

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JULY 2003

SMOKEJUMPER



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NSA Web site: <http://www.smokejumpers.com>

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Editing: *Jill Leger*

Illustrators: *McElderry Books, Nick Holmes,*

Chris Demarest, Ken Morris, Dan

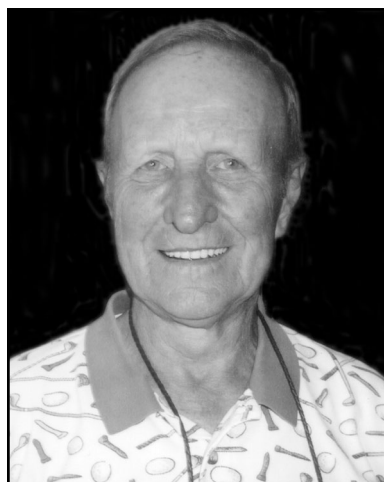
Veenendaal and Eric Rajala

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Message from the President



by Ron Stoleson
(Missoula '56)
PRESIDENT

AS OF THIS WRITING IN April, we have grown to 106 life members. This growth is key to our survival as an association and I continue to believe 200 life members is an achievable goal. It would be great if we achieved that goal by the time of our national reunion next June in Missoula, Montana. So come on and join the Black Cap gang.

On April 4th, Vice President Doug Houston presented a plaque memorializing the 30 individuals killed while serving as smokejumpers to the Alaska Smokejumpers. A total of 13 plaques will be presented to each of the smokejumper bases and to the Museum of Mountain Flying, the Evergreen Aviation Museum and the National Forest Service Museum. Most of the presentations will have been made by the time you read this in July.

In April, I presented an appreciation plaque/clock to Roger Savage for all the work he has done for the Association. Roger is responsible for the magnificent smokejumper database we have and he also developed and maintained our first Web site many years ago.

Jon McBride has got a lot of volunteers for the trail jobs coming up this month. If you haven't tried out this program, plan for it next year. It's great to get out in the woods with old comrades and swap a few stories around the campfire. We also get a lot of work done.

Our effort to register our trademark logo continues and should be accomplished by this fall. Your Association is strong, vital and committed. We continue to invite your help in its administration. There is a load of talent among our membership. How about sharing your time and skills for the good of the outfit. Give any of us a call or write a note to volunteer. 📧

In the Door

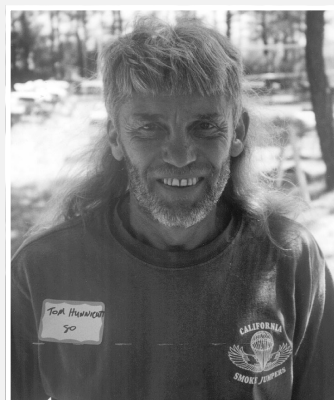
by Tom Hunnicutt
(Redding '78)

A steady gaze at the horizon,
That fuzzy irregular line,
That focus point separating
Blue sky, green trees
And the air.

The air.

That air!

Standing in the door
The air is like none other.
In the door before the jump!



Tom Hunnicutt (NSA file)

The Burning Pupa of Death

by Jason Greenlee (Redding '99)

It was pretty much a routine day for Rachael Link. She had no idea of the evil that waited for her in the familiar halls of our smokejumper operations center.

We were all gathered around as usual in the morning, waiting for roll call. Rookies sat around open-mouthed as Wolfman finished up a yarn. "... Yup, this is no do-do. There I was. I was in the door and I'd forgotten my 'chute. The spotter slapped me, so I jumped anyway. I was lucky I had trees below me. I crashed through the first few branches, and that slowed me enough so I could grab a branch and hang on. Then it was just a matter of swinging down and doing a good roll. Don't forget to do a good roll, or your butt is in bad shape! ..."

NSA Members — Save This Information

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

Smokejumper Magazine & Merchandise

Articles, obits, change of address, orders

Chuck Sheley 530-893-0436
cnkgsheley@earthlink.net
10 Judy Ln
Chico CA 95926

Membership

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

All Else

Ron Stoleson 801-782-0218
rmstoleson@aol.com
NSA President
1236 E 2925 N
Ogden UT 84414

Trail Project

Jon McBride 406-728-2302
N2601@aol.com

Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

Dubya interrupted him with an announcement: "Hear this, you rabble. I have a new book here about smokejumpers. Hot off the press. The book looks good, but I can't say much for the guy that wrote the stuff on the dust jacket. Get a load of this:

'... and then the brave smokejumpers were caught on all sides by the raging fire, which had become a raging, burning pupa of death.'

"What kind of word is that? What in heck is a burning pupa of death, anyway?" In anger, Dubya threw the book down on the counter and began roll call: "Adams, Burke ..."

Just then, Rachael Link came around the corner. She was in her usual shorts and t-shirt, leading the next tour of visitors. Things were slow, and the crowds weren't too bad that day. She enjoyed this work, because it gave her a chance to meet people and hob-knob with the jumpers a bit on her free time. The jumpers all liked her exuberance, her friendliness and (this was her undoing) her innocence.

This really wasn't as much a job for Rachael as a fun way to spend the summer. Little did she know what Billy, the evil rookie, had in store for her that day. That was Billy's big day to mess with Rachael, because that was the day Rachael's family was visiting the base.

Now let's start by calling a spade a spade here. Billy was sort of the opposite of sweet, innocent Rachael. Lord knows why the two hung out together. Billy was the sort of evil, low-down, conniving guy that you'd expect to find in a smokejumper's jumpsuit.

But I'll get to that in a moment.

Let's just say that Billy was up to something, as was usual for Billy. In fact, let's put our cards on the table here—Billy was a darned rookie! And everyone knew what that meant! Yup, Billy was up to no good. And this time Rachael was going to be his innocent victim.

Coming around the corner with Rachael was her small crowd of visitors. Kids were yanking each other's hair, poking each other, and looking around for things to eat. Adults were pulling the kids along and trying to hear what Rachael was saying. Rachael was trying to look cool for her mom and dad and cousins. The smokejumpers were trying to not snicker, because they knew what was going to happen to Rachael. Some were running for cameras.

"And here, ladies and gentlemen, is our dummy smokejumper, Oscar, wearing a real smokejumper jumpsuit and parachute," said Rachel, addressing the crowd with her back to Oscar.

She had no clue that Billy had climbed into Oscar's gear and was standing in his place, stock still, with his hands extended into a good smokejumper salute.

An evil grin flicked across Billy's face, but it was so fast that nobody but the jumpers noticed.

Rachael was talking away: "Ladies and gentlemen, besides the high tech outfit you see on our dummy Oscar, the jumpers use lots of other modern technology in their work."

Billy caught the eye of Rachael's nephew, Dan, in the front row and winked at him. Little Dan's eyes got as big as saucers, and he pointed up at the suddenly animated dummy and said, "Rachael! ..."

Rachael smiled pleasantly at her nephew and said, "Not right now, Danny, I'm busy. So, folks, one kind of technology we use is infrared cameras in the sky and on the ground. ..."

Now Billy got bolder and gave Danny a little wave. The wave was just enough for Danny to see, but nobody else noticed.

"Rachael!" Danny pointed, his mouth working up and down, trying to warn Rachael against the evil hovering just above her shoulder.

But Rachael was on a roll: "People who use infrared refer to it as 'IR.' So a camera that senses infrared is called an IR camera." Rachael paused so everyone could grasp this bit of wisdom.

Billy slowly bent down toward Rachael. Everyone now saw that this dummy was alive, but no one was able to move, to shout, to warn her. Everyone was frozen like deer in headlights. The screams and warnings for poor Rachael couldn't seem to find their way to the lips of parents, cousins, uncles, friends and visitors watching as events unfolded in front of them. Everyone just watched in transfixed horror as the living Oscar leaned closer to Rachael.

Then Oscar spoke.

Oscar's low voice, barely a whisper, was meant only for Rachael, but it was heard clearly by everyone, because there was not a sound in the room other than Billy's voice and the visitors' horrified intake of air.

Billy said in Rachael's ear: "I R a smokejumper!"

Rachael seemed frozen. Her face was locked in a smile. The words she was about to say to the visitors had become lost somewhere between where words come from and her lips.

Her eyes slid sideways to see who was whispering to her, and they came to focus very slowly on Billy's twinkling eyes, only inches from her face.

Her brain reconnected with her body, and she began to move. First her lips moved, and her mouth began to find its voice again, at first hesitant, then firm. She began to emit a sound that started as a low whimper and ended as a bellow, louder than the loudest bullhorn. The sound coming from deep within her was heard in the weather building next door, in the warehouse down the tarmac, and in the barracks, where she woke up two slumbering smokejumpers whose alarm clocks had failed to go off.

Next, her body began to move. As her voice rose an octave, she slowly pivoted her face, then her hips, away from the offending, devilish grin leering at her from behind Oscar's facemask. Her right foot shot out and kicked Danny out of the way, and her left foot began propelling her through the crowd. As she gathered speed, she became a blur of action, a whirlwind of motion, streaking toward the hanger door that led to the tarmac.

Witnesses claim to have captured her screaming flight on



*Dr. Bob Moffitt (CJ-48) with Oscar in a visit to Missoula in 2001.
(Courtesy of Starr Jenkins)*

film, but, so far, no one has produced more than a blur in the pictures recording the exit of Rachael, the innocent.

As for Billy, he was doubled up, hugging his stomach and making rude noises. Once the crowd saw that it was safe from Billy, it too began to produce snorts, guffaws, chortles and shrieks of laughter. These sounds merged together and flowed out onto the tarmac right after Rachael, catching up to her in mid-stride. The sounds didn't really match what she thought should be following her out of the building, and she slowed down enough to look back to see why people weren't streaming out of the building behind her. Waves of laughter met her, and she pivoted back into the building.

"Billy, I'm going to kill you, you ..." But her last words were lost amidst the peals of laughter washing over the tarmac.

And Billy, sitting on the dummy's platform, was now slapping his knee, pointing at Rachael and howling. His howl did indeed sound like one that only a burning pupa of death can make. 🐛

Jason Greenlee is fire management officer with the U.S. Forest Service on the Osceola National Forest in Florida. He can be reached at: Osceola Ranger District, Osceola National Forest, P.O. Box 70, Olustee, FL 32072 (386) 752 2577 ext. 4522.

The Gobi Charisma

by Tom Albert (Cave Junction '64)

The Gobi, what is it? It is the nickname for the base called the Siskiyou Aerial Project, later the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. It was the smallest of the primary U.S. Forest Service bases. This probably was one of the keys to the tradition that developed. We were small, quaint, and not in the headquarters' limelight. This allowed the succession of project air officers (PAO) to hold a looser reign that enabled the crew to develop the hard work, hard play ethic that endured throughout the existence of the base. Bottom line, the Gobi was the Gobi because of the crew.

I was first introduced to Cave Junction in 1963 when a crew of jumpers came to the Galice Ranger Station to perform project work: a cocky bunch of bastards who had little to do with us district pogues. Our district ranger, Don Woods, loved the jumpers and considered himself one of the recruiters for the base. Hell, he treated them like the gods they thought they were.

Don would select a few from his summer crews to "interview" with the PAO. Mr. Woods was very selective, as he only endorsed people he felt would make the grade. Anyway, he had three of us go to the Gobi one Saturday morning (on our own time) to interview with Jim Allen. We had just gotten out of the car when the siren blew. I will never forget that day. It was a typical fire call—the guys helping Cliff Hamilton and Chowwabby suit up, the engines on the ol' Twin Beech firing up and all the guys issuing the good luck "salute" to the departing jumpers as the plane sped past the loft on its takeoff roll. Think about it. To a non-jumper want-to-be, can you imagine anything more exciting?

Let's face it; those exciting moments were relatively few and far between, especially in the earlier days. Yes, this is what we lived for but that wasn't the essence of the Gobi. It was the fun we had together, laughing, kidding, and challenging one another:

Watching Lou Groza (Lou Wayers) eat in the mess hall. Heaven forbid getting between his fork and the food.

The smile that came over Cliff Hamilton's face when some big logger in the Chit Chat asked if anyone here was tough enough to step outside with him.

The "soft encouragements" that Chuck Sheley uttered to his teammates when they were losing the volleyball game.

The beleaguered anticipation the rookies felt waiting for Farinetti to come back to the barracks late at night from one of his excursions to town. Trooper Tom and Gar-Buck were the usual targets.

Practice jumps and the jump pot.

Handing out the 150-foot letdown ropes to the booster crews.

The Gobi Gorge, don't screw up or have a birthday. Any excuse, ANY.

"Shopping" at the Gobi Store for your ditty bag items.

Sitting around the lawn on warm evenings joking and BS'ing.

Getting up in the morning swearing that you weren't going to town tonight, only to change your mind that afternoon. But, just for one!

The laughter: Emmet Grijalva's one-liners, Ron-the-Mac's chuckle.

Tom Smith's Gobi haircut.

The Peters twin's boxing match at one in the morning on their 21st birthday. And don't forget the track meet. Almost pulled it off.

Constructing the jump tower. "This piece goes here." "No, no, no, it goes there." "Bull shit!"



Tom Albert (NSA file)

Watching lightning strikes at night with excited anticipation.

Paychecks after a bust.

The rookie party.

Oh, and the practical jokes. Glued tennis shoes to the floor. Doors tied closed. Night before the first rookie jump rituals. One time I stashed a six-pack of beer behind a bush alongside the road. Rubisow, Ron-the-Mac, and a couple of others were in the car with me. As I approached the location, I started sniffing the air, "Do you guys smell that?" "What are you talking about," they answered. I passed the beer, stopped and backed up still sniffing, stopping abeam the beer, got out and retrieved the six-pack from behind the bush. They almost fell out of the car.

There are as many stories as there are Gobi stones. All of us recall and savor those little endeavors; some we'd like to forget, most we remember fondly. Our aggressive reputation on the fire line was only part of what made the Gobi the Gobi. It was the in between times that made up the "charisma" of the Gobi. Damn, it was fun. 🍷

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."

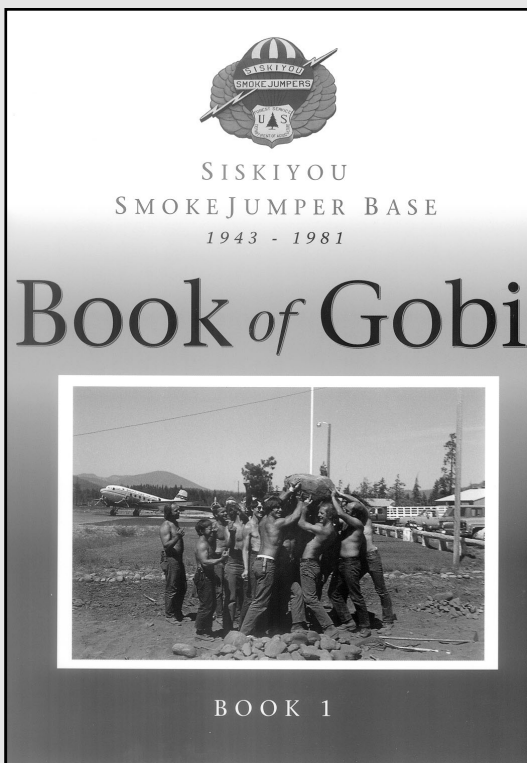
FEATURED LIFE MEMBER JOHN MCINTOSH

by Ted Burgon

JOHN JUMPED OUT OF MISSOULA for three seasons, 1960–1963. He attended Presbyterian College, Clinton, South Carolina, receiving his B.A. in 1961. Then, in 1965, he received his law degree from the University of South Carolina.

His first year, 1965–66, was spent in private practice. He then became a public defender for three years in Columbia, South Carolina. Next followed nine years with the Fifth Circuit Solicitor's Office followed by three years in the South Carolina Attorney General's Office in Columbia. In 1981 he joined the U.S. Attorney's Office, where he remained for the next 13 years. John currently is with the South Carolina Attorney General's Office as the chief deputy attorney general.

He writes "I am proud to be a member of the National Smokejumpers Association and appreciate the hard work by all of the volunteers who make the Association and the magazine possible. Many of the lessons I learned in the Jumpers served me well in my courtroom work and legal practice." 🍷



Book of Gobi

Siskiyou Smokejumper Base 1943-1981
160 pages — 51 Contributions — Many pictures

This is a limited edition produced solely for the 2002 Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Reunion *but contains many stories of general interest to all jumpers*. Copies are still available for \$15.

Send checks to:

Stan Collins

1312 Jeppesen Ave

Eugene OR 97401

Mick

by Troop Emonds (Cave Junction '66)

Mick Swift was one of the smartest guys I've ever met, and for sure he was the Greatest Natural Born Leader I've ever dealt with. Any time there was ever a problem or a complicated situation every head and every eye turned to Mick. It was just assumed he would have the answer, period. I served under some great leaders, and had great leaders who supposedly worked for me, but no other human ever approached Mick. He was as strong as a bull, low key, modest, and his manner, well, it worked like this. All who met him had no choice; they simply had to like him.

When I was a rookie back in 1966, Mick was already over in Laos heading up cargo kicking operations with Air America. At first all I heard were Mick Swift stories. He was a legend. He was spoken about with fun, but always there was this unspoken respect and admiration. I jumped the next summer and in 1968 stopped by the base during rookie training and I was still hearing stories about this character named Mick Swift.

After three years in the Marines, I returned to CJ. The early seventies brought us to the Eastern Appalachian Mountains. Mick was running things back there, and at first he did most of the spotting. I guess I have to tell you that Mick, above all his other skills, was the greatest spotter I ever saw. The winds over the Appalachians!!!! Those mountains back there created the most challenging spotting and jumping situations that any of us had ever seen.

When Delos (Dutton) became the base manager at Cave Junction, he went back there with a gang of outlaw jumpers from CJ and made it jumpable country. You either had to consistently jump in winds that were way past the envelope of safety or you would end up passing up the majority of fire jumps. It would have been ideal country to jump with a square chute, but really extra difficult country with those old round chutes.

Mick was a real student of the changing dynamics that went on aloft. You'd see him in the back of the Doug calmly smoking a Camel. He studied the fate of drift streamers as they shook and danced in the wind. He would watch the ground, study how it all played its part in layers, currents, and channels aloft. Like no one else, he understood what the drift streamers told him. He'd find an inert place to put you. A sheltered spot that nullified the strong winds aloft. He'd also look right inside you and could tell if you understood what he had painted for you.

Usually we had to jump much higher to make up for the wind ride and the terrain.

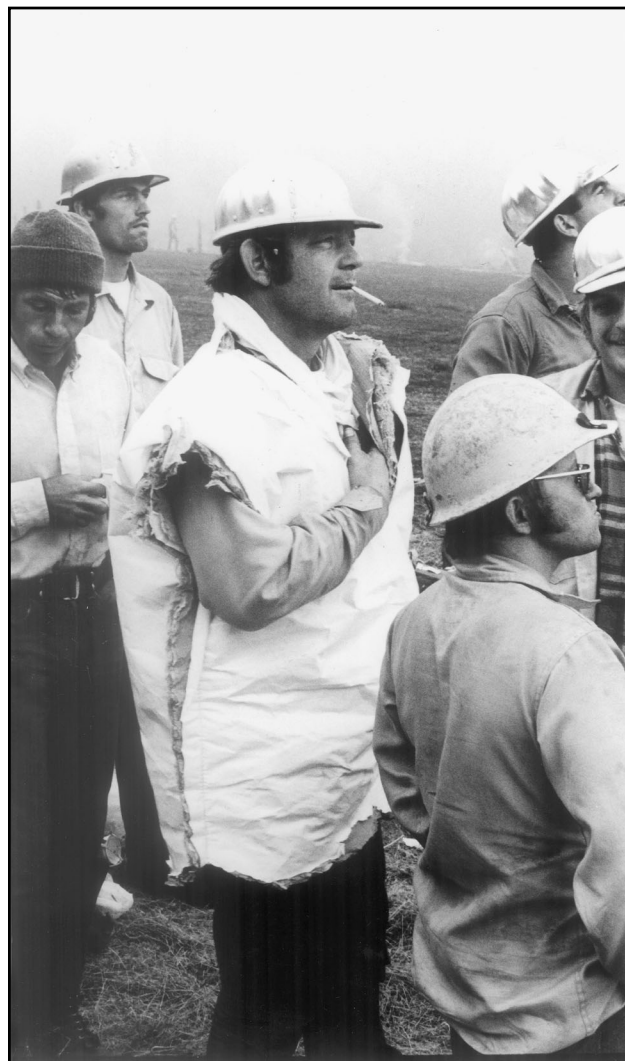
He'd explain why it appeared so unusual and to be sure to raise your feet as you pass over that ridgeline. Get ready cowboy!! Go gettum.

The only guy I've ever seen Mick get mad at is me. He told me once he had gotten into a heated argument with Delos Dutton when they were both young squad leaders on a fire up in Montana. Later, when Mick got back from Laos, Delos was running the Gobi. He rolled back in as a straight jumper and basically took over as the foreman. Mick and Delos were the best team anyone ever saw. It was sort of like Lewis and Clark. Two tough guys with

extremely different temperaments and skills that complemented each other. They really respected and liked each other. Swift was the great communicator with the troops, and Delos knew how to work the system and get good deals for the guys.

I've seen Mick deal with big surly guys. Never did he ever get mad, but he knew how to physically show his power and he always ended up top dog. He never hurt anyone but he could wrestle them to the ground and get them to the point where they really figured out that they were messing with the wrong guy.

I'm the kind of person who'd drive the pope crazy. One morning I showed up for work and things were bustling. Some BLM mining engineers were out in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area; one of them fell and broke a leg. He needed to be packed down some rough terrain to where they could send in a helicopter and get him out.



L-R: Garry Dunning, Walt Congleton, Mick Swift, Allen "Mouse" Owen, Trooper Tom, Gary Thornhill. (Courtesy of Troop)

Before work, Mick was running around organizing a rescue operation. He was hand picking an elite group of jumpers and didn't want to use the jump list. I was at the top of the jump list and I wasn't one of the guys Mick picked. I was bummed out, but still I jumped in to help everyone get into their gear. It was one of those rush, rush, and rush things.

I was standing beside the Doug, safety checking everyone's gear as they were climbing into the plane. The pilots had the plane running and as the last jumper climbed up the stairs someone asked, "Hey, who's spotting?" No one knew who was spotting. Well, who in the hell is assigned to spot the Doug? Word came from the office that Mick was the spotter assigned to the Doug. I looked at Mick and asked, "Are you spotting, jumping or both?"

Mick flinched, as he realized he indeed was supposed to be the spotter. I looked around; all the squad leaders were in jump suits. The plane started moving, so I said, "Hell, I'll spot." Mick helped me into the plane. We pulled in the stairs on the roll and were off. Mick had given the pilots the map showing them where Tin Cup Creek was and where the target location was.

We were about five miles out when Mick said, "Troopy, get the radios and give me one and spread them out." I went back to the tail section to dig them out of the spotter's kit, only no spotter's kit. OK Mick, what did you do with the spotter's kit?" That's when Mick got mad at me. "You mean you didn't get the spotter's kit?" "No blankety-blank radios, no blankety-blank streamers," Mick had everything he could do to keep from decking me, and he started stomping up and down the airplane.

Nobody had ever seen him so mad. The entire plane felt awful. I went back in the tail section and dug down the sides of the boards trying to find some old streamers that might have fallen out of the spotter's kits of old. I came up with three old ratty, beat up streamers. A couple of them were wet and sort of welded together. The next thing I learned was that the headphones to the pilots didn't work, nor did the lights that gave the most basic of all communications between spotter and pilots. None of us knew the pilots, as they had just flown in from Redmond. When Mick learned about the zero ability to communicate to the pilots he got even madder.

We were almost there and I went up to talk to the pilots to try and work some sort of deal out via hand signals. It was clear the entire planeload was distraught as they saw the body language of Mick, the true leader of this little world inside the DC-3. Here we had perhaps the greatest planeload of good keen jumpers anyone could ever ask for and everything was going wrong.

We got to the spot, and I picked out an area on a little knoll that looked like a stand of small reprod in great scheme of the rugged Kalmiopsis Wilderness of the Siskiyou. I threw out the first streamer and it was an odd looking thing out there with water spots all over it. Someone yelled, "Hey Mick what's with the polka-dot streamer?" There was no smoke out there like on a fire and the pilots had put the plane in a flight pattern that really was not good for seeing the streamer. Then they headed off with the streamer behind us like maybe we were heading back to the base.

I made my way to the front of the plane. It was clear the pilots just had no idea where the jump spot was. Somehow we came around back to the same reprod area. I had two streamers left and was starting from scratch. Mick was yelling at me about something and I ignored him, desperately trying to find some sort of landmark.

I looked out and found a log on the ground that I could hopefully find again and use as a landmark. Mick kept saying



Mick Swift (Courtesy of Douglas Beck)

something to me in anger. I dropped the streamer over the log. I looked up at Mick and just said, "Eldo, I'm trying to spot here, and you're not helping me!" Mick blinked his eyes, looked at the crew, and saw that they were all worried about what was going on between us in the back of the plane. Swift leaned over and planted a big kiss on my helmet in his most melodramatic way. The entire crew burst out laughing, and the grim atmosphere in the plane changed to some kind of fun situation.

It was now so easy. That last streamer went exactly where we wanted it in the center of the reprod. By this time Mick was sitting in the door and we were laughing and joking with each other about the whole thing. And the entire crew was ready and up for this jump. He was first man out, and led the crew in a great rescue operation. When he got back he came straight for me, grabbed me in one of his great bear hugs and said, "Good job spotting, Troopy." The point of this whole thing was how influential Mick was at altering the wills and mind-sets of everyone in that aircraft with simple little tricks that only he could pull off.

Whatever I could say, it would always end up being not enough to describe the man to his full measure. I consider the time I got to spend with Mick Swift as one of the great treasures and total honors in life. I guess my request for the hereafter is that someone will dump half my ashes out over the Green Wall in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness to be in the same area as my pal Mouse. The other half of those ashes ought to be dumped out under Mick's favorite old cedar tree in O'Brien to annoy my pal Mick's ashes. Anyway, Eldo, you rank as my favorite boss! 🐉

Troop jumped for 23 years totaling 525 jumps of which 261 were on fires. He is currently living in Nehalem, Oregon, with his wife Rivena and son Jed. He is currently developing the "ultimate" in fire tools—The Troop Tool and can be contacted at troop@dragonslayers.com

Huckleberry Pie Might Have Saved Life

by Wild Bill Yensen (McCall '53)

1965 in McCall was a pretty slow year. We were kept busy by project work. Jumpers were going to Paddy Flat and getting fence posts, fence rails and bumper logs. We would haul them to Thorn Creek and would peel and stack them. Once dry, they were treated with diesel and penta and then used all over the forest.

It was my second year as squad leader. One day I was told to take the ton truck and two jumpers, Charlie Hay (McCall '63) and Mitch Ruska (McCall '63), and go to Paddy Flat to pick up a load of poles and haul them to Thorn Creek. Off we went.

We went to the place where the poles were supposed to be and there were no poles. We looked all over and there were none to be found. I knew if we went back to McCall, Thad Due1 (McCall '56) would find some other job for us. So we pulled the truck out into the brush, out of sight, and ate our lunch. I had my little chess-board with me so Charlie Hay and I played a game of chess. After we started the second game, Mitch wandered off. As we finished the second game, Mitch came back with his baseball cap full of huckleberries.

We took our lunch sacks and went to the berry patch and picked about a half gallon. By then it was time to head back to McCall. On the way in we stopped at the Lakefork Store and I bought some piecrust mix. At McCall, we parked the truck and went over the hill to my trailer. We presented the huckleberries and piecrust mix to my sweet wife, Arlene. Being the wonderful wife that she is, she immediately started baking us a pie. While she was baking, Charlie and I played another game of chess.

When Arlene presented us with the pie, Charlie cut it in two and ate his half. He then thanked Arlene and went

up to the barracks. In the barracks one of the jumpers had just pulled the cork out of a bottle of Jim Beam. Charlie had never tasted hard liquor before. He took a swig and just kept at it until he had drained the whole fifth! He thought he was tough enough to drink whiskey like beer.

Needless to say in a very few minutes he was out. He stayed out for 26 hours. Dr. Dave Hemry (McCall '64), a fellow jumper, checked him out but there was nothing anyone could do. The huckleberry pie that he had wolfed down had probably saved his life.

When he woke up, he had soaked the mattress and it had to be thrown away. Del Catlin, our foreman, was really pissed off. He laid down the law and said anyone who misses work or a jump because of being drunk would be fired. 🍷

"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. Chances are that you can find him on a golf course near his home in St. George, Utah.



Bill Yensen (NSA file)

A Letter to the Gobi Smokejumper Crews from Jim Allen

I have tried many times to write and thank you for all that was done to make the 2002 Cave Junction reunion one of the outstanding events of my life. It is difficult for me to put into words just how much I appreciate all of the time and effort that was put into organizing and carrying out the details of such an undertaking. A few of the persons that I know had a lot to do with it were Wes Brown, Gary Buck, John Robison, Gary Thornhill, Garry Peters and Chuck Sheley. I know there were others and I haven't purposely omitted them and I apologize for any omissions!

One person that I could never forget is Gary "Tex" Welch. Gary was instrumental in organizing and presiding over presentations to Al Boucher and myself. Thank you, Gary. I would like to thank each of you personally but, as that is impossible, I will have to take this method.

Recently, I celebrated my 80th birthday and Emily and I celebrated our 55th anniversary this spring and I am pleased to report that all is well with us.

Thank you all again!! With all the good reports and comments I have heard about the 2002 reunion I am hopeful that another Gobi reunion will be forth coming in the not too distant future. We both plan to be there! 🍷

Jim started jumping at NCSB in 1946 upon returning from WWII where he jumped in Operation Market Garden (Holland) and was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge. He took over the base in Cave Junction in 1953 as project air officer and stayed there until 1966 when he transferred to Redmond as air center manager. He retired in 1976 and is living in Redmond with his wife, Emily.

Aggressive Wildland Fire Control and the Biscuit Fire

by Chuck Mansfield (Cave Junction '59)

It has been one year since the Biscuit fire burned over 500,000 acres of Oregon and California at a cost of over \$150 million. It started in a wilderness area covered by smokejumpers for 37 years until the closing of the Cave Jct. Base in 1981. This is the fourth and most expensive major fire in the area since that closure. At issue is the lack of aggressive initial attack. Has anything changed a year later or are we bound to repeat our mistakes?

The group of men who gathered at the old abandoned smokejumper base near Cave Junction, Oregon, a year ago could not have imagined the disaster that would befall the forests near the base in three short weeks. These men had laid their lives on the line to protect the forests from fire. The siren would sound and all hands would fall to in order to prepare the men and equipment, fill out the paperwork and get the plane airborne. This activity had to be done within 10 minutes in order to get the men to a fire before hope of getting it under control faded. Studies of old records had shown that in many areas of the Siskiyou, Rogue, Klamath and Six Rivers National Forests, firefighters had to be on the fire within 30 minutes of sighting the first smoke or the fire would reach project size.

Who were these men? For the most part they were college kids that needed summer employment. Who would they later become? They entered all walks of life. Their ranks include scientists, doctors, teachers, dentists, lawyers, foresters, and even farmers, mechanics and bricklayers. When the group of 130 men gathered on the Gobi last summer, they were brothers. Since 1943 only about 350 men had ever manned the base at Cave Junction. In times of need, jumpers would be brought in from other bases.

The major dangers of wildland fire fighting are well known. The sudden shifts of wind that cause a fire to explode, falling snags and rolling rocks are common to almost all wildland fires. The dangers of parachuting into a forest generally added only the risk of the type of injuries found in contact sports. However, the forests in southwest Oregon do have their own dangers. These are steep mountains that can receive over 100 inches of rain each winter and trees that run well over 200 feet in height. In the summer the mountains bake under a cloudless sky. Dry lightning is the worst threat.

Five men who attended the smokejumper reunion spent the next week in an area of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness called Gold Basin. Gold Basin is in the heart of the area now burned by the Biscuit fire. They were rebuilding an old trail that was nearly destroyed by the Silver Complex fire in 1985. The Silver Complex fire started in the same general area as the Biscuit fire. One smokejumper, who is now an aide to a U.S.

senator, said that he was in the group of smokejumpers that made the initial attack on the Silver fire. It took 18 hours for a planeload of smokejumpers from Missoula, Montana, to arrive at the fire. The Silver Complex fire burned around 100,000 acres of forest.

In June of 2002, the brush in the old fire area was up to six feet deep. It rained in Gold Basin two weeks before the Biscuit fire. In June 2002, the areas burned by the Silver fire had finally recovered. As

one of the men who attended the reunion said, "It's too bad the Biscuit fire didn't happen two weeks earlier—we would have stomped it cold." While many at the reunion are becoming a bit long of tooth and starting to slow down there is no question about it, they probably would have stopped this fire in its tracks had they been first on the scene.

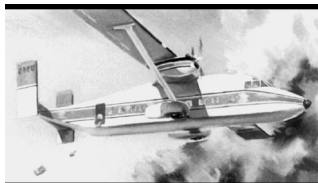
Are aggressive fire control efforts needed? The loss of timber, wildlife and watershed and the cost of fighting the fire would argue in favor of aggressive efforts during times of high fire danger. Did the closure of the smokejumper base at Cave Junction contribute to the losses of the Biscuit fire? No one will ever know for certain but those of us who fought fire in the area years ago can only stand in silence and shake our heads. ☹

Chuck Mansfield is a retiree of Los Alamos National Laboratory and a longtime resident of Los Alamos County, NM. While attending college he worked as a smokejumper at Cave Junction during the summers from 1959–69. His father was a career forester whose interest in field botany led him to establish the Kalmiopsis Wilderness in the 1960s. In recent years Chuck and his family have taken several trips into the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. His interest led to the trail restoration efforts of five men after the June 2002 smokejumper reunion in Cave Junction. This small group of retirees, average age 64, was able to clear eight miles of trail in six days of work. This work included removing approximately 120 downed trees that ranged up to 3 feet in diameter.

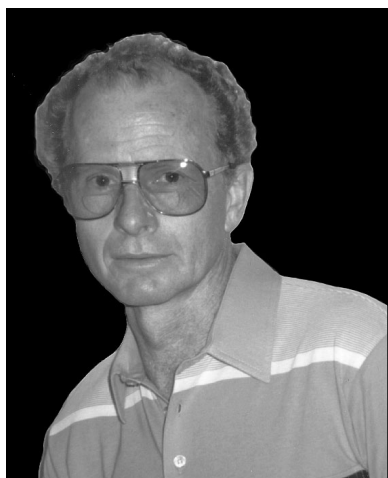
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Chuck Mansfield (NSA file)



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

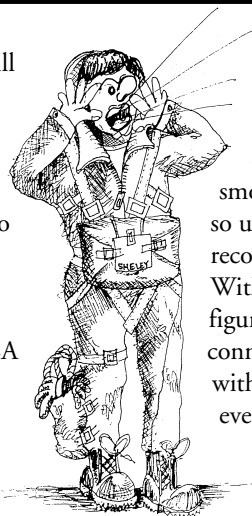
THIS IS GOING TO BE one of those "catch all" columns as I have numerous items to throw out on the table.

In this issue of *Smokejumper*, I've thrown out a question to members concerning editorial oversight. Requests for responses to that question were made via my e-mail list. The responses were quick and

interesting showing that we will use a question and reader's response in future issues. The responses were so great that I only used the first part of my address book. Please feel free to take part. My contact info is always on page three of the magazine.

The new and improved NSA Web site is up and running after many long hours put in by new NSA webmaster Jon Robinson. It is set up to handle your input of obits and news items. You can have that information on line in a short period of time. Take part in the new chat room.

I will continue to give my best shot at varying the content of the magazine putting in a wide variety of stories and trying to keep current issues in front of the reader. A few have expressed concern about including Air America/CIA stories in the magazine. I feel that one of the strong points of the magazine is being able to record smokejumper



history and get it printed. Once in print, we have it for the long haul. The connection between smokejumpers and the CIA was so unique, that it needs to be recorded as a matter of history. With the passing of years, key figures involved in this long-term connection are passing away without recording important events. I'm still kicking myself for not interviewing and learning more about Jack Mathews (MSO '48) before

he passed away. His involvement in Southeast Asia and China must have played in some very key developments in U.S. history. Just remember this rule of thumb: If you don't like an article, turn the page!

On the question of editorial supervision, I threw out the idea of an oversight committee just to create discussion. The day we have limits on editorial opinion is the day when some other flag will be flying over this country and our jump wings will be made of chicken feathers. 🐔

Readers Respond ...

Mind blowing how they fight fires now days. Wow, when I think about how smokejumpers fought fires in the 1970s. Man, did we have a lot of freedom. In those days we were all out aggressive initial attack. We had a few gobblers a season. Most of the time we'd knock a fire down and get back to the base and get ready to go jump another fire. Hell, in the 1977 season in western Alaska, I jumped a fire everyday for seven days in a row. I had around twenty fire jumps that season. Chuck, you are so right about project sized fires. All you get is greater money lost, more accidents, more injuries. Increase the number of jumpers at each base. Go back to aggressive fire fighting with the smokejumper crews.
Milford Preston (RDD '74)

Hi Chuck: Have enjoyed the continuing dialog re the Biscuit fire. A while back I was reading the article by Dee (Dutton) regarding the "one-maner"—that reminded me of back in the 60s. I believe **Keith Fitzjarrald**, NCSB squad

leader, made a one manner on a fire just south of Twisp. — Believe it was a hunter fire that could be seen from town and the base. **Bill Moody** (NCSB '57)

Mr. Sheley, I am the Postmaster of Mount Vernon, Oregon, and also the 1st Vice President of the Oregon State Chapter of the "National Association of Postmasters of the United States." I truly enjoyed your article that was reprinted in the *Northwest Ag Life* magazine. As a resident of Eastern Oregon, we see this kind of wasted funds every summer. I would like your permission to reprint your article in the *Oregon Postmaster* magazine. This magazine goes to over 300 Postmasters across our State and every States President across the United States. Thank you for your time and again congratulations on a great article. **Postmaster Cathy Heisen**

Good stuff, Chuck. FYI—I had to go half way around the world to meet another jumper. I was invited to speak at the

GIS in Telecoms Conference in Nice, France in November. While I was there, I met another presenter, **Russ Johnson** (Redding '70), from ESRI who was also presenting on Geographic Information System and emergency management. We had lunch together at the conference and discussed working together on a grant application to the Department of Homeland Security. As a result, he came up to Washington State and met with me and some of my staff for a brain storming session. Again, I appreciate your fact-finding—I followed the Biscuit Fire virtually every day. Like you, I can't believe the USFS has been so penny wise and pound-foolish. **Terry Egan** (CJ '65)

As we look for answers to the current downward spiral of the USFS, I think we have to go much deeper to find the answers needed to put Smokey back on track. I grew up next door to a Ranger Station and spent countless hours playing with the FCO's son. As summer approached each year, we were always impressed when the fire crew rolled out code 3. I can still recall the conversations we would have playing "Fire Boss" after the crews rolled out. What fun! After growing up in that environment, I guess it is no surprise I would become a fireman.

One thing that really sticks in my mind is the way the crews were supervised and what was expected of them compared to today. In the '50s and '60s on the San Bernardino NF, you stood inspection at roll call and towed the line or found a new job. Fighting fire was a no-holds barred exercise in successfully completing a mission. And where did this "Can Do" attitude come from? It came from WWII combat vets who found a home in the Forest Service after returning from four years of war. Fighting fire was a good substitute for getting shot at as far as an adrenaline rush goes. You can still see the influence of those veterans in the way campaign (war term) fires are managed.

It seems that their influence has definitely peaked in the late '80s. The vets instilled the no-bullshit, all or nothing attitude into their crews and those crews went on to be Hotshot Foremen and Engine Captains. That group of guys taught me. Point being the attitude instilled by the WWII vets has been diluted with the ever-growing politically correct crap we see today. I certainly don't know how we reverse this cancer that is infecting fire control management today. A good combat vet knows how to stay alive by using all the resources available to him. Obviously some of the current "District Gods" don't have a clue as far as resources go and the cost has been high.

Lets hope it is lack of training and not egos that is part of this problem. The current powers need to remember that the WWII vets knew what they were doing and it showed in their fire control records. We need to keep that attitude alive in every person involved in fire control. It saves firemen's lives. **Buzz Teter** (RDD '79)

Chuck: This past week while attending the annual conference of the American Camping Association, I had the opportunity to speak with US Congressman Mark Udall for about 5 minutes after his keynote address. I spoke about my

concern for the more active use of smokejumpers in early attack on fires and also the concern I have for pulling highly skilled firefighters off the fire line at night. I believe Udall is a listening ear and he certainly is on some of the right committees for being able to exert influence. I told him I would send some materials for his review. **Jim Cherry** (MSO '57)

It's a serious systemic problem at the federal level in the West—seasonal, low paid dispatchers combined with many FMO's/fire managers with no formal fire department response-oriented backgrounds. I really think it can be addressed if federal fire managers were forced to focus on the issue and do so on a region by region effort—pattern it after R5's model—R5 (Calif) certainly is not perfect but it's much further along in standardized responses in many unit locations.

It's easy for me to say, but if my fire district handled responses the way we do on forest fire reports in the mountain west and other areas, we'd be sued or out of business because we didn't show up with the ambulance on an EMS call or didn't bring 5 engines and a ladder truck to the reported house fire—loss prevention should be the root focus—both life and property—the taxpayers in this suburban area simply would not stand for it. And by spending money on the front end combined with a "Go big and cancel" response/dispatch standard, there'd be money left in the budget for more prescribed fire/fuels programs because you didn't fight as many large fires in a season. These aren't new ideas—just ones that should have been in place years ago. We need to be able to say "We tried to catch that fire" on every response. **Paul M. Ross Jr.** (Initial Attack Helicopter Rappeller, Firefighter/EMT)

I've never heard of that "none available for 48 hrs" excuse ... dispatchers usually say none available; do you want to keep the order open? And they call the open order and ask when jumpers do become available. Of course the none available for Biscuit could have been strictly a NW Center answer, indicating that the NW had set a priority for fires other than Siskiyou fires. Also did NW have orders in to NIFC for more jumpers?

Having more jumpers ought to solve the hoarding problem, because if hoarding is done to insure a certain amount of jumpers staying home to protect the homeland, then the "extra" jumpers could be released for out of region use. The "problem" of what to do with lots of jumpers in a slow year is a product of traditional myopic thinking ... for comparison, what do the city firefighters do when they're not on fires? They wait and wait and wait, and every one accepts that as part of having an ever-ready fire fighting force. However, smokejumpers could be turned into hotshots easily AND they could be turned into woods workers too ... trails, weed control, prescribed burning, road and building maintenance ... damn near anything on the district that takes people power. With some creative planning and a better cooperation with the other programs on their home district and forests, the extra jumpers could always have something meaningful to do.

The re-tred program was abandoned because re-treds were returning to the ranks when the action was heavy, and there was no time to refresh and get up to speed and they were getting hurt regularly. It takes constant and current practice in the specialized skills of a jumper to be effective and safe. It looks good on paper to be a re-tred, but it doesn't work.

State funding sounds good too, but I think it's also a loser. If the state puts up some money for five jumpers they would want five jumpers ALL the time, thus creating a hoarding situation. I think federal jumpers are available to states through agreements right now, but states don't call jumpers because they are too expensive for weenie state

budgets—except California which has plenty of money for plenty of their own non-jumper forces. In Alaska the state has funded about 12 jumpers for years ... a direct payment of 300K from state to BLM when I was up there ... 1985 ... and they put pressure on BLM to hold those jumpers in state when the lower 48 was crying for jumpers ... the fabled hostage loads. Standing by for weeks in the rain while the rest of the crew was down south jumping many fires.

I think you're right ... the dispatch system is broken ... and probably never did function correctly ... and there is NO talk of fixing it or of modifying or improving it ... the disregard and denial of the dispatch problem is akin to disregard and denial of the failed IA performance ... they

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JERRY HOWE
President

(480) 505-0125 OFFICE
(480) 797-9279 CELL

JERRY.HOWE@GOBIII.COM

GOBI INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS, INC.
8095 N. 85TH WAY • SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85258 • WWW.GOBIIII.COM

(Cave Junction '65)

Printing Publishing Editing Layout



HEIDELBERG
GRAPHICS

LARRY S. JACKSON

2 STANSBURY COURT, CHICO, CA 95928
PHONE/FAX 530-342-6582 TOLL-FREE 800-342-1845

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Scott Warner

7008 Hermosa Way
Redding, California USA 96002-9746
Tel: 1-530-226-9333
Tel/Fax: 1-530-226-9950
E-mail: swar@jps.net

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John C. Helmer, CFA
President

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(Cave Junction '48)

just don't want to look at their own deep flaws ... it's impossible for them to admit that their huge house is built upon such a shaky, weak and neglected foundation. **Steve Nemore** (RAC '69)

My White Paper "Biscuit Fire Chronology—An Analysis" has been transmitted to Dale Bosworth, Chief USFS, and to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

My intel indicates that the paper has been distributed through the Fire Control Division to as far as the bottom of the food chain in the WO. In addition, I received a phone call from a staffer on the Senate Committee yesterday. We had a long discussion and I have since sent my entire body of writing to the committee last night. There is a high probability that I will be called to testify before the Committee some time this spring. **Chuck Mansfield** (CJ '59)

I have followed the accounts of the 2002 fire season with great interest and equal disbelief! I date back to the "Smokey Bear Era" of fire fighting when we fought and put out every fire. We got to every fire early, usually when it was just a recent lightning strike and almost always before it spread to over ten acres. An old Forest Service friend from the 1940s at Winthrop/NCSB wrote at Christmas time that the 30 Mile loss of four firefighters had so paralyzed the Forest Service in the area that they could no longer organize to fight fire effectively. Your account of the Biscuit fire demonstrates that this is a visiting general phenomenon. Let us hope that the message gets through and the Forest Service resumes using smokejumpers and fighting fire the way we have done it in the past. **Wallace "Pic" Littell** (MSO '44)

I very much enjoyed the April issue of *Smokejumper*. I don't know if it was a change in the substance of the magazine, or just that I had more free time than usual, but I found myself giving the publication a more thorough reading than usual. As I prepare to teach a fall class at Colo. State in Fire Management, I found myself going through many of the articles with highlighter in hand. **Geoff Butler** (RDD '97)

It seems that the people who know what is wrong with the system and how to do things right are either retired or in "lowly" smokejumper or jumper-like positions. It is undesirable for many to come out of the field but we need to get some people in key places like coordination centers to start making changes. Big fire is big business. There is definitely an industry lobby in Washington and contracting is often mandated these days. The high costs on large fires are not being spent on the government firefighters. If you look at what is charged for equipment and contractor services, you can see the economic impact that would occur if we did not have large fires. I just looked today and a 1-1/2" gated "Y" now costs \$172. **Ashley Sites** (WYS '98)

You have taken the NSA magazine to a new level—a quantum leap forward. The magazine is not just about jumper history. It has become a vocal advocate for the entire smokejumper program. **Jerry Dixon** (MYC '71)

With reference to the April '03 issue, and the "Readers Response" to initial attack on wildfires, I think Jon Klingel (CJ '65) hit the nail on the head with his observation. The key to what kind of initial attack should be used is dictated by the BURNING CONDITIONS at the time the fire is discovered. During times of HIGH AND EXTREME burning conditions (the obvious case in SW Oregon last summer), the fastest initial attack possible should always be used. In remote and roadless areas this scenario most always means requesting Smokejumpers—an action which should appear in writing on pre-planned dispatch cards. The Biscuit fire is a perfect example of what can happen when this proven fire suppression tactic is not adhered to. Someone on the Siskiyou N.F. should be held personally accountable for the inept dispatch decisions made with regard to attacking the Biscuit fire. Of course we all know that ACCOUNTABILITY is not a well understood concept in the F.S.—especially when it is not the politically correct thing to do. **Ken Hessel** (MYC '58) 🐼

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

CLARENCE 'JIM' RABIDEAU

AFTER SERVING IN THE NAVY from 1944 to 1947, Jim rookied in 1949 at North Cascades with his brother, Phil. He graduated from Eastern Washington University with a B.A. in political science in 1949 and from the University of Washington with an LLB in 1955.

The Navy recalled Jim when the Korean War broke out and he spent 1950 to 1952 in Japan and Korea. Back home, he practiced law until 1963 when he was elected county prosecuting attorney and served in that position until 1986. Jim noted that he also served as coroner during that same time. He retired in February 1986 from the Navy Reserve after 42 years and then in December of 1986 from practicing law. He writes that he learned to fly for the Navy in a Stearman Texan and a Twin Beach but didn't get his wings, a sore (bleep) point.

Over the years he has been a board member of the Franklin County Historical Society, a precinct committeeman, and the area chairman for Washington State Committee Employer Support of Guard and Reserve.

Jim remembers with "fondness" old smokejumpers such as: **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB '39), **Jim Allen** (NCSB '46), **Lee Kahler** (NCSB '46), **Roy Goss** (NCSB '46), **Chet Putnam** (NCSB '52), **Dean Sutherland** (NCSB '49) and **Elmer Neufeld** (CJ '52), plus a host of others. "I remember jumping chutes packed by **David "Skinny" Beals** (MYC '45) and **Joe Buhaly** (NCSB '47). I especially remember my jump partners, brother **Phil** (NCSB '49), **Ed Mays** (NCSB '51), **Stan Tsunoda** (NCSB '53) and **Bryon Keesler** (NCSB '54)."

Jim can be reached at: 732 W Henry St, Pasco, WA 99302. 🐼

Since my cover-to-cover reading of the January issue of *Smokejumper*, I have spent a great deal of time thinking about your editorial, the comments it generated and the article that was written by Jerry Schmidt. I have also just finished reading and considering your proposed editorial for the April issue of *Smokejumper*. My thoughts have focused on one main theme and several sub-themes, which I'd like to share with you.

First of all, where do editorials such as yours take the NSA and its members, and is that where the officers and members want the organization to be? I've asked myself these questions, but I'm not sure my answer is the answer for the organization. You are a very intelligent man, and you know that seldom is an editorial intended to express the opinion only of the organization or of the editor of the organization's publication. Most often, as seems to be the case here, the editorial expresses an opinion and subtly, or not so subtly, calls for the involvement of readers who share in the expressed opinion. I am certainly in favor of including thought-provoking articles in *Smokejumper*, but I am not sure we function within our charter and bylaws when those articles appear to be a call to action that has a strong likelihood of generating letters and calls to elected officials at several levels of government. I believe there is a need for some type of officer or director oversight on editorials we as an organization publish. In some form, this will ensure that the right people have made conscientious decisions on opinions we share in our publication.

Secondly, I wonder if, when we do editorialize in *Smokejumper*, we have a moral obligation to provide enough factual information so that readers can develop broad enough perspectives on the issues to display objectivity in the positions they take and the actions they suggest. I believe that most of our members are much like me in that they fought fires 20 to 40 years ago. We see ourselves as having been the best-trained, best-conditioned, most motivated fighters of wildland fires. We were good; heck, we were the best. This assessment, however, is based on what was back then, whenever that was. It is my belief that many of us have not stayed adequately involved over the years and perhaps, just perhaps, we need to improve our knowledge base in order to evaluate what is happening today and offer truly constructive criticism. When we use dated experience and perspectives to judge things that are happening right now, we run the risk of appearing personally and organizationally less than objective.

I'll use one primary example to illustrate this point. The term "aggressive firefighting," and the suggestion that it is no longer the direction of our fire policy, can be misleading. I don't think there has been any change in the policy that says we will fight fire aggressively but provide for safety

first. This has always made sense. What *has* changed, however, is what is considered the appropriate balance between aggressiveness and providing for safety. It seems that each time we have loss of life on fires, we do investigations and develop action plans intended to avoid recurrence. One major outcome of the 30 Mile incident has been an increased focus on personal accountability with regard to crew safety. During the 2002 fire season, the 30 Mile Action Plan was cussed and discussed repeatedly. Members on each of my incident-management teams had twists of their own with respect to what the plan meant and how they would comply. There was never any question about the need to understand the plan and comply, but it suddenly seemed as if terms often thought of as having only one meaning were all at once subject to interpretation. We realized the situation had become more complex than ever. Hence, when we say, "Fight fire aggressively or disengage the crew," there is need to consider new information as we form our opinions on the good, the bad and the ugly.

I think all agencies that have roles in wildland-fire suppression believe as you do that initial attack is the absolute best way to minimize costs, exposure to risks, etc. The statistics I have seen indicate that we make successful initial attacks on a very high percentage of the starts. Buried in the numbers, however, are undoubtedly situations in which it was not possible to manage safety risks and also make what most of us might consider appropriate, timely initial attacks. When we see a specific case where a timely initial attack was not made, I think it is quite appropriate to ask questions, as you did with regard to the Biscuit fire. I also believe that you should be able to get honest answers to your questions. On the other hand, when we don't feel we have been given honest answers, I don't think it follows that we should take license to advance the opinion that many aspects of fire suppression are way out of whack. If we criticize, let's do it with objectivity, which means evaluating things in the proper context. Personally, I want NSA and its members to be interested and involved in wildland-fire issues, credible in their critiques of fire-suppression issues and appreciative of many current and former firefighters who have done or are doing their best to perform their jobs effectively, efficiently and most of all safely. If we must criticize, let's be as specific as possible. Let's not risk unintended hits on friendly forces by using saturation bombing techniques. 🙏

Upcoming Reunions
NSA ... June 18–20, '04, Missoula

... Counterpoint

by Jim Veitch (Alaska Smokejumpers)

SMOKEJUMPER
Special Topic Discussion

I appreciate the author's participation in a public discussion on fire-policy issues. I find such compliance ironic, however, given the fact that the ideas asserted seem to amount to an attack on a free and open exchange of ideas.

I do not agree with the notion that tax-exempt organizations should forfeit their right to participate in the democratic process. Tax-exempts have some limits on their political activity, but they are not prohibited from addressing issues important to the country. This is called participatory democracy and is one of the ways Americans make their thoughts known to their government representatives.

I disagree with the assertion that any editorial critical of fire management or policy should undergo review by "the right people." I'm quite confident NSA directors read *Smokejumper*, and they must think Chuck is within reason, because they continue to let him bring us interesting and exciting editorials. I happen to be glad *Smokejumper* is not a forum for group-think. Being a smokejumper has always meant being independent and having an opinion. That's one reason non-jumpers dislike us.

The current editorial process is working well. There is no "saturation bombing" happening, because *Smokejumper* op-ed pieces are always offset by articles, reader comments and other features. To achieve this balance, Chuck goes to great lengths to solicit member input and reaction. Members have always been encouraged to contribute letters and articles so their opinions can be heard. This letter, and the one that sparked it, are good examples.

Why should the editorial policy stay as is? Simple. Editorials constitute a form of free speech important to democratic involvement in government. Good editorials provoke thought and action; that's what they are meant to do. A good editorial builds on facts and synthesizes them into a coherent picture. Facts are often like pieces in those extra-hard jigsaw puzzles, where the parts can be put together in more than one way. Assembling the facts in various ways can change the picture. An editorial writer

assumes the reader is intelligent enough to follow an argument and make a judgment based on that argument. The writer has a moral obligation to be honest but is free to supply facts as needed to support a given argument. A demand for "objectivity" is nothing more than a demand for politically correct thought. To paraphrase Arthur Koestler in *Darkness at Noon*, "Truth is what is useful to the Forest Service; falsehood is what is harmful."

I also take issue with the view that smokejumpers are not "adequately involved" or don't have the proper "knowledge base" to participate in debates on the pages of this magazine. Using such criteria, 99.99% of the American public should be barred from criticizing fire policy, because they don't have current fire line credentials. Furthermore, only the Forest Service would be qualified to comment on the Forest Service.

Perhaps the best argument to counter the author's views on objectivity concerns the very 30 Mile Action Plan he or she invokes to illustrate the complex new fire-policy situation. The writer argues that old-timers had it easy with clear rules like "fight fire aggressively" and "provide for safety first." Under the new fire policy, the author asserts, "the appropriate balance between aggressiveness and providing for safety" has changed over time. But even the author argues that nobody knows for sure what the plan means and how to best comply. Today, firefighters have endless discussions about the meaning of simple directions. They are confused about "the balance," but they know they must comply and get it right. If they get it wrong, they know who's on the hook and who's off. A "policy" that can mean virtually anything is pernicious, because personal accountability becomes subject to any expedient interpretation. This is straight out of Kafka.

Where can thinking like this lead? In February, the Forest Service announced it had secretly (yes, secretly!) charged, tried, convicted and sentenced 11 employees for activities related to the 30 Mile Fire fatalities. Neither the families of the deceased nor the wider fire community were told anything. This is the type of justice meted out by the Soviets in the 1930s. Readers should reflect on the morality of demanding "objectivity" given the ambiguity inherent to some of the policies currently in place.

Fire policy and management in America is in crisis. Hundreds of millions of dollars are going up in smoke each year not because of line firefighters, but because of fire-management structure and national fire policy. Agencies might believe in the efficacy of initial attack, but in the world of initial attack, you are judged by your losses, not your wins. When you lose one that costs \$170 million, the public has a right to be concerned. And *Smokejumper* has every right, even a duty, to provide leadership. 🧑‍🔥

Add this Photo to Your Collection

NSA Life Member **John Helmer** (RDD '59) donated copies of this color photo taken



by **Jerry Schmidt** (CJ '62) to the NSA. The photo is printed on odd-size Fuji Pictro paper which will trim to make an outstanding display in a standard 8 x 10 frame. This picture is the cover shot of the NSA video *Firefighters from the Sky*.

\$15.00 covers shipping/handling. Use merchandise order form when ordering the "Jumper in a Tree" shot.

In recent editorials and articles in Smokejumper magazine, I (Chuck Sheley) have been expressing my dissatisfaction with current fire management in the area of smokejumper use and money spent on mega-fires. I've called for members to become actively involved in the political process. Some have suggested that I am overstepping my bounds with these pieces. It's been suggested that there ought to be editorial oversight while others say that editorial opinion should be free of oversight. The question e-mailed out to members for this issue is:

Should the Board of Directors approve the editorial opinion of *Smokejumper* magazine before being published?

You have written some of the most original and thought provoking material ever published in the magazine. Strong editorial opinion often provokes a healthy dialogue. I do, however, think that the magazine has matured enough to necessitate a little more professional management. You should protect yourself by either clearly stating that it is your opinion, or getting the approval of the Board. The Board's approval should not be for individual pieces, but instead should give the editor a general box/position from which you can write. CYA Chuck and keep up the good work. **Jim Damitio** (RAC '69)

I'm not on the Board but I will say I have liked the Editorial latitude that you have. I have especially liked the content of the magazine when it comes to features and opinions. You have this contributor's vote of confidence. **Jim Buden** (MSO '73)

Ibelieve that Ron Stoleson, at least, should review such opinion pieces before they're published. **Carl Gidlund** (MSO '58)

Absolutely not. The board should entrust the duty to an editor, and if dissatisfied, should choose another editor. Writing and editing by committee is a horrible and cumbersome process, and results in soft-pedaled pieces of no interest to anyone. The point is to have discussion of important topics, not just to publish pablum that no one can object to. **Grant Beebe** (NIFC '90)

There should **not** be before the fact editorial review. If, however, the Editor steps outside of reasonable bounds and is not within the general goals and objectives of the Board of Directors, an **after** the fact review by the Board, then he/she may be subject to some action. **Don Hertzog** (MYC '48)

This is the Republic of The United States of America, the land of personal freedoms; chief among those freedoms

is freedom of speech. So, Chuck, not only do I have expectations of you, which I support, I think I'm in a position to demand your best.

That's what I'm getting and that's what I want. **DeWayne Davis** (MYC '53)

It totally support the editor of NSA *Smokejumper* magazine to express his opinion with current fire and smokejumper use. Any jumper who disagrees with the editor would be given space to state his/her case. The present editor has taken the magazine to a new level. If we want to be relevant to current smokejumpers then the best way is to be involved and that means being willing to take a stand. While I don't always agree with the editor, I would defend his right to say what he thinks. That is one aspect I always respected of my jumper buddies, they had no qualms telling you what they thought. **Jerry Dixon** (MYC '71)

Ienjoy the reading, don't agree with each and every finite point or sub-conclusion but do on the broader important points you have made, keep it up. ... I REALLY ENJOY READING THE MAGAZINE. **Arlen Cravens** (RDD '78)

Ishare each issue of "The Smokejumper" with friends at work. I call it the last bastion of free thought. I enjoy reading all of the articles and gain a little from each different perspective. I believe that "diversity of thought" is what truly makes us strong. The inherent confidence and assuredness of the smokejumpers is in part the basic foundation for this "diversity of thought." We should never be intimidated by it; rather, we should embrace it. **Karl Brauneis** (MSO '77)

Isee no need for another layer of approval for articles going into the magazine. Cannot say it any clearer. The articles are straightforward and appear to be on track. **Larry Boggs** (RDD '63)

Ibelieve that you should keep up the good work. I happen to agree with you on the fire management, but the editorials also gives those who don't an incentive to express their opinion. I personally believe that all wildfires should be met with quick IA with the objective of putting it out as quickly as possible. We should not confuse the management of IA with diverse objectives. Their mission should be to get it out—period. If it grows to one of these monsters all fire management involved should be held accountable. **Jimmie Dollard** (CJ '52)

Ifeel that as long as the articles are not libelous and have accurate information, they should be printed. However, once or twice on a particular topic ought to be enough. **Steve Carlson** (IDC '62)

Editorial opinions in the NSA magazine should definitely be free of Board oversight. The Board should not be in the business of censoring/approving/disapproving editorial comments unless they are scandalous, defamatory, pornographic, or something similar in nature. **Fred Cooper** (NCSB '62)

Editorials are written by editors, right? Isn't that what he is getting the big bucks for? **Fred Donner** (MSO '59)

We may be missing a major mission for the organization since we so far haven't been engaged as a group in the issue of today's fire management and especially initial attack doctrine. I think the issue should be an agenda item for the BOD to consider "lobbying" for changes to fire management. **Dave Bennett** (MSO '61)

If you waited for the Board to okay everything, you'd never have a chance to print anything. People can continue to respond if they disagree. I read every article, and enjoy the magazine immensely. **Ted Dethlefs** (MSO '47)

I think your editorial opinions have been "right on" and I would like to see them continue. If the Board wants to make the magazine more PC each member should be willing to contribute an article for each issue to insure a diversity of opinion. **Wally Henderson** (MSO '46)

Stick to your guns ... you have some good points that need to be looked at. This is a jumper forum for jumpers not an official government agency. **Mike Hill** (WYS '95)

I would hate to think your thoughts were turned into a camel, which I recently heard described as a horse made by committee. **Jerry Howe** (CJ '65)

Go for it! If there are other issues, the other folks can respond; makes for a fair mix. **Tom Decker** (IDC '64)

Effort on the subject of government waste in direct attack of wildfire is right on. Now we have "rules of engagement" for fires. It makes more sense just to get your butt up there and put them out. **Brad Hughes** (NCSB '86)

Editorializing is just that and your opinion, not necessarily the opinion of the board members or of the membership in general. **Doug Houston** (RAC '73)

I was particularly impressed with your last two editorials. A good editorial stimulates interest and discussion. Yours are accomplishing this. Our Assoc. has the responsibility to not only support the FS Smokejumper program but also to provide constructive criticism when warranted. Professional FS leaders should recognize this and welcome input from our Assoc. **Don Dayton** (MSO '48)

Oft hand, I'd say "yes" there should be some sort of "peer" review. But then again, it depends on the membership of the Board, if individual members have, in fact been responsible for, actively participated in, and have credibly "demonstrated performance" in Command positions with large "campaign" fire organizations. **Bill Buck** (CJ '53)

The editor should have the option of expressing opinions freely as long as other members of NSA have the privilege of responding, and those responses being presented in subsequent issues of the magazine. **Dick Flaharty** (Missoula '44)

I think an editor should be free to state his opinion on any subject without anyone's okay as long as he makes it clear that it is his opinion. An author of a "letter to the editor" can give an opinion with little knowledge of the subject and get away with it, but an editor is looked at as representing someone or something. And, in my opinion—if brains were dynamite, some USFS fire people couldn't blow a panama hat off a piss ant. **Al Boucher** (CJ '49)

I read editorials all the time and would much prefer that the comment is the product of the writer and not the consensus of a review board. Let's not complicate the magazine by awkwardly attempting to make it "Politically Correct." **Bob Graham** (MSO '52)

I believe it would be wise to have editorial oversight through a small group of people who would commit to reviewing editorials and controversial articles in an impartial manner, and who would be dedicated to ensuring an equal voice to all members and in some cases to nonmembers who may represent the opposing view. **John Culbertson** (FBX '69)

With specific reference to the April 2003 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine, I think you did a great "Andy Rooney" kind of non-partisan editorial on legitimate issues of firefighter's/SmokeJumper's concern. As far as I'm concerned Chuck, keep it up. **George Harpole** (MSO '49)

I don't think that it should be "approved" per se—however, I think it ought to be run thru a group sensitive to variables. **Mike Apicello** (CJ '78)

Oversight committee, I think not. As the managing editor of the *Smokejumper* you have every right to express your personal opinions/view points in the publication—as does every other member of the NSA. Members need to keep in mind the line printed in every edition of the magazine under the table of contents; i.e., "The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA."

Keep up the good work Chuck. Your leadership in getting the *Smokejumper* published and distributed is much appreciated. **Ken Hessel** (MYC '58)

I think the hallmark of a professional publication is an editorial policy that seeks to speak for the producing organization—in this case NSA. Since this is a publication of our association, I believe it should reflect the beliefs of the greater organization rather than reflect the views of individual members. For what it's worth, I would hazard a guess that the members support your position regarding fire management and use of smokejumper assets. **Terry Egan** (CJ '65) 🍄

Hoarding Jumpers—Are They a National Resource?

by Steve Nemore (Redmond '69)

I started to write about hoarding and the dispatch system and found that I don't have any specific knowledge of how the system is supposed to work. I don't have any manuals that describe the processes for ordering jumpers, the correct method of determining when to send jumpers, or the proper dispersal proportion of the limited jumper numbers. I don't have those manuals because I don't think they exist. I think the national coordination of the use of jumpers is fragmented. Each Regional Coordination Center (dispatch) has control of their own jumpers and is free to do with them as they will. Therefore, sending jumpers outside their own region/area is totally their own decision. There is NO big general or joint chief of staff that adjudicates/coordinates the best use of the limited amount of jumpers. If there is interregional movement it is done for their own reasons ... there is no "higher power" that issues orders to the regions. The closest they come to real national direction is a National MAC group (Multi Agency Coordinating group). Which is convened only when the national activity level reaches 4 or 5 ... I think! Absent the MAC group, the regions and GACCs (Geographic Area Coordination Centers) operate autonomously and send their resources out of their area, for their own reasons. Some examples of why a GACC may send resource out of their own control.



Steve Nemore (NSA file)

—They are "fat" (have enough for their own fire conditions) and can afford to send the excess.

—The GACC manager knows and trusts the receiving GACC manager and can expect resources to be returned when needed.

—The sending GACC owes a favor to the receiving GACC.

There are probably lots of petty, personal, political reasons why a GACC would NOT send requested jumpers. I'm not sure if the GACC has to have a justification as to why they don't send requested jumpers, but I'm sure they could make up something. Again, there is NO national direction on this. And, again, I don't have written documentation that this is the way it works, but it's my perception and experience that there is no cohesion and set policy as to how to use jumpers nationally ... it's a free-form system, functioning erratically, based upon personal and political associations.

I have, and plenty of other jumpers have, experiences of standing by at an airport, with nothing in the region going on, and knowing that another region is screaming for jumper boosters. We are standing by knowing of fire action elsewhere, thusly, being Hoarded. We know this because we have cell phones and jumpers have friends at all the bases ... we talk on our level and know what is going on. And what is going on is often stupid and an ineffective use of jumpers nationally. 🙄

Smokejumper History/Yearbook Makes Good Impression

by Don Dayton (Missoula '48)

I just received my copy of the *Smokejumpers History* yearbook. It is a "Gem," well worth the wait. Kudos to all the Association volunteers who participated in the collection and assembly of this fine historic document. It is a well-written, excellent publication and something that I will treasure to hand down to my grandchildren. I



Don Dayton (Courtesy Don Dayton)

urge all those interested in smokejumper history to be sure and order one of the remaining copies available.

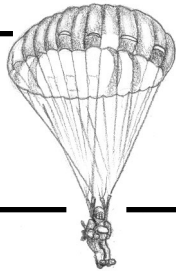
To me, the book brings back many memories of the late '40s, some good and some sad. The recount of the disastrous Mann Gulch fire particularly hit home. As a rookie at Camp Nine Mile in 1948, I viewed the first page of the book with particular sadness as it reviewed the death list of the Mann Gulch fire. Of the eleven that died, five were with us in 1948. Bill Hellman was our squad leader in 1948 as he was in the disastrous fire. I remember in our evening bull sessions in 1948 how he missed his young wife to whom he had been married a short time. Little did he know then that he would only be with her less than a year.

Wag Dodge was our foreman in 1948 and he was on the Mann Gulch fire. I had great respect for Wag. It was sad to read the account in the history book, as one of the few fire survivors, the devastating affect the fire experience had on him. I often wonder if I had not been required to attend Air Force Summer Camp in 1949, I might have been there on that fire.

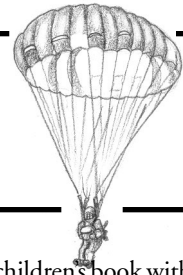
The happy memories include the photos of the training and particularly the old Johnson Ford Tri-Motor planes that we jumped. I remember sitting in the plane waiting to jump while viewing "daylight" between the corrugated metal skin panels as the aircraft flexed in rough air. The pilots would do a "stall" with those fantastic aircraft just before the jump to slow them down.

As the book outlines, 1948 experienced a relatively wet summer with few fires. As a student from a Midwest college, I was able to stay later in the season than most jumpers. Consequently, a late season flare-up of fires enabled several of us to get our fire jumps over in the Idaho primitive areas.

The "Special Stories" section in the book brings out some of the hairy tales. The article, "Nickles in the River of No Return," brings back memories of my jump into the Salmon River area. It was a quick trip in and a long hard trip out. 🙄



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

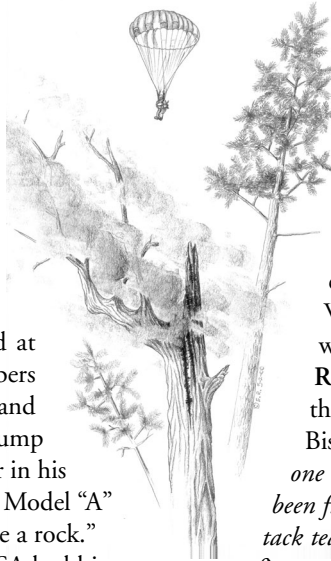
I really get some great business cards from members that cross my desk. One from **Tony Percival** (NCSB '54) titled "Ancient Order of the Dinosaur" shows that Tony is still active in fire dispatching every summer as an "AD" (emergency type) employee. The great artwork on one from **David Provencio** (MSO '77) shows Dave with the USFS as a fire operation specialist out of Ogden, Utah.

Although the Ford Tri-Motor was not stationed at Cave Junction, **Don Wallace** (CJ '49) remembers that one landed at the Gobi one day and he and another jumper were able to take a practice jump from it. Don says two things still remain clear in his mind about the Tri-Motor: "It sounded like a Model 'A' and there was no prop blast—we dropped like a rock."

Ed Courtney (MSO '58) mentioned that the NSA had hit a milestone. Ed said that when the NSA started, a bunch purchased 10-year memberships so that the organization would have enough money to get things going. Since Ed was notified that his membership was due, we know that the NSA has made it through those ten years and is going strong. Go NSA!!

One of the big advantages of a good Web site is the ability to bring people from outside the jumper community into contact with the NSA. Last December I received an e-mail asking about a **Malcolm "Monty" Montgomery** (MSO '56) and if I knew anything about his death. In checking the NSA database I found that we did not have a first name listed for the Montgomery who jumped from Missoula in 1956 and that he was listed as one of those jumpers for whom we had no address. We now have the following details: "Ensign 'Monty' Malcolm C. Montgomery was a young 'Utility Squadron One' pilot whose F9F disappeared at sea on March 17, 1959, while off Oahu, Hawaii, on a training mission."

Got an e-mail that was just a tad late for the April issue. Associate member **Chris Demarest** had just been notified that his book *Smokejumpers One To Ten* has been included by the Children's Book Council (CBC) in their list of Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People 2003! The titles selected for this year's list will be displayed at the NCSS Annual Conference in Chicago, Ill. Chris has been featured several times in *Smokejumper* and is a very successful artist/author of children's books. He is responsible for much of the artwork that we have in the magazine and we are fortunate to have him as an associate member willing to help the NSA. His mention of the NSA on his book is giving us much name recognition around the U.S. If you do not have a copy of *Smokejumpers One To Ten*, ask at



your local bookstore. It is a children's book with some great artwork.

Last winter **Jim Ward** (MSO '46) contacted me and wanted to forward my op-ed piece on the Biscuit fire to his nephew who edits *AG Life* magazine that reaches 23,000 homes in the western U.S. "How The West Was Lost" was printed in the January 2003 issue. We now have expanded our audience by a considerable number. When will Initial Attack become a priority with the wildland fire management?

Roy Wagoner (NCSB '61) forwarded me a piece from the Grants Pass, Ore., paper concerning last summer's Biscuit fire: "*Experienced fire managers agree that had one of the Siskiyou forest's 20-member ground crews not been fighting fire in New Mexico and a regional aerial attack team not been fighting fire in Colorado, the five small fires now known as the Biscuit fire probably would not have merged into Oregon's largest blaze in 137 years.*"

Still no mention that available smokejumpers would have had a **better** chance to stop those fires and they weren't used. 70+ smokejumpers were shown available in the system during that time. Are they so well "hidden" that they don't enter the minds of the dispatchers? Why is the USFS talking around this point?

Paul Ross, who writes "Fire Aviation News" for *Wildland Firefighter* magazine gave us a good plug in the February edition: "The National Smokejumper Association does an outstanding job of preserving its history, legacy and keeping up with former jumpers. The recent issue of *Smokejumper* magazine was filled with 56 pages of fire fighting stories old and new, updates on jumpers engaged in unique work and individual base updates. Other groups in the wildland fire fighting business can take lessons from NSA's fine example and at the same time bring needed pride to what you do."

When **Karl Brauneis** (MSO—wrote the article on the 10 standard fire orders for *Smokejumper* magazine (October 2001), **Mike Apicello** (CJ '78) picked up on it and sent it to every agency director, staff, and to the world. "Now finally, we are going back to the original order. NWCG made the change."

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) was established in January 1974 to expand operational cooperation and coordination between the Department of Agriculture and Interior and the National Association of State Foresters. Just another example of how effective the NSA can be in letting our voices be heard and how that word can be spread with this magazine.

Another "small world" bit from **Starr Jenkins** (CJ '48). In the Baldwin-Wallace College (Berea, Ohio) alumni magazine

there was a mention of a recently published one-act play by Starr. It was called *Man of Steel: A Smokejumper Drama*. That put Starr into contact with retired B-W College economics Professor **Albert L. Gray** (CJ '45). In August of 1943, Albert was in a 14-jump season with the CPS-103 unit in SW Oregon and had never heard of B-W College. At the same time, Starr was starting the Navy V-12 officer training program at B-W College and had never heard of smokejumping. Starr went on to become an English professor at Cal Poly, San Louis Obispo. After 60 years two smokejumpers who jumped at the same base/different time, meet due to a small blurb in an alumni magazine.

Good to hear that the foreign mailing of the magazine is arriving on a timely basis. **Gary Romness** (MSO '62) e-mails from Norway: "A big barrel of thanks for your sending the *Smokejumper* magazine. That, *National Geographic* and *Montana* magazines are all read from cover to cover at least two times before going into my library."

Good to hear from **Dayton Grover** (MSO '55) who wrote a short note with his membership dues: "Having people contact me, which would not have happened without the NSA, is a great feeling of reconnection with a unique experience which I've never forgotten." Dayton is living in Edina, Mo.

Jay Anderson (MYC '53) has recently changed careers. Jay owned a successful civil engineering company since 1959 and has recently turned the business over to his son. Jay is now a hunting outfitter and guide in Utah and living in Ogden.

Jeff Dobbins (NIFC '78) forwarded an interesting bit of trivia: Name one high school that produced four smokejumpers all from the same class (1975). The high school was Marana High School in Arizona and the smokejumpers were: Jeff Dobbins, Mike Guinn, Gene Manzer and Erik Thorsrud. Although not the same year in school, Chico High School in California has produced at least seven people who went on to jump: **Chuck Sheley** (CJ '59), **Jim Linville** (MSO '69), **Jim Gerber** (MSO '77), **Darren Marshall** (MYC '90), **Pat Condon** (RAC '91), **Alison Cushman** (NIFC '93) and **Ivan Smith** (MSO '95).

Tom Kovalicky (MSO '61) passed along information that the Mitchell Monument in the Fremont N.F. has been added to the National Registry of Historic Places. It is in memory of the six members of the Mitchell family killed in May 1945 by one of the Japanese balloon bombs floated to the U.S. during WWII. 🇺🇸

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

BEN O. MUSQUEZ

BEN MUSQUEZ HAD BEEN in the Army for a year and a half when he first witnessed a parachute jump—just a few paratroopers jumping out of a DC-47 over a parade field at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. But right then and there, at age 18, he told his buddies, "I'm going Airborne."

In 1951 he joined Company "K," 3rd Battalion, 504th PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment), 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

When smokejumpers hit the silver screen in *Red Skies of Montana*, they captured Ben's attention. He loved his job in the Airborne Unit, but he decided to become a smokejumper. It was a long journey from Fort Bragg to Pasadena, California, where he worked as a Hotshot out of Oak Grove Ranger Station. He finally became a rookie smokejumper out of Missoula in 1956–57.

His seven practice jumps in 1956 were in Travel Air, Ford, Twin Beech and DC-3 aircraft. In 1957 he made two practice jumps in a 1957 Ford. His nine fire jumps were Nez Percé; North Star Creek, Region 5; Shasta; Barren Creek; Lolo; Oliver Creek, Region 4; Salmon National Forest; Bronco Creek; and Salmon-R-4 Pine Creek.

His stint as a "firefighter from the sky" was cut short when he broke his foot during a fire jump at Pine Creek off the Salmon River. Including military Airborne

and free falls, his jumps total 200.

Ben stayed active in the Montana Army Reserves, and in 1964 he worked his way into active duty. He volunteered to serve at Fort Polk, Louisiana, where he trained at the Drill Sergeant's Academy. He was a Drill instructor throughout the Vietnam conflict. He had three tours of duty: Vietnam 1968—Co. B, 3rd BN, 503rd, 173rd Airborne Brigade (SEP); 1969—Light Weapons advisor, MAT 102, TM 55, 4th Corp area, headquarters at Rach Gia; and 1971—Field 1st Sergeant, Co. C, 2nd BN, 1st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

During his last tour, he served as non-commissioned officer in charge, Range Control. Later he was operations sergeant for the Directorate of Plans, Training and Security of the Army Support Command in Hawaii. He also served at Fort Polk as operations sergeant, Recruiting and Retention Office. He was instrumental in recruiting for the 5th Inf. Div. (Mech.) during the phasing out of the Infantry Training Center and the formation of Fort Polk into the home of the 5th Inf. Div.

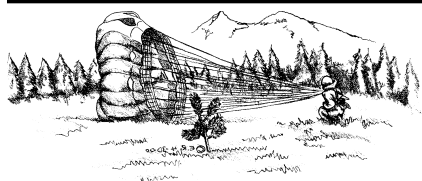
During Ben's 26 years of military service, he received many awards including the Combat Infantryman Badge, Senior Parachutist Badge, and the Bronze Star Medal with one oak leaf cluster.

Ben married his childhood sweetheart, Maria Rodriguez, in 1952, and together

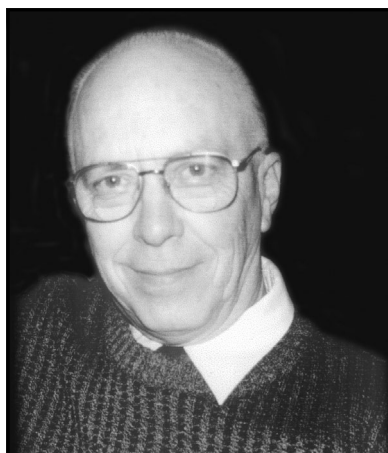
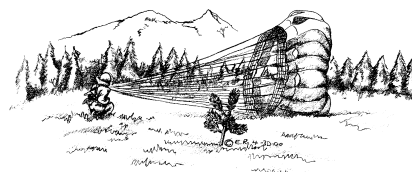


Ben Musquez (Courtesy Ben Musquez)

they raised six children: Angela Oliphant, a buyer for Hardline Division of Sales Directorate, AAFES, Dallas; Raymond Musquez, marketing district manager, Atlanta; Gloria Musquez, assistant manager, AAFES, Dallas; Army Sgt. Lydia McGuinness, Fort Hood, TX; Melisa Musquez, customer representative with USAA, San Antonio; and Army Sp4. Ruben Musquez, deceased. Ben and Maria live in D'Hanis, Tex., and can be reached by e-mail at: Bme-8armyret@awesome net.net. 🇺🇸



Checking the Canopy



by Rev. William (Bill) Bull
(McCall '64)
Final Jump

I FELT A SENSE OF ANTICIPATION as I went to bed late on that early summer night. Lightning had been flashing across the sky towards the rugged horizon to the east and north of the jumper base. Tomorrow was bound to be a good day in the eyes of any true red-blooded smoke-jumper!

The light of dawn had not even begun to paint the sky to the east the following morning when one of the squad leaders began making the rounds waking those of us who were high on the jump list and would be in the first planeload to be sent out. A short time later I was lacing up my Whites, making sure I had my Case knife attached to my belt, and was on my way out the door and headed for the mess hall.

A steady stream of jumpers were coming through the door, most of them stopping to grab a steaming cup of coffee and then filling their plates with generous helpings of ham and eggs and hash browns. Such a meal was not likely to be the good fortune for many of us over the course of the next several days.

There was an undercurrent of excitement as the jumpers wondered aloud where we might be going that

morning. How many fires were there? How large were they? How many of the jumpers would get to leap out the door of an aircraft before the day was over?

One of the squad leaders entered the mess hall and spoke. "C'mon guys. We have fires to get to!"

As the faint light of dawn began to chase the darkness away, men were scrambling into their jump suits, putting on harnesses and strapping parachutes onto their backs and chest. Pilots were doing the walk-around inspections of the several aircraft that would be used. Spotters were loading firepacks into a Douglas DC-3, a Turboporter and a Cessna 206. Moments later there was a throaty roar, a blast of air and the smell of high-octane aviation fuel as the engine on the right wing of the Doug came to life. In the background the whine of the powerful turbine in the Turboporter could be heard. The smell of burning jet fuel now mixed with the odors all of us had become accustomed to around such aircraft.

I was assigned to the Turboporter along with three other jumpers. The spotter began to check all our fittings and gear as we prepared to load into the plane. He said we were headed for a couple of small fires that had been reported to the northeast. In fact, it should be a relatively short flight of only 20 to 30 minutes.

Our aircraft was the first one ready to go and, in a short time, we were taxiing to the end of the nearby runway. The pilot completed his checks and the spotter looked over his shoulder at the four of us seated in the back. "Ready?" he yelled. We



gave him a thumbs-up and the pilot pushed the throttle forward. We began to accelerate down the runway and, seconds later, lifted from the ground and soared rapidly upward into the sky.

The pilot began a climbing turn to the northeast and we were soon lost in our own thoughts as we

watched the lights of town, still shrouded in the pre-dawn darkness, pass by below us. To the east we were now able to see the telltale signs of the coming dawn. The sky still contained some large buildups of clouds from the storms of the previous evening. Their color was just beginning to change from the slate gray of early morning to exhibit a hint of color as the sun continued its steady crawl towards the horizon.

Suddenly the spotter turned and yelled at us. "We've got a smoke!" he said, pointing forwards and off to our right. A short time later the pilot banked the plane sharply to the right and we craned our necks, trying to locate the smoke the spotter had called out.

There it was! A thin wisp of white winding up through the lodgepole pine that carpeted the ridge top below us. The smoke, spiraling nearly straight up into the sky, made it clear there was no wind to be concerned with this morning. Just north of the smoke was an area of low brush, the size of a baseball diamond that would make a nearly perfect jump spot. Hey! We were ready!

The spotter unbuckled his seat belt and shoulder harness and

twisted around, slipping between the pilot and spotter's seats, and into the back of the aircraft. He informed us that this fire was small enough that it only required two of us. That was all right with me. I would be jumping with an old-timer who was easy to get along with. The spotter gave us a map on which he had marked the location of the fire. Then he informed us that, after taking care of the fire, we should simply stay put until we received word to either pack out on foot to the nearest road or wait for a helicopter to return us to the base (We were already hoping it would be the latter!).

Minutes later, having made a pass over the small clearing to throw out streamers to confirm the absence of wind drift, my jump partner attached his static line to the cable in the aircraft and seated himself in the doorway, his feet resting on the step outside. The spotter gave several minor corrections to the pilot as we approached the spot and suddenly gave a shout and slapped my partner on the shoulder. He shoved himself out from the Turboporter and began to fall away towards the treetops far below, the static line pulling the D-bag and then the orange and white canopy out into the cool morning air.

As the pilot turned the plane to the right I hooked up my static line, double-checked my harness and fittings, cinching up the leg straps one more time, and prepared to slide into the doorway. On the downwind leg we could see my partner, drifting towards the small clearing. As we made the final turn, and just before the nose of the aircraft covered the clearing, I watched his feet disappear into the brush and his canopy begin to flutter to the ground.

The spotter signaled me to get in the door and I slid my legs out into the slipstream, my eyes beginning to water as I leaned out in an attempt to see the spot I was going to be trying to land in. There it was, gliding slowly towards us 1000 feet below. In moments the plane was directly over it. My heart was beating just a bit more rapidly than it had a

few minutes earlier and adrenaline was pumping through my veins. I could make out my partner far below getting out of his gear.

Suddenly there was a hard slap on my shoulder and the spotter yelled, "Go!" I stepped out into the windblast and began to fall away from the plane, hearing the shroud lines playing out behind me. There was a sharp "crack" as the canopy caught air and inflated. As I swung wildly back and forth several times, I looked up to see the bright orange and white of the canopy above me. What a beautiful sight! The sun had just broken over the horizon moments earlier and the parachute canopy was saturated in its light. The cacophony of noise which had surrounded me moments earlier was replaced with a deep silence, broken only by the quietly fading sound of the turbine engine on the Turboporter which now seemed to be miles away.

My gloved hands were already tightly grasping the steering lines as I made a wide turn and began my approach into the spot on the ridge top. It seemed only moments before the ground began to rush towards me with increasing speed. I made sure my feet were together and my knees flexed as I crashed into the low brush just a few feet away from my partner's collapsed parachute. My feet struck the ground and the next thing I knew I was laying in a heap with leaves sticking through my facemask. I rolled over and sat up, checking to make sure I was all right. I pulled the bright orange streamer out of the leg pocket of my jump suit so that I could lay it out in the shape of a large "L" to indicate to the spotter that I was safe.

My partner gave me a "thumbs up," and yelled to me, "Good jump!"

Smokejumpers are trained in a multitude of procedures with one of the major purposes in mind being able to arrive on the ground safely. When we stand in the door of the aircraft, awaiting the slap on the back of the leg or on the shoulder, we have committed our very lives to men and procedures that have our

safe arrival on the ground as the ultimate goal. Just a few of those are the instructors we have had during training, the pilots, the spotters and the person who may have packed our chutes. No matter how many times we stand in that door we always rely on the multitude of preparations that have been made beforehand to insure our safe arrival on the ground. From the very first time we leap out of an aircraft to that final jump of our career, our commitment to the integrity of many people remains consistent.

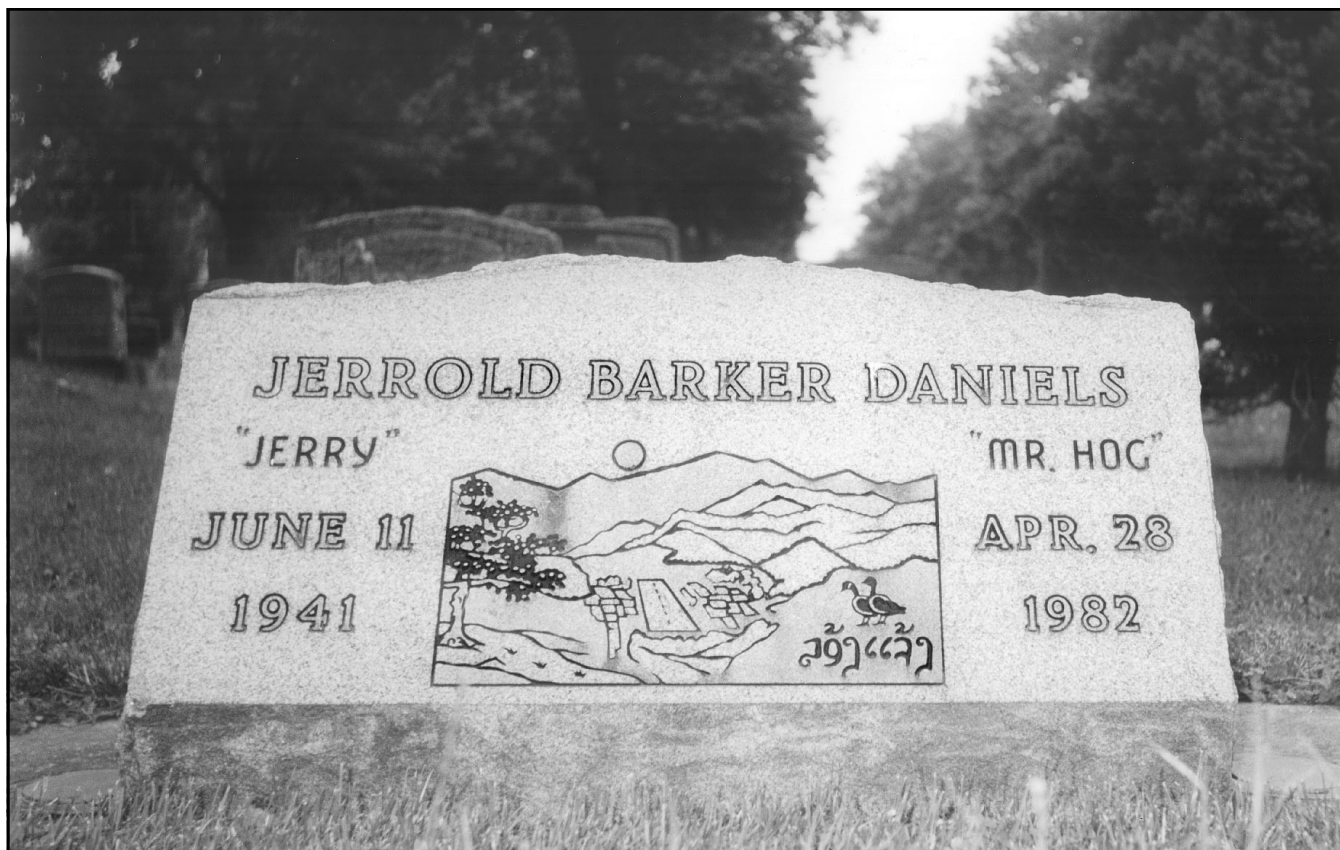
Let's think in another direction, for a moment. Our entire lives are filled with all manner of seemingly insignificant details which ultimately lead to that "final jump" we are destined to make. We cannot ignore it. It comes for all of us. It would be well for each of us to make sure we are prepared. In the Bible, we find these words in Hebrews 9:27, "... it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment, ..." And in Proverbs 16:3, these words, "Entrust your efforts to the Lord, and your plans will succeed."

Where have you placed your trust? Are you ready for that "final jump"? 🙏

Rev. Bill Bull jumped five seasons out of McCall, beginning in 1964. He spent more than 22 years with the Lewiston, Idaho, Police Department, retiring in 1993 to enter the ministry. He pastored in Cle Elum, Wash., for more than seven years and is now the pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Harrington, Wash., where he has been located since November 2001. He can be reached at: pastorbill@harrington-wa.com

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.



Jerry Daniels' Gravesite in Missoula (Courtesy Fred Donner)

A Missoula Smokejumper Won the Second, Third, and Fourth Highest Medals of the Central Intelligence Agency

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

Jerry Daniels (Missoula '58-'60) Remembered

When Jerry and I began rookie smokejumper training in June 1958, he had been 17 years old less than a week and was a rising senior at Missoula Sentinel High School. Two brothers had been Missoula jumpers (Danny '53 and Jack '54). "The Youngest Smokejumper" (January 2003 issue) noted that the late John Lewis made his first fire jump at 17 years, two months, and six days of age. With all due respect to John's memory, Jerry had made several fire jumps by that age. (I was one of three rookies who broke bones on practice jumps in 1958. Two of us repeated rookie training in 1959.)

Among the approximately 50 rookies in 1958, there were many colorful characters but Jerry stood out. He was very vocal about people of any kind who did not measure up to his own high work ethic standards. He was a railroad brakeman

while still in high school and was scathing in his denunciation of railroad union "featherbedding." He was also outspoken with his low opinion of college fraternities. Jerry thought the entire East Coast should be paved over. He helped his mother run a janitor business (named Death of Dirt) where he once cleaned up the aftermath of a shotgun suicide. A rodeo bull rider who talked about "ranch bums" a lot, Jerry was altogether not your ordinary teenager or even jumper and clearly destined for an eventful life.

I saw a lot of Jerry while I worked at Missoula on crutches in 1958. We jumped a 16-jumper fire together in California in 1959 and were both on a jumper-tanker crew on the Cleveland National Forest east of San Diego for several months late in 1959. He was both a high school state wrestling champion and chess champion. I occasionally beat him at chess in Cali-

fornia. (Not as dumb as I look, I knew better than to wrestle him.) He was a sore loser but I mean that as a compliment.

Jerry Daniels was the most mission-oriented, job-committed, task-driven individual I have ever known. His motto was "lead me, follow me, or get the hell out of the way." Jerry was not anti-authority but he was most definitely anti-bureaucratic. Nothing stood between him and completing the mission. Dedicated and hard-charging only begin to describe Jerry. These are not unusual smokejumper traits but he was an outstanding example. He was also one of the funniest and most irreverent people one could meet, combining humor and hard work. With Jerry, you busted your butt working while splitting your sides laughing.

While I was an Air Force lieutenant from 1960 to 1965 in Texas, Washington state, Taiwan, and Vietnam, I ran into smokejumpers in each location, especially Vietnam. I heard stories about Jerry and other jumpers, notably from Inter-mountain Aviation, a CIA operation, in Marana, Arizona. Some of the places mentioned were Bay of Pigs, Tibet, Arctic ice islands, Laos, and Thailand. Never sure what to believe about second-hand jumper stories, I thought some stories were just typical jumper equine feces, a common commodity in Missoula.

When I got out of the Air Force, I flew as aerial observer on the St. Joe National Forest in Idaho that summer, and was hired by Air America to be the traffic manager at Danang,

Vietnam. In November 1965, I went to Missoula to get on Northwest Airlines for Taipei, Taiwan. To our mutual astonishment, Jerry and I got on the same plane, Jerry headed for Laos. We flew out of Montana seated together (the flight attendant upgraded me to sit with Jerry in first class) celebrating old times while headed for new adventures. Alternating periods of work and study, he had graduated from the University of Montana in business.

Fast forward. In April 1982 I was a Foreign Service officer in the American Embassy in Manila, Philippines. One day I picked up the embassy message file and was dumbstruck to read that Jerry had just died of carbon monoxide poisoning in his apartment in Bangkok, Thailand.

A number of books over the last two decades talk about Jerry's spectacular CIA career in Laos after 1965. The circumstances of his death add an odd finale that could not have been invented for a novel.

Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992 by Jane Hamilton-Merritt (1993) has errors in it and was not well-received in some book reviews but it probably has more Jerry information than any other book. The frontispiece of *Sky Is Falling: An Oral History of the CIA's Evacuation of the Hmong from Laos* by Gayle L. Morrison (1999) dedicates the book—In Memory of Jerry "Hog" Daniels: June 11, 1941–April 28, 1982.

The Ravens: The Men Who Flew In America's Secret War In



(Courtesy Nick Holmes)

Laos by Christopher Robbins (1987) describes Jerry's career as the CIA's connection to General Vang Pao, the leader of the Hmong tribal army in Laos. *Back Fire: The CIA's Secret War in Laos and Its Link to the War in Vietnam* by Roger Warner (1995) covers much of the same story with lots of Jerry in it. This book was reissued in a slightly different version in 1996 titled *Shooting at the Moon: The Story of America's Clandestine War in Laos*.

Another book out under two titles is *Codename Mule* (1995 hardback) by James E. Parker, Jr., reissued in paperback in 1997 as *Covert Ops: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*. He refers to Jerry only as "Hog," Jerry's self-chosen call-sign, on numerous pages recounting Hog's actions but never by proper name.

That Jerry was "the most beloved of all the Americans by the Hmong" is a statement from the inside cover flap of *The CIA's Secret War in Laos—Shadow War* by Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison (1995) that sums up the various references to Jerry in the book. Oddly enough, Jerry is not in the book's index but is found on at least ten pages of the text.

One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam by Timothy N. Castle (1999) is an excellent investigative work that mentions Jerry briefly.

Harvesting Pa Chay's Wheat: The Hmong and America's Secret War in Laos by Keith Quincy (2000) at 600 pages seems to be the most exhaustive book to date on the war in Laos. Jerry is mentioned in some detail. By now, the astute reader has noticed that most of the books on Laos have "Secret War" in their titles, something of an oxymoron regarding Laos.

Between all these books mentioning Jerry and more books naming other jumpers in the CIA (see my bibliography article in the July 2002 issue), I learned that those smokejumper stories I heard in the Air Force were basically true. In *Project Coldfeet: Secret Mission to a Soviet Ice Station* by William M. Leary and Leonard A. LeSchack (1996), I read what Jerry had done in the Arctic. In 1962 an Intermountain Aviation B-17 with the Fulton Skyhook apparatus and a number of jumpers in the crew parachuted a Navy officer and an Air Force officer on to an abandoned Soviet ice station and gave them three days to sort out important intelligence material. (The Fulton Skyhook has two arms or "horns" extending from the nose of the aircraft that engage a 500-foot rope held aloft by a helium balloon and tethered on the ground to an object or person to be picked up.) The B-17 returned and picked up the intelligence material and officers in three passes. Jerry was the winch operator who brought the cargo and people on board. In 1963 the same aircraft with Jerry as winch operator picked up the body of an American scientist who died of a heart attack on a U.S. ice station. (See the April 1997 issue for extended details on both events.)

According to *Tragic Mountains* and *Sky Is Falling*, Jerry had been a "kicker" dropping cargo over Laos before 1965. *Tragic Mountains* adds that he had also flown numerous drop missions over Tibet. A jumper told me of accompanying Jerry on the first C-130 Tibet drop mission. (For more on Tibet, including many smokejumper names, see *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet* by Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, a 2002 book too late for my bibliography article last year. How many more "CIA Secret War" books are out there remains to be seen.)



L-R: Jack Daniels, Jerry Daniels 1974 (Courtesy Jack Daniels)

From late 1965, Jerry was a paramilitary officer (Hog or Mr. Hog) at Long Tieng, the headquarters of Vang Pao's Hmong soldiers. (Long Tieng, sometimes written as Long Cheng, was commonly known as "Sky" to the Hmong.) He committed to stay with Vang Pao and the Hmong, come hell or high water, and spent nearly ten years in combat with the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. Once he refused to get on an airplane he thought was overloaded, then watched it crash killing all on board. In the wreckage, he found an extra leg beyond the number of people known to have been on board, confirming his suspicions as he told his brother Jack.

One story stands out among many extraordinary Jerry tales. The U.S. government had an electronic installation on a mountaintop at Phou Pha Thi, also known as Lima Site 85. Jerry was there when four Soviet-style AN-2 Colt biplanes attacked the site with crude weapons. According to several books, Jerry opened fire with his M-16 and claimed to have shot down a Colt that crashed. (He did admit other people were also firing.) There is more. An Air America helicopter actually overtook a Colt. A crewman firing a hand-held weapon downed that Colt, likely the only time in history a helicopter has shot down a fixed-wing aircraft as well as creating probably the most oft-told story in Air America history. With two Colts down and two escaped, that was the first and last enemy air attack against friendly ground forces in the Indochina War. Unfortunately Lima Site 85 was later overrun in a disaster well told in the Castle book cited earlier.

Another famous story occurred when Jerry and another jumper staged a rodeo at Sky featuring bull riding, to the bewilderment of the Hmong. According to one book, Jerry lasted about a second on his bull while the other jumper made a respectable ride. Jerry was upset to lose to another jumper, a reminder to me of past chess games.

Sky was heavily attacked in 1971 and, with the United States withdrawing forces from Vietnam, the handwriting was on the wall for the demise of Sky. The Hmong fortress lasted four more tough years under constant enemy pressure. According to one book, Jerry lived underground the last year at Long Tieng with Vang Pao after putting three sons of Vang Pao in school in Missoula.

Sky Is Falling contains personal recollections from nearly 50

Hmong and Americans who were witnesses to the fall of Sky on May 14, 1975. The enemy was at the gates and thousands of Hmong expected to leave, a repeat of Vietnam the month before. By every account, Jerry was the glue that held things together until the final bitter moments when he and Vang Pao had to pull the plug. His Hmong radio operator said of Hog on the last day that, "For Jerry it is duty, duty, duty first. Real deep duty." Two Air America pilots spoke on tape in the last hours, "But old Hog, I've never seen that guy get excited yet. Have you?" "No, not really." Later, "Hog, hell, he'd have stayed there all day, I believe, if I hadn't pushed him. Because, like I said, he isn't afraid of no mob scene or nothin'." On the last airplane out of Sky, Hog broke out a case of Olympia—a true blue smokejumper.

After Laos, Jerry went on a two-month hunting adventure with another Laos jumper in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area and also worked his gold mine north of Butte, Montana, with some Laos jumper help. He became a resettlement officer with the State Department refugee program in Thailand. A fluent Hmong speaker, no one knew better than Jerry who was telling the truth among Hmong fleeing Laos seeking refugee status. He earned a State Department Superior Honor Award. A retired senior CIA officer who knew him well told me that Jerry had "thrown his career away" by staying with the Hmong rather than the Agency. If he had been willing to be an intelligence bureaucrat (not a chance, as the reader knows by now), there is no telling to what high rank he might have risen. Instead Jerry chose the Hmong, bringing the first Hmong refugees to the Bitterroot Valley south of Missoula.

Jerry was 40 years old at his untimely death. Unfortunately he has not been allowed to rest in peace. The official story is that he died of carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty gas hot water heater and was not found for several days. It was probably inevitable, given his storybook life, that rumors would abound after his unusual death. Some jumpers who knew Jerry believe the official story. Some do not. There is little dispute that Jerry died of carbon monoxide poisoning but how that came about is not agreed upon. Some think it was an accident, some suicide, some murder. The instant-on, instant-off, on-demand propane hot water heaters that are all over East Asia are notorious for malfunctioning and causing occasional deaths. Nevertheless, rumors continue when old Southeast Asia hands get together.

Tragic Mountains relates that Jerry made a pact with a friend to jump off the Missoula Higgins Avenue Bridge into the Clark's Fork River when they were 40, presumably because they would have done everything with no new worlds to conquer. Later he wrote to the same friend to make it "50." However joking these remarks may have been, in retrospect they were ill-chosen words.

Jerry told friends of death threats received in Thailand from Hmong, presumably some who had been refused refugee status and then blamed him. More ominous, a Laos jumper was in Jerry's house in Missoula when Jerry answered the telephone. When asked what that strange conversation was about, he said it was the "mystery man" who said he was going to "kill me."

The Ravens repeats some conspiracy speculation about Jerry's death but states that no evidence supports that specu-

lation and further that journalist investigations confirm he died as reported. However the same author goes on to say, "For a more sinister interpretation of events, see 'Mystery in Bangkok: Yellow Rain Skeptic Found Dead,' *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, No. 17, Summer 1982." (CAIB is an anti-CIA and anti-establishment publication.) Jerry was a well-known disbeliever of "yellow rain" and was outspoken about it, according to several jumpers.

Today Jerry's brother, Jack, a former smokejumper, feels the family has never gotten the complete story about his death. Jack, a Ph.D. in physiology, a winner of Olympic silver and bronze medals in the modern pentathlon competition, and a professor at the State University of New York at Cortland, is puzzled by two aspects. One is why Jerry died and a Thai found unconscious in Jerry's apartment lived. Jack, who certainly knows, says carbon monoxide attaches itself to hemoglobin at 35 times the rate of oxygen. According to Jack, the Thai fellow, reportedly a university student, was taken to a hospital and later fled, never to be seen again. (One 1982 press account says the student talked to a U.S. journalist and "does not remember what happened." Admittedly a local national found near the death of a prominent American would not hang around to see what happened.)

The sealed coffin also puzzles Jack. As the executor and next-of-kin, Jack was initially pressured to have the body cremated with possibly some cremains to remain in Thailand and/or Laos and some to Missoula. Jack consulted Hmong in Montana who vetoed cremation, especially since division of the cremains was offensive to Hmong culture. So a tightly-sealed coffin with guards to keep it that way arrived in Missoula.

Whatever the circumstances of his death, his family is extremely proud of his CIA service. A prized possession is their photo of the CIA director presenting three posthumous awards, the second, third, and fourth highest medals of the Agency, to his mother and three surviving brothers and families. (As reported in the January 2003 issue, the family of John Lewis (McCall '53) received his posthumous CIA award 41 years after his death. The Daniels family didn't have to wait that long.)

I make no claim to having been one of Jerry's closer friends but I knew him well in the early years and I know the literature. There are better-qualified jumpers from the Laos and Thailand years to memorialize him and I hope mine is only the first chapter. I felt someone had to get him in the official archive of smokejumper history since it had not been done to date. Jerry tops anything in a Tom Clancy novel. He was an unforgettable larger-than-life character of whom it can truly be said that the mold was thrown away after he was born. There will never be another Jerrold Barker Daniels. Ask the Hmong.

(This article has been reviewed by CIA. That review neither constitutes CIA authentication of information nor implies CIA endorsement of the author's views.) 📌

NSA life member Fred Donner is a retired Defense Intelligence Agency officer with nearly 40 years of experience and education related to Southeast Asia and China. He can be reached at: fredandbev@earthlink.net or 703/698-5480 in Virginia or 320/684-9966 in Minnesota in the summertime. Permanent address: 7320 Pinecastle Road, Falls Church, VA 22043-3017.
www.smokejumpers.com



The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

I AM VERY PLEASED to announce that Congresswoman Barbara Cubin, R-Wyo., introduced legislation on Feb. 27, 2003, to amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. It will provide death and disability benefits for fixed wing and helicopter pilots and crews who work on a contract basis for the Forest Service or an agency of the Department of the Interior and suffer death or disability in the line of duty. H.R.977, the Aerial Firefighter Relief Act of 2003, has been co-sponsored by Congressman Darrell Issa, R-Calif., and referred to the

House Resources, Agriculture and Judiciary Committees. The public agencies covered under this bill are the U.S. Forest Service and any agency of the Dept. of the Interior. The legislation, if passed, would apply to death or injuries occurring on or after Sept. 29, 1976. The current death benefit adjusted for inflation is \$260,000.00. The official announcement was made at the Johnson County Airport in Buffalo, Wyo., on February 15, 2003. Among those attending the ceremony were Neptune Tanker 11, the California Division of Forestry Firefighter Honor Guard, Campbell County Wyoming Fire Department and Buffalo Wyoming VFW Honor Guard.

According to the *Missoulian*, the Forest Service will not be reimbursed for nearly \$300 million of the \$1.2 billion the agency spent fighting wildfires last summer, leaving some forest restoration and research programs without full funding. The federal government's just-signed fiscal year 2003 appropriations bill reimbursed the Forest Service for \$636 million of the \$919 million "borrowed" from national forests and research labs nationwide to pay the cost of fighting last year's fires. The Forest Service's \$275 million fire fighting budget was depleted by the end of June. When Congress refused to approve emergency supplemental funding, the Forest Service froze all non-fire budgets and raided them for fire funds. Region One forests lost about \$80 million, including \$25 million intended for restoration and replanting of forests burned two summers earlier on the Bitterroot National Forest. Only two percent of the watershed restoration work in the Bitterroot has been completed. In the past, Congress has either approved emergency midseason funds for fire fighting or has quickly restored any raided accounts at the end of the year. Congress has warned the Forest Service not to expect 100 percent re-

imbursement. The Fire Sciences Lab in Missoula was required to transfer \$479,000 to fire suppression accounts. Currently about two percent of the Forest Service Budget is allocated to research. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has said that the agency could face a deficit of close to \$1 billion if the 2003 fire season is similar to last year's record-breaking fire season. Under the 2003 spending bill the Forest Service will receive about \$420 million to fight fires, which is about \$1 billion less than was spent to battle the 2002 fires.

According to the March 31, *Casper Star Tribune*, Forest Service assistant director of aviation Tony Kern told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that fires that do not threaten lives might be allowed to burn. "Obviously we will function within the constraints of the budget we are given," Kern said. "I am willing to accept that more acres will burn, but I will not accept that any lives will be put at risk. Kern and Bureau of Land Management director of aviation Larry Hamilton said that they were working on a plan that would not risk the lives of pilots or communities near forests. Such let burn policies can be political suicide even if they are based on science. We only have to look as far back as the fires in Yellowstone in 1988 and the National Park Service "Let Burn" policy. The press and various special interest groups branded Park Superintendent Robert Barbee "Barbeque Bob" and tried to portray Yellowstone as a burned out wasteland when in truth less than 20 percent of the park was affected by the fire in 1988. The trial lawyers will have a field day when trophy homes in the urban interface burn this year. 🌲

A tip of the hard hat to Tim Eldridge (Missoula '82) and Wayne Williams (Missoula '77) for being my gracious hosts when I toured the Missoula Smokejumper Base in March.

Please Tell Us When You Change Address

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



Items from the Fire Pack



First One To The Ground Wins!

I recall dropping a complete fire camp including cooks. Dale Yoder was designated as cook's helper rather than cook. When he left the plane, his chute did not open properly and he fell for quite some time before opening his emergency chute. When he was questioned as to the delay, he said he wanted to be "cook" and not "cook's helper" since he was the first one to the ground.

Ralph Miller (McCall '45)

Montana People Understanding

On entering the CPS, I was impressed by the different denominations, educational level and philosophies of the people. I found the people in Montana usually very understanding of conscientious objectors. The smokejumper camp was operated by the Forest Service in cooperation with the Mennonite, Brethren and Friends churches. I spent two seasons at Moose Creek.

Sheldon Mills (Missoula '43)

We Called Him "Ace"

We had about 33 men who came to work in 1946 and only about two of them weren't veterans. Ten were ex-paratroopers and the rest of them were a pretty good cross section of the military. We had one fellow who was a Navy flyer who we called "Ace."

Wayne Webb (McCall '46)

I Could Have Died in 1949

Four of us jumped a fire on Telephone Creek. I hung up about 80 feet. The chute collapsed and I was so far out from the trunk that I couldn't even reach any branches. I was only hanging by three or four lines and really getting worried. I

told Kenny Roth that I think I'm going to fall out of that tree. He said "Come on down, let's get to work." Then they packed their gear and walked over to the fire.

I'm sweating and have a lump in my throat looking down 80 feet at those rocks. After tying my reserve to the jump rope, I swung it and finally got it over a limb so that I could slowly pull myself into the tree. You talk about scared! Right after I pulled myself in and grabbed hold of the limb, the chute came floating down.

Finally after getting out of the tree I'm so weak from fear that I'm just sitting there. Roth comes over and says "What the hell's wrong with you. We got a 3-man fire? What happened to the chute?" I tell him it fell out just like I thought it would. "Must not have been hung up very tight," he says.

I still dream about this once in a while and wake up in a cold sweat. I could have died in 1949.

Max Glaves (McCall '47)

First Letdowns

They made the harnesses with snaps on each shoulder and we had a pocket on our leg where we kept 50 feet of quarter-inch line. We worked out a deal where you put the line through the snaps and get it down under your foot and pick the weight off the snaps so you could unhook the canopy.

Virgil Derry (North Cascades '40)

Don't Mess with the Rookies

Rookie training was far more difficult than I had envisioned. We had 22 rookies which was a large group for a small base. We significantly outnumbered the experienced guys and harassed them quite a bit rather than the other way around.

Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

Worst Part of the Job

There was one job that was miserable. It was baling hay at the remount station. The sun would be beating down on you and you'd be on top of a haystack pitching hay into the baler. Your eyes were bleeding and you were itching. Oh, that was terrible. Quite an experience.

Chuck Pickard (Missoula '48)

1982 Was a Poor Season for Money

1982 was a terrible season. I made twice as much money the year before on an engine crew. I had a total of six fire jumps. My first fire jump was in Alaska. It was pouring rain and lightning was all around us when we jumped. It was about two in the morning when we jumped.

Wendy Kamm (Missoula '82)

Early CPS Training

I barely made it on time for the training course. The country is beautiful and this is the only camp where the Forest Service supplies the food. Boy, what food! I don't see how we existed on the food at Coleville. I won't get to jump until next week at the earliest. The ones who have been here three weeks jumped today. One fellow broke his leg and four turned their ankles. The Forest Service men are young fellows but they sure know what they are doing.

George Robinson (Missoula '44)

Landing at Moose Creek Was an Experience

I arrived at Moose Creek on July 15, 1943, after my training. Eddie Nafzinger received a concussion when he crashed into a tree. I was the nearest thing to a doctor within a 100 miles as I was a qualified First Aid instructor, but all I could do was give him six aspirins.

Just landing at Moose Creek was an experience in itself as the dirt strip was about 800 feet long and hemmed in by mountains on all sides. There wasn't a margin of safety as there were large tree stumps at the end of the strip.

Warren Shaw (Missoula '43)

Where Is Nine Mile?

I went to Missoula by train where Mr. Cochran met me at the station and put me on the bus to Nine Mile Camp. I fell asleep and suddenly the bus stopped and I got off half-asleep. Nobody was there to pick me up. I

looked at the sign and it said Six Mile Corner. I put on all the clothes that I had in my suitcase and tried to sleep but it was too cold. The next morning I found out from a road-worker where the camp was and started walking. Well, Earl Cooley never forgot my name because I was the boy who walked into camp.

Harold Toews (Missoula '44)

Those Were Good Days

I was never injured in my 17 jumps at CPS-103 and there is something about parachute jumping that I have never experienced in any

other job that I have done. It was fun and exciting even though scary at times. Those were good days for me.

William Webber (Missoula '44)

Learning to Fly

While at McCall I learned to fly. I took flying lessons under the tutelage of Warren Ellison, Bob Fogg, Bill Yaggy and Jerry Verhelst, all Johnson pilots. The day Bob Fogg crawled out of that plane at McCall and said, "take her up" was a mighty exciting day. The feeling of it all was much like that first parachute jump.

Merlo Zimmerman (McCall '44) 🦋

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

JOHN C. TWISS

JOHN TWISS (REDMOND '67) RECENTLY became a Life Member, one of a growing number (87 plus nine more in the process) of smokejumpers who have chosen to do this.

In 1965 he was a seasonal employee with the National Park Service at Yellowstone. Two seasons later he became a smokejumper and jumped for nine seasons, all out of Redmond. John writes, "I grew up in the smokejumpers. I was 20 years old when I joined up and I left when I was 29 to see what life was like in the rest of the Forest Service. ... Other than my father, smokejumpers were my role models and the largest influence to this day. Older jumpers like **Jim Hawes** (RAC '66), **Tony Percival** (NCSB '54), **Jim Laws** (RAC '66) and **Skinny Beals** (MYC '45) left a lasting impression on me. I want to thank **Hal Weinmann** (NCSB '47) for being tough and fair with me when I needed it most. (I was as wild as they came and as dumb.) I also want to thank Redmond Air Center Manager **Jim Allen** (NCSB '46) for his patience and understanding each time Hal sent me to visit with Jim after my latest escapade! Both were true leaders. They could have fired me on many occasions."

John graduated from Oregon State University with a B.S. in forest management in 1972 but continued to jump.

As John recalls it, his hardest jump was also his last one. It was above the Selway River on the Nez Pierce N.F. with **Karl Petty** (RAC '71) and one other. "... We jumped a small fire that took three days to put out, with no food left on the last day. We then proceeded to pack out about 20 miles with eight being cross-country downhill bushwhacking through thick downfall. I wish Karl would have just shot me, but instead he ran over me trying to get away from a black bear he saw just ahead (the bear ran the other way more scared than Karl). My body hurt all over at the end of that pack-out and I knew my jumping days were at an end.

There had to be easier work"

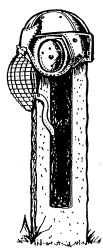
As with most jumpers John recalls some special people whom he remembers "fondly": fellow rookies **Lance Stryker** (RAC '67), **Vic Congleton** (RAC '67), **Bill Jordan** (RAC '67) and Vietnam squad buddy **Bruce Cheney** (RAC '67). Others who were prominent in his life are current Forest Service employees **Jerry Williams** (RAC '72), **Orrin Corak**, **Tony Sachett**, **John Berry** (RAC '70), **Jim Damitio** (RAC '69) and **Dave Bohning** (RAC '68).

John further comments "the Redmond smokejumpers are currently in good hands with great leaders like **Dewey Warner** (RAC '75), **Mike Brick** (RAC '76), **Mark Corbet** (LDG '74) and **Ron Rucker** (RAC '76). John hopes to some day catch up with **Doug Houston** (RAC '73), **Walt Congleton** (CJ '78), **Sid Spurgeon** (RAC '70) and **George Rainey** (RAC '68)."

After leaving jumping, John worked in Utah, Nevada and Idaho before serving as a district ranger in Idaho and Oregon. John served as a deputy forest supervisor in Minnesota and then as the agency's national wilderness leader in Washington, D.C.

Currently he and his wife, Jackie, live in Custer, South Dakota. They have been there since 1995. John is the forest supervisor of the 1.2 million-acre Black Hills National Forest. The supervisor role includes overall responsibility for a work force of 600 permanent and seasonal employees, managing a \$40 million budget and overseeing the management of the forest. Jackie is a graphic artist with the Forest Service and their daughter, Jill, moved to New York to become an actress after graduating from William and Mary College.

We wish John many successful years ahead. 🦋



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 on page three of the magazine). Include the name, address and phone number of the subject's next of kin. We'll take it from there.

Harold Graber (Missoula '44)

Harold died February 22, 2003, at age 79. He was a CPS-103 jumper.

Randle M. "Randy" Hurst (Missoula '54)

Randy Hurst, 73, passed away February 23, 2003, in Oklahoma City of complications from hernia surgery. His wife, Juanita Hurst, sons David and Anthony and stepsons, Jim and Bill Patton, survive him.

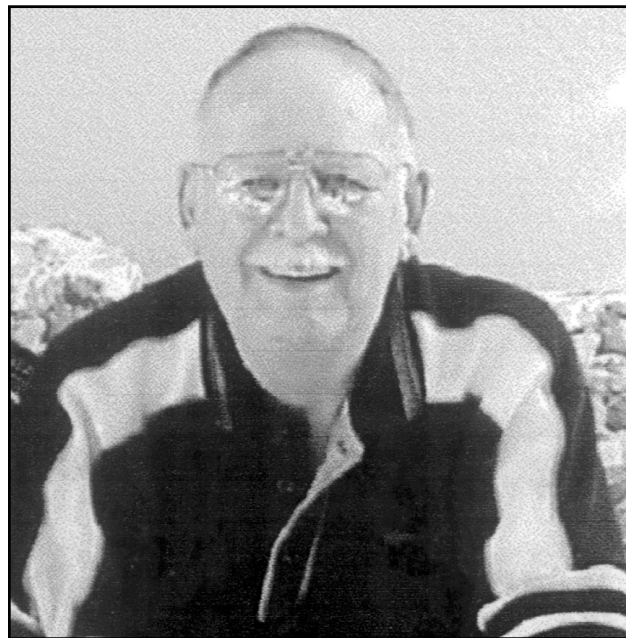
Randy served his country proudly in the Korean War earning several medals. He jumped at Missoula from 1954-56 and 1958-62 with 109 jumps. After graduating from the Univ. of Oklahoma with a degree in geology, he taught for 15 years in Fresno, Calif. Randy was working as a security guard for the Oklahoma Dept. of Transportation at the time of his death.

Randy loved smokejumping more than any occupation that he held. He authored *The Smokejumpers* in 1963 dedicated "to every smokejumper who has ever cracked a chute over the Gila N.F." He continued to write and portions of a manuscript on his Korean War experiences were included in *Disaster In Korea* by Roy Appleman.

His son, David Hurst, would like to hear from any smokejumper friends or acquaintances who might wish to relate a story about jumping with Randy. You can contact David at: h2o_rodent@yahoo.com or 1315 Fremont Ave, Clovis, CA 93612.



Randy Hurst (Courtesy David Hurst)



Rodney Leicht (Courtesy of Barbara Leicht)

Rodney W. "Red" Leicht (Missoula '52)

Rodney passed away February 8, 2003, in Chino Hills, Calif., at the age of 73. A U.S. Army veteran, he had served in the Korean War and was a retired L.A. County Sheriff's Sergeant. His wife, Barbara, and two sons survive Rodney.

Joseph R. Madar (Pilot)

Joe died of cancer March 11, 2003. He served in the Korean War in the Air Force before starting a career as a smokejumper pilot and lead plane pilot in the private sector. In 1977 Joe began working for the U.S. Forest Service in Wenatchee and later moved to Redmond where he served as the Air Center supervisor for over 10 years. He is remembered as a true leader and a "Godfather" to a generation of forest service aviators.

Maynard W. Shetler (Missoula '45)

Maynard Shetler, who headed the Herald Press book division of Mennonite Publishing House, died October 15, 2002, at age 80. He helped shape hundreds of books and helped develop Bible school curricula used by many denominations across North America. Maynard graduated from Goshen College in 1953 and achieved advanced degrees in 1954 and 1955. His work at the publishing house began in 1955 where he worked until his retirement in 1989.

Edward Nurse (Missoula '48)

Ed died March 3, 2003, in Helena, Mont. From 1943–1945, Ed was a packer for the U.S. Forest Service in Missoula and in 1948 and 1949 he was a Missoula smoke-jumper. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served as electricians mate for 22 months. Ed worked as an instrument man for the county surveyor in Missoula in 1950–1951 and as student lab assistant at Montana State University, Bozeman, in 1952–1953.

He married Marian Louise Sampson in 1951. Ed graduated from Montana State University with a civil engineering degree and after MSU attended the University of California and received a “fast track” masters in engineering.

He opened Foundation and Material Consultant Engineering located in Helena, an active business for 40 years.

Robert P. “Bob” Schlaefli (Tanker Pilot)

Bob, 80, passed away February 24, 2003, in Grant County, Washington. Born in Yankton, South Dakota, he graduated from Bremerton High School in 1940 and became a fighter pilot for the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Bob flew throughout his life, piloting aircraft from Alaska to Panama and from the U.S. to Europe and Africa.

He pioneered scooping water with PBY “Catalina” aircraft and his SLAFCO tankers were well known by smoke-jumpers, air attack bosses and lead plane pilots especially in Alaska where he was an ever present figure on the ramp and in the daily life of the base.

Bob’s flying adventures were legendary with the jumpers. He was known by the general public for piloting the PBY in the movie *Always*.

He served on the board of directors of the National Air Tanker Pilots Association, was an honorary member of the Pat Wing 4 Group WWII Airdales and had recently become an NSA life member as an honor from some of his old jumper buddies. Bob is survived by his wife of 35 years, Claudette Schlaefli.

A remembrance of Bob will be published in the fall edition of the Smokejumper.

Edwin Vail (Missoula '44)

Edwin died September 19, 2002. He was a CPS-103 jumper.

Merlo Zimmerman (Missoula '44)

Merlo died September 4, 2002, after being injured when a tractor rolled over on him. He was a CPS-103 jumper. 🕊

Prompt Smokejumper Initial Attack Equals Dollars Saved

by Chuck Sheley

The summer of 2002 found the highest amount of money spent on wildland firefighting in history. With the help of data supplied by Mark Corbet from the Redmond Air Center, this chart compares the cost of fighting two similar fires: Fire 1 using smokejumpers and Fire 2 using engine crews. These two fires are about as close as we can get without having them start at exactly the same time.

	FIRE #1	FIRE #2
Reported	9-1-98 (15:00)	9-2-98 (13:07)
Fuel.....	Model G (dense conifer)	Model G
Cover Type	Douglas fir	Douglas fir
Elevation	4800 feet.....	4800 feet
Fire Status	1–2 acres actively burning	1–2 acres actively burning
Location	11 miles from trailhead75 miles off hwy
Ordered Resources	5 minutes	8 minutes
Distance from RAC	55 miles	34 miles
Initial Attack.....	55 minutes	—
	8 RAC Jumpers	Engine Crew
Final Size	2.2 acres	150 acres
Declared Out	4 days	71 days
Cost	\$12,000	\$1,000,000 plus

The above action by Redmond smokejumpers indicates that on a single fire they may have saved more than their annual budget. This comparison should be interesting reading to any congressperson who wants to save taxpayer money.



Blast from the Past



Illinois Valley News, June 1948

Two rescue parties brought Opal Hill of Cave Junction, who received a broken ankle and multiple injuries when she was bucked off her horse, into the Redwood ranger station at 2 A.M. Thursday.

Smokejumpers **Cliff Marshall** and **Bob Nolan** jumped from a Forest Service plane piloted by Don Moyer into the remote Canyon Peak area where the accident occurred. The news of the accident was brought into the station at 1 P.M. by one of the nine women who were on the sixth day of a pack trip in the Siskiyou.

According to the riders, Miss Hill's horse bucked on the trail and both the horse and rider fell down a steep embankment, with the horse rolling over three times on Miss Hill.

Marshall and Nolan administered first aid and when it was determined that Miss Hill could not be taken out on horseback, they carried the injured rider on a stretcher 11 miles toward the nearest road. The jumpers were met by a rescue party of nine men who relieved them for the remaining three miles to the road.



Illinois Valley News, December 1968

Former Smokejumper Gets Flying Cross

U.S. Air Force Captain Garry R. Peters has been decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroic aerial achievement.

Captain Peters distinguished himself as a forward air controller while on a mission directing artillery and helicopter gunships near Tay Ninh, Republic of Viet Nam. Despite poor visibility in hostile territory, he rescued the crew of a downed helicopter and forced unfriendly forces to withdraw.

A 1961 graduate of Lakeview High School, Captain Peters received his degree in Physical Education from Oregon State University in 1966. Many people in the Illinois Valley will remember Garry Peters from his years at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. Peters and his twin brother, Larry, jumped fires here and in Alaska. 🇺🇸

Ted Burgon Update

NSA Director Ted Burgon was killed in an ambush in Papua, New Guinea, in August 2002 while on a teaching assignment. NSA members were encouraged to write their congresspersons asking for an investigation of the potential involvement of the Indonesian military in the incident. It looks like you might have helped. The following is an e-mail from Ted's son, Mark Burgon:

On January 14–17 (2003), a victim (Patsy) who lost her husband and was shot twice herself, an attorney, my brother (Dirk), and myself went to Washington, D.C., in an attempt to jump start the stalled investigation. We had 20+ meetings with senators, Congressional representatives, State Department heads, FBI and the Indonesian ambassador. Patsy told the story, Dirk asked for conformation of information (did not get any) and discussed many of the articles pointing to the

Indonesian military. I tried to make it more personal by putting a face to the names and help them see a person, lifestyle and accomplishments.

At first I did not feel we could do much and almost did not go. Halfway through the first day I had changed my mind. In a couple of the meetings with non-elected officials, we were given indications that we were being heard. One person in the State Department commented that about three weeks before (about the time we had a letter writing campaign going) Capitol Hill started paying a little more attention. In the time we were in town, people we had met with were asking questions of the State Department and FBI and putting more pressure towards getting a Bali style joint investigation going. A week after we returned home, we were notified an amendment was put on the floor by Senator Feingold, D-Wis. *The amendment failed and I have at-*

tached the voting records so if you wish to thank or _____ your representatives you may.

We have made a difference and I for one appreciate your involvement. We will continue to contact our representatives so they know we are not going to let the issue drop. The State Department has said they will not disperse the funds without consulting congress, so it will still be important to keep pressure on those elected officials until some reasonable conclusion. We received copies of letters from senators to the president and a joint one from Oregon's senators and congressional reps to Assistant Secretary of State Kelly, requesting pressure be put on the Indonesian government. The FBI has had a team in Indonesia since January and from what we understand, has been allowed an active part in the investigation.

I am adding a section of H.R. 1646



Ted Burgon (NSA file)

that I found by accident a few weeks before our trip. Thanks again for your help. Mark

AMENDMENT NO. 200

The Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. FEINGOLD) for himself, Mr. Leahy, Mr. Wyden, Mrs. Boxer, and Mr. Durbin, proposes an amendment numbered 200.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To restrict funds made available for for Indonesian military personnel to ``Expanded International Military Education and Training'' assistance unless certain conditions are met):

The Government of Indonesia and the Indonesian Armed Forces are

1. Demonstrating a commitment to assist United States efforts to combat international terrorism, including United States interdiction efforts against al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.
2. Taking effective measures to bring to justice those responsible for the October 13, 2002, terrorist attack on Bali.
3. Taking effective measures, including cooperating with the FBI, to bring to justice any member of the Indonesian Armed Forces or Indonesian militia group against whom there is credible evidence of involvement in the August 31, 2002, attack, which resulted in the deaths of United States citizens. Make concerted and demonstrable efforts to find and prosecute those responsible for the murders of United States citizens Edwin L. Burgon and Ricky L. Spier.

On August 31, 2002, two American schoolteachers and one Indonesian citizen who were working at an international school for the children of Freeport mine employees were killed, and eight more Americans were wounded when they were ambushed on a mountain road in Papua, Indonesia. Press reports indicate that Indonesian garrisons control all access to the remote road where the attack occurred. The attackers sprayed their targets with automatic weapons—weapons that would be rare to find in the hands of separatists in the area. Police reports indicated that the Indonesian military was very likely involved in the attack, but the investigation was then turned over to the military, which, not surprisingly, has proven unwilling to investigate itself, and unwilling to fully cooperate with the FBI. In November, the *Washington Post* reported that intelligence agencies had obtained information indicating that, prior to the ambush, senior Indonesian military officials discussed an operation targeting Freeport and intended to discredit Papuan separatists.

The survivors of the attack, and the widows of the murdered, want their government to pressure the Indonesians to uncover the truth about the attack and to bring those responsible to justice. This Senate should support them.

We are also supporting the Indonesian military. Our armed forces are engaging with the Indonesian military

at all levels, including providing them millions of dollars in antiterrorism training assistance. We are doing that despite the fact—and this is widely known—that the Indonesian military was responsible for creating and arming some of the most radical Muslim terrorist groups in that country.

But even worse, there is credible evidence that 5 months ago—last August—the Indonesian military purposefully singled out American citizens for assassination. That they planned an attack which left two American teachers dead and several others wounded. Since then, they have actively tried to obstruct the police investigation of the crime. Should we not at least expect the Indonesian military to cooperate with the investigation of the murders of American citizens?

If the military had not actively obstructed the investigation, this amendment would not be necessary. There is even evidence that an army officer shot at a police investigator, and that a police vehicle was attacked. Only after months of refusals and obfuscation have they finally agreed to let the FBI assist in the investigation.

This amendment does not cut off anti-terrorism training. There should be no confusion about that. The Feingold amendment reinstates the IMET program. But not for combat training—not until they meet the conditions in the amendment. It is a timely and reasonable amendment. It is a simple amendment. It is a victims rights amendment.

The Vote:

Alaska:	Murkowski (R-AK), Nay	Stevens (R-AK), Nay
Arizona:	Kyl (R-AZ), Nay	McCain (R-AZ), Nay
California:	Boxer (D-CA), Yea	Feinstein (D-CA), Yea
Colorado:	Allard (R-CO), Yea	Campbell (R-CO), Yea
Florida:	Graham (D-FL), Nay	Nelson (D-FL), Nay
Hawaii:	Akaka (D-HI), Nay	Inouye (D-HI), Not Voting
Idaho:	Craig (R-ID), Nay	Crapo (R-ID), Nay
Montana:	Baucus (D-MT), Nay	Burns (R-MT), Nay
Nevada:	Ensign (R-NV), Nay	Reid (D-NV), Yea
New Mexico:	Bingaman (D-NM), Nay	Domenici (R-NM), Nay
Oregon:	Smith (R-OR), Yea	Wyden (D-OR), Yea
Texas:	Cornyn (R-TX), Nay	Hutchison (R-TX), Nay
Utah:	Bennett (R-UT), Nay	Hatch (R-UT), Nay
Washington:	Cantwell (D-WA), Yea	Murray (D-WA), Yea
Wisconsin:	Feingold (D-WI), Yea	Kohl (D-WI), Yea
Wyoming:	Enzi (R-WY), Nay	Thomas (R-WY), Nay

National Fire Plan Suggestions

by Troop Emonds (Cave Junction '66)

It's an ancient visitor that roams virtually all land masses on earth—wildfire. Fire is a natural force, as vital as the cycles of wind, snow, rain, sunshine, heat, cold and night.

But the frequency and strength of wildfires are increasing, and it's clear that what we're doing to control the situation is no longer working. In case no one has been watching, we are experiencing more and more failures out there. Given the not-outrageous fact that terrorists might resort to setting wildfires on an obscene scale, we must strive to improve—now.

It's true that in some ways, we are better than ever. Looking at the smokejumper programs of both the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service, those of us who stuck around long enough to log 400 to 600 jumps—and did it back when the rivers ran deeper and the mountains were taller (hardy har-har!)—really do have to admit a truth: The jumpers today are, for sure, far better and more experienced than they were back when Christ was a corporal.

But in other respects, we have only made things worse. Take the sometimes improper use of prescribed fires. We must remember that in nature, the effects of wildfire are random, the result of many different environmental conditions. **Because man can never duplicate the infinitely delicate and mysterious calibrations of nature, it's imperative that when resorting to the use of prescribed fire, we exercise extreme caution to minimize undesired effects.** Prescribed fires constitute a valid recourse only in certain fire-tolerant ecosystems. While species like the Douglas fir, Southern pine and ponderosa pine seem to be compatible with the practice, many others are not. Thin-barked species like the lodgepole pine and white fir, not to mention most brush-filled grassland, may certainly get diversified, fertilized and completely replaced, but even after complete replacement, you usually have a loss of valuable vegetation. Worse, the pioneer vegetation that sprouts back is fertilized by the recycling of nutrients, often setting the landscape up for even greater masses of light fuels that are eager to burn when they cure.

We've also made things worse when it comes to the smokejumper program itself. Big mistake number one: Administrators have shrunk the network of bases that overlaid the map of our wildland fuels. I was a smokejumper most of my life. Often, at the Cave Junction (Ore.) base, we would have dry lightning roll in, and we would jump the base out before dark or at first light. Very quietly, the fires would be manned. Since they closed that base, many fires

dotting the valley went unmanned. Eventually, five or six became multimillion-dollar fires. This has happened repeatedly since the 1980s. Turns out all the highly paid smart people really were not very smart at all.

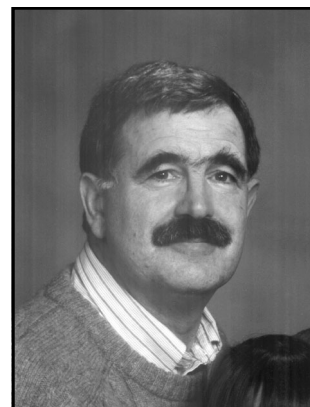
Big mistake number two: **There's not enough training going on.** In the lower 48, dispatchers have too often been uneducated and ignorant of the concept

of mutually shared resources. Somehow, as dispatchers rolled into their jobs or fire leaders did, lessons learned were forgotten. People had to learn the hard way. They invented the wheel over and over again, and no one was held responsible.

Big mistake number three: Smokejumpers have not been optimally utilized. Initial attack is not everything, but it really is the first chance to keep things manageable during extreme conditions. Or, to put it another way, it's the first opportunity to nip it all in the bud, before the bad conditions show up. **Too often, dispatchers and fire managers have failed to use smokejumpers for initial attack, even when they've had starts.** Only in Alaska have they gotten it right. Up there, all the dispatchers call for jumpers as the initial strike force for off-road fires. From there, the other specialists do what they can.

The Incident Command System of Organization was a great idea aimed at uniting firefighters into a cohesive system characterized by common leadership and mutual cooperation, but one of its unintended consequences has been to create a rather hollow system. Many people raised in today's fire culture get plugged into learning very specific roles. We now have an entire cadre of folks raised in a fire camp who believe they are professionals but who lack broad enough backgrounds to know what it's like out there on the fire line, in a diverse array of fuel types. Today, going to fires too often means hanging out in fire camp—logging big-time wages for some role not connected to direct fire work. There's too much waste, too much standing around, too many rules to learn—and big gaps in common sense.

Safety concerns in the wake of recent firefighter deaths have only aggravated the situation. My e-mail this summer



Troop Emonds (Courtesy Troop Emonds)

was ablaze with accounts of the fire culture becoming entrenched with the “85-25-05” concept—meaning, if the temperature is 85 degrees or above, the relative humidity 25 percent or below and the wind 5 mph or above, you backed off and used the “S” (for safety) word to justify not actually doing anything. They don’t even man fires at night any more, except for jumpers and shot crews.

The problems are big, but where are the right solutions? The fact that we are losing so many homes to wildfire (about 3,000 a year) is direct evidence that our leaders haven’t a clue as to how to adapt to the changing needs in the fire world. Good leadership and vision toward where we are going and what needs to be done is missing. We remain stuck in a continual cycle of reinventing the wheel.

Anyway, my suggestions are as follows:

1. Keep and maintain an aggressive, hard-charging cadre of smokejumpers distributed throughout the wild areas of the West. Have smaller numbers per base, but more bases is better, so they can cover the ground.
2. Train dispatchers and fire managers to use smokejumpers for initial attack when they have starts and need to get fires manned. Dispatchers must understand they are in an office and that the spotters in the aircraft can better decide whether a fire needs to be jumped or not. Period!
3. Use district crews to go in and relieve jumpers and/or help them. Sometimes jumpers can’t handle the strength and power of fires, and there must always be ground forces to go in and deal with the fast, large fires.
4. Continue to use fire as a management tool, but always exercise caution and common sense.
5. Build on the post-September 11 mindset to convert citizens into an effective resource. Teach them how to become more fire-adapted.

The final point is an elementary concept—but a crucial one. If you live on the Oregon coast and are subjected to lots of rain, you must get a raincoat and a house without a leaky roof. If you live in Alaska and deal with eight months of snow and ice a year, you must get warm clothing and a draft-free dwelling capable of retaining heat. Similarly, citizens living in areas frequented more and more often by fire must adapt to fire’s strength, force and power. They must learn how to endure and even how to help control stronger and more frequent blazes.

To this end, those who live in wildland fuels must have things set up and ready for firefighters to create “safety harbor areas.” Landowners must convert natural fuels around their structures into a savanna of light fuels (grasses) on the ground, and well-separated, pruned and thinned trees. Ideally, three circular control lines should separate the ground fuels. The beauty of circular control lines is that the wind is always blowing in the right direction for a controlled burn-off of light fuels. All firefighters must know how to safely and systematically burn off the light fuels inside the

circular control lines, and all interface dwellers must know how to ignite a consistent and dependable “escape fire” for those times when firefighters cannot get there, or when they prove incompetent at being able to recognize a prepared and managed “universal blueprint.”

Why the urgency for change? As alluded to earlier in this column, perhaps the most ideal opportunity for terrorists to destroy an entire region of the United States is to launch a coordinated wildfire attack. It’s quite clear that we as a society are not fire-adapted and can’t even control one single start during extreme conditions. For this reason alone, it’s imperative that we take action to improve the system now in place. Fire experts who talk only about thinning and pruning and who preach that water squirters will come in and defend everything are in the wrong line of business. Fire is no longer a suppression issue. It is a matter of national security.

More than 2,000 years ago, a wise Chinese general thought fire so critical that he wrote an essay about it, which he included in his great work, *The Art of War*. That general was Sun-Tzu, who, in Chapter 12 (“Attack with Fire”), wrote:

“It will not do just to know how to attack others with fire; it is imperative to know how to prevent others from attacking you. ... The first and most basic mission of an army is to protect the citizens and the state from enemy attack. Foreign adventures for security of state may prove vital, but defense of the home ground must be provided for above all other matters. ... A wise general uses the ground to win the battle before it ever begins. It is the wise general who ensures that the troops do not have to fight hard or endanger themselves to win.”

Anyway, this is my two cents’ worth, and in the event you haven’t figured out we are vulnerable, and that the enemies we face use common sense and bold, low-cost methods to attack us, good luck to you. For more information, look up the following Web sites:

www.wildfiretools.com, www.dragonslayers.com and www.whitehouse.gov/homeland. 🔦

Troop Emonds graduated from Nichols College in Dudley, Maine, with a bachelors in forestry. He jumped for 23 years totaling 525 jumps of which 261 were on fires. He is currently living in Nehalem, Oregon, with his wife Rivena and son Jed.



Fatigue Reduction Proposal

The following proposal was written at the request of Missoula Base Manager Ed Ward.

More Common Sense

by Tory Kendrick (Missoula '00)

In 2002 the fire fighting community was presented with a 2-to-1 work/rest policy and 16 or 24-hour shift limit policy. It is widely felt that there are other options that would, when used in conjunction with these policies, increase safety and performance in the first two shifts of the initial attack stage. There is research that suggests that short, restful breaks are more beneficial to the individual and the fire organization, rather than the current blanket policy that can be restricting, counterproductive and may be unsafe.

It was documented time and again in the fire season of 2002 that compliance with the 16 or 24 hour shift limits cost person hours, acres burned and increased firefighter exposure to hazards, i.e. uncontrolled lines, snags, and heat related illnesses. In conversations with Brian Sharkey, project leader at Missoula Technology and Development Center, it was brought forth that further research as well as a summa-

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Line Creek Fire Analysis

Below is a case study of a fire in 2002 that illustrates the limitations of the current policies put on firefighters.

by Dan Cottrell (Missoula '01)

On June 28, 2002, a jump request was received at Missoula from the BLM, Miles City District at approximately 4:30 P.M. A load of 10 smokejumpers was dispatched to the Line Creek fire. After a fuel stop in Billings, jumpers were over the fire at 8:00 P.M. Initial size up showed the fire to be approximately 150 acres and staffed by several engines, a helitack crew and at least one bulldozer. By 9:30 P.M. 10 smokejumpers were on the ground, briefed by the fire IC and ready for assignment.

With two dozers now on scene, the 10 jumpers were instructed to build fire line and follow one dozer up the line burning out where necessary. At approximately 11:00 P.M., the jumpers were informed that all fire operations were to stop by 11:30 P.M. to allow individuals to get back to the camp spot by midnight to adhere to nationally mandated 2:1 work rest guidelines. The fire had slowed to a creeping rate of spread at approximately 200 acres. Line was halted at roughly 50 percent completion, with burnout operations completed on about 30 percent of the fire. Crews were

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L-R: Don Erickson, George Schreiber '47, Rod Davidson '47, Monty Brooks '48, Jake Fields*, Bus Bertram '47, Ralph Gregerson '50, Chuck Blanton '47, Bob Baxter* and Rod Priest. Courtesy Chuck Blanton. *Non-jumpers.*

Some of the McCall jumpers rendezvous each Jan./Feb. on the Kona Coast on the big island of Hawaii where they are close to 12 golf courses. This picture was taken on the lanai of J. Charles "Hawk" Blanton's condo. The group reminisces about times gone by and prognosticate the future. They agree that the upper echelon of the Forest Service and BLM are way off base in the management of forest fires. "Chuck Sheley's editorial and the letter in response thereto in the January issue of Smokejumper magazine were right on target."

Fatigue Reduction Proposal

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tion of existing research would support restful breaks in policy. Restful breaks could be one, two, or four hours in duration, and fall within the most trying times for the human body's sleep cycle, generally between 2 A.M. and 6 A.M. Research suggests that restful breaks are more beneficial to physical stamina and alertness over a 48-hour initial attack period than the current blanket 2-to-1 policy that dictates that if 32 hours were spent working, then 16 hours must be spent resting, even if some of the work time was in a restful "standby" mode. This standby factor is common due to the nature of initial attack resources.

It is common knowledge in the fire community that the first two shifts of initial attack are the determining factors in fire size, cost and environmental and social impacts. It is during this phase of fire suppression that logistical support, transportation, and safety concerns are stretched to the limit. The combination of these factors means that careful time management must be utilized in order to efficiently fight the fire. It is this initial attack phase that, if managed effectively, can reduce exposure to the public and firefighters that would be needed to fight a larger fire.

It is agreed that the extended attack work/rest policies are well directed and used. It is the initial attack phase that frustrates firefighters and managers alike and makes for a larger, yet less effective, fire fighting program. If firefighters are permitted and encouraged to act when the chance of safely "catching" the fire is greatest (initial attack phase), that makes for a more efficient, safe, and cost effective fire program. Additional research into restful breaks and optimum fire fighting efficiency should be focused on the first 48 hours of initial attack. 🔧

Line Creek Fire Analysis

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instructed to be up at 8:00 A.M. and to the briefing area by 9:00 A.M. The briefing was completed by 9:30 A.M. and the jumpers were assigned to build fire line through an area inaccessible to the dozers.

Saturday's weather was unfavorable, with high temperatures expected at 95–105 degrees and minimum humidities under 10 percent. By 10:00 A.M., fire activity was increasing. At 12:30 P.M., weather observations on the fire showed 102 degrees and a relative humidity of 11 percent. Due to firefighter safety concerns, all personnel were ordered off the fire lines. Fire line stood at roughly 80 percent completed at

1:00 P.M. when the fire made the first of several major runs that day. The temperature hit 108 degrees at 4:00 and a frontal passage also hit the fire early on Saturday evening with sustained winds of 30 mph. By day's end the fire was roughly 1000 acres and a Type II incident management team had been ordered. The Line Creek fire would burn for nearly two weeks, threatening several structures, and reach a size of 9700 acres and cost XXXX dollars to suppress.

Could the Line Creek fire have been more effectively suppressed?

Personnel on the fire suggest that the 2:1 work rest guidelines not only hampered their ability to control the fire, but also jeopardized their safety. Upon arrival on the incident, fire activity was minimal, aided by the cooler temperatures and higher relative humidity of evening. The smokejumpers agreed that with a night shift, there were adequate resources on the fire to complete a line around the fire and burn it out. Friday evening forecasts suggested that Saturday's weather would be hot and dry and the impending frontal passage would exacerbate fire behavior. After a slow day of standby in Missoula, the jumpers were prepared, both mentally and physically, for an extended shift on the fire. While there are no guarantees that the needed work could have been completed, a night shift would have certainly lessened the chance of the fire escaping control the following day. Yet due to the 2:1 work rest guidelines, firefighters were taken off the fire line at midnight when fire activity was at its minimum.

In addition to hampering efforts to control the fire, work rest guidelines also put firefighters in more danger on Saturday. Once firefighters were allowed to return to work on the fire line, temperatures were already soaring into the 90s and humidities were dropping. Fire activity was increasing and firefighters were suffering the effects of extreme heat fatigue. Due to the work rest guidelines, firefighters needlessly found themselves in front of the fire at the hottest and most dangerous time of the burn period. Eventually conditions worsened to the point that firefighters were pulled from the fire. Would a night shift have caught the fire? We'll never know. But did the work rest guidelines make the fire a safer experience for the people working the fire? All who were present at the Line Creek fire say no.

I realize objections will be raised in support of work rest guidelines. For example, there are dangers of snags during nighttime operations. Snags are an ever-present hazard of firefighting, whether on the line, sleeping in camp, or walking around the woods. However, that danger can be mitigated by daylight assessment and removal of hazard trees. The snag danger on the Line Creek fire was assessed to be small in comparison to attacking the fire during a burn period that included temperatures of 110 degrees.

Another issue raised is the effectiveness of firefighters who work beyond a 16-hour shift. However, after a day of standby and a good night's sleep, the jumpers were adequately prepared to work beyond 16 hours, only three of which had been on the fire. To accomplish an initial attack on this fire, working beyond midnight seemed by all to be a safe and logical thing to do especially in light of the predicted weather conditions for Saturday. 🔧

MEMBER PROFILE

DEWAYNE DAVIS (McCALL '53)

IN THE BIOGRAPHY OF **John Lewis** (McCall '53) (*Smokeyjumper* Jan. 2003) it was mentioned that John had first heard about fire fighting from his friend DeWayne Davis.

DeWayne relates more: "I got to McCall early in '53, and worked around the base before training started. During that time, I got a phone call from Johnnie's and Leah's (Hessel) dad, my friend and mentor, county Judge Sylvester Lewis.

"DeWayne, when I went into John's bedroom this morning, I found a note on his pillow stating he was following you up to the smoke-jumpers in McCall. He was gone so I expect he'll be contacting you in a few days."

"What do you want me to do, Judge Lewis, send him back home?"

"No, DeWayne, since he's demonstrated the initiative to strike out on his own, I'd like to see him succeed. Do what you can. ..."

"Okay, Judge, I'll do my best."

I then went to **Lloyd Johnson**. Lloyd asked, "Does he work like you?"

I answered in the affirmative and that I guaranteed it, but I told Lloyd that John was not yet 18. Lloyd responded: "Does he look 18?" When I assured him he did, Lloyd said, "Then he's got a job waiting." John completed his jump training, getting off to a good start at work that pretty much defined his young

life until he died in a plane crash in Laos in 1961.

DeWayne continues: "We are molded in life by the things we get ourselves into and how we handle those experiences. That includes the jumpers I've known and the Central-Texans who followed me to McCall: **John 'Johnnie' Lewis, Darrell Eubanks, and Randolph 'Toby' Scott**. We thrived under the leadership of **Lloyd Johnson, Reid Jackson, Del Catlin, Wayne Webb, 'Paperlegs' Petersen** and the whole team at McCall '53. I'd like to plagiarize from the Marine Corps: Once a Smokejumper, always a Smokejumper (one of God's Truths). I was a Marine at 16, and I still am. All the good things I've done in life were mainly the result of the training and discipline I learned in those two outfits."

DeWayne was born in Burnet, Texas, in 1934 during the depths of the Depression. He grew up in Lampasas County as did Johnnie, Darrell and Toby. "All four of us are made from the same clay and the same rainwater." Military service was compulsory so after breaking his leg at Texas A&M football practice in the fall of '53, he joined USAF Aviation Cadets in early '54.

This led to flight engineer status with the USAF on a SAC Select Combat B-36 crew out of Roswell, New Mexico. "When we retired our



DeWayne Davis (Courtesy DeWayne Davis)

B-36s, I flew with the 509th as a navigator on B-47s but I had decided to get out of the Air Force and go to the university. But when Colonel Claytor, my boss, took me for a ride in the B-52, I re-upped. Unfortunately a C-119 crash landing ruined my hopes to become a pilot. After the crash, I woke up at Travis AFB with injuries which cost me my right eye."

After the Air Force, DeWayne ended up in Brazil and returned to the U.S. in 1977. He retired from the Navy skunk works at China Lake in '97 and bought five acres in Nevada "where the air is clear, the water pure, the mountain scenery beautiful." 🌲



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In Memory of Jim Thrash— You Can Help

by Jeff Fereday (McCall '70)

I was in my Boise office that early July day in 1994 when I got a call from the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association office: McCall smokejumper and IOGA president Jim Thrash was among those killed on Storm King Mountain near Glenwood Springs, Colorado, caught by wildfire. He died alongside McCall jumper Roger Roth. Also killed were Missoula jumper Don Mackey and 11 members of the Prineville hotshots.

I had met Jim a couple of years before at a smokejumper gathering in McCall. We became even better acquainted in 1993 and 1994 when I was asked to provide legal advice to the IOGA. Our common background as jumpers also brought us together. For several years, Jim had run a post-fire season outfitting business, packing elk hunters into the Payette National Forest backcountry. He knew the woods and loved the wilderness, and was an effective leader of the outfitters and guides organization. In fact, I had consulted Jim just a few weeks earlier on a backpack route my family and I were considering—and later completed—that same summer.

During the days following the tragedy, discussions with McCall smokejumper foreman Neal Davis and IOGA executive director Grant Simonds led to a plan to honor Jim. We focused on the three most important people in the scenario now: Jim's widow, Holly, and his children, Virginia ("Ginny") and Nathan. In that sad summer of 1994, Ginny was twelve, Nathan nine. We quickly came to a recommendation, and the McCall Jumpers and the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association readily endorsed it: we would establish a trust fund to help underwrite college education for Ginny and Nathan. IOGA used its newsletter and statewide meetings to spread the word. The McCall Jumpers expanded the concept to include Roger Roth and established the Jim Thrash and Roger Roth Educational Fund as a fund-raising vehicle for the McCall smokejumpers. Its first project was to gather contributions to the Thrash children's trust. With the help of my then-partner, tax expert Greg Vietz, I set up the Virginia and Nathan Thrash Education Trust.

Neal Davis and I made the first two contributions to the new trust fund the morning of Jim's funeral in New Meadows, Idaho. The jumpers contributed heavily, as did outfitters and guides, friends and complete strangers. The trust department at Wells Fargo Bank (then First Interstate) also pitched in, waiving its management fees for holding and managing the trust's investments.

Today the education trust is split into two separate trusts, one for Ginny and the other for Nathan. Ginny's fund is paying for a significant part of her tuition and fees at Montana State University, where she is a sophomore. We look forward



Jim Thrash (Courtesy of Jeff Fereday)

to helping out with Nathan's college career in another couple of years.

It truly is a pleasure to be able to honor the memory of our friend Jim Thrash in this way. While neither trust is of a size capable of fully paying four years of out-of-state tuition and fees, it pays a substantial part. If you would like to donate, write a check to either the Ginny Thrash Education Trust (#70520600) or the Nathan Thrash Education Trust (#70520700) (or both!) c/o William Snelson, Trust Officer, Wells Fargo Private Client Services, P.O. Box 20160, Long Beach, CA 90801. 📧

If any of you have any questions about these trusts, please feel free to contact me at: Givens Pursley LLP, P.O. Box 2720, Boise, ID 83701, 208-388-1200, jcf@givenspursley.com.

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