



THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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JULY 2006

SMOKEJUMPER

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

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Editing: *Bill Fogarty, Emmy Haynes, Jill Leger, K. G. Sheley, and Denis Symes*

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

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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

Ernest Buck Pino
(NCSB-56) passed away in 1996. Buck was one of three brothers from Omak, Washington, who had all jumped out of NCSB. They had grown up a couple blocks away from Grandma's house in Omak, where I also was raised. When approached by his family to help fulfill his last wish, I

was more than happy to try and make that possible. His wish was to make one last jump out of a smokejumper aircraft. The idea was given thumbs up from levels above me in the organization as they also were friends of Buck and respected his career-long commitment to the smokejumping program. Buck's ashes were brought up to the base by his family and on a beautiful, sunny day above the Bear Creek drainage in the Methow Valley, Buck took his last flight. Eight jumpers went out the door before Buck, all getting into the spot. It was Buck's turn. I threw an additional streamer just for Buck, opened his ashes into the slipstream and told him to keep his feet together. It was a glorious day in the Methow and still brings a tear to my eye knowing that wishes were fulfilled on Buck's Last Jump.

Until next time, the door is yours (both body and soul), there's 100 yards of drift, and the whole world is a jump spot. Get Ready. 🇺🇸

Where Are These Guys?

Please send any information (addresses/email) to: John McDaniel, P.O. Box 105, Falun KS 67442 or email: jumpercj57@hotmail.com

<u>Name</u>	<u>Base</u>
Ed Barker	(MSO-50)
Lester Bradford	(MSO-50)
Hal Brown	(MSO-50)
Lee Brown	(MSO-50)
James Brown	(MSO-50)
Bob Butler	(MSO-50)
Robert Cochrane	(MSO-50)
Neil Dibble	(MSO-50)
Wallace Donaldson	(MSO-50)
Walter Fickel	(NCSB-50)
Calvin Floyd	(MSO-50)
William Gardippe	(MSO-50)
Joe Gardner	(CJ-50)
John Griffin	(MSO-50)
Jeroy Haines	(MSO-50)
Kelly Hammond	MYC-50)
(Hoot Gibson) Hanahan ..	(MSO-50)

Edwin Harmening	(MSO-50)
John Harris	(MSO-50)
Fred Hooker	(IDC-50)
Larry Howard	(MSO-50)
Kennith Jensen	(MSO-50)
Richard Kielhorn	(MSO-50)
Ronald Lindh	(MSO-50)
John Lovjoy	(CJ-50)
William Lovjoy	(MSO-50)
Arthur Lynn	(MSO-50)
Maurice Robertson	(CJ-50)
Charles Sena	(MSO-50)
Robert Skidmore	(MSO-50)
Lewis Thoman	(MSO-50)
Erwin Vanderheide	(MSO-50)
John Verbeck (Verbeck) ...	(MSO-50)
Charles Ward	(MSO-50)
Richard Allewett	(CJ-51)
Robert Anderson	(MYC-50)
Jim Ballard	(MSO-50)
Stanley Beesley	(MSO-50)
Randall Best	(MSO-51)

Jumpers to the Grand

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

Grand Canyon's Lava Falls are breath-taking Colorado River rapids. I have run them three times, and they still put my heart in my throat. A V-wave at the top of the rapids can catch a raft and turn it over into the swirl below. For this wave, the larger the raft, the better. Only a highly experienced person should row these rapids in a small raft. I once watched **Jim Rush** (MYC-65) and his wife, Mary Lou, hit the V-wave in a small raft. Jim rowed strongly into the first wave and was tossed into the rapids as the strong current snapped his oarlock; Mary Lou was left in the raft. As Jim bobbed in the current, Mary Lou grabbed the remaining oar and steadied the boat. She made it through the "Big Drop" alone as Jim scrambled out at the bottom.

For three weeks in July 2005, I traveled down the Colorado River with a group of family and friends. **Doug**

Abromeit (MYC-71) and his wife, Janet, also were there. Doug, the Director of Avalanche Forecasting and Safety in Sun Valley, and I trained together in 1971 and were both still jumping fires in 1982. He is a skier of merit and a 5.13 rock climber, which puts him near the top of the heap. I started running wild rivers 37 years ago as a teenager on the Snake River near Jackson Hole. Doug had only rafted a river once before, but we were still a team 34 years after first jumping together.



Jerry Dixon (NSA file)

I dislocated my right shoulder two times in 2004; once in the Alaska Mt. Wilderness Classic Race and then skiing in Utah. I was just a few weeks out of a sling when the Colorado trip started; rowing an overloaded 20-foot El Grande raft through the Grand Canyon was pushing it.

The sky was clear during the three weeks we were on the Colorado, and Grand Canyon Julys are hot! Daytime shade temperatures hit 124 degrees and in the sun - 136! I wore a long-sleeved shirt, hat, bandanna and frequently jumped into the 49-degree water. Each evening, we would soak our sheets and bathe in the river before turning in. It was still 100 degrees at 3 AM, so we would re-soak our sheets.

Enjoyable evenings were spent watching the golden sunlight rise up the 5000-foot canyon walls, changing the colors of the rock. It was a great time to relive jump memories. I had heard much about **Jim Rush** (MYC-65) before ever meeting him. When I was struggling through jump school, I heard stories about Jim that were part of McCall's history.

"Jim, I heard you smoked a cigarette thru your jump mask just to push the trainer's buttons," I once said. "That's right," he responded.

I then asked him about the classic story of being treed-up. His jump buddy came over to find out why he hadn't lowered himself. Hanging in the tree Jim replied, "I don't have a let-down rope."

"You don't have a rope? Why?" his partner asked. "I sold it," Jim answered. Another jumper had to climb up and hand him a rope. Jim responded that this story was also true. In 1969, Jim met his wife, Mary Lou. Six weeks later they were married and spent the next five years teaching in Barrow, Alaska. They live on a beautiful ranch outside McCall; Jim flies his airplane from their homestead.

Another rafter, John Davis, was a prime example of "life not being fair." John is 6' 2", blond hair, blue eyes and an excellent boater. Like myself he is in his 50s, yet he has the physique of a 29 year old smokejumper. His knows the Colorado River well.

Watching the kayaks shoot the rapids was a real joy. When

NSA Members — Save This Information

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

Smokejumper magazine

Articles, obits, change of address

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

Membership

John McDaniel 785-668-2093
jumpercj57@hotmail.com
P.O. Box 105
Falun, KS 67442-0105

All else

Doug Houston 406-844-0326
doughouston@centurytel.net
NSA President
P.O. Box 1022
Lakeside, MT 59922

Trails 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

I kayaked the river in November 1978 during high water, it rained everyday, and the Colorado River's flow rose to 28,000 cubic feet per second! Running the rapids felt as though a giant grabbed you and thrashed you to the bottom. I was upside down most of the time and rolled along the bottom of the river. There wasn't another party on the river, but higher up, helicopter rescues were being conducted as the Canyon's North Rim received three feet of snow.

This trip, Doug and I worked out a system for the big rapids. We decided to face each other with Doug's back to the waves. I have almost four decades of whitewater experience

under my belt while Doug's broad shoulders would provide the strength. Most rowers take the right side of the falls, but we decided to go left. As we hit the first wave, the left oar was ripped from my hand, striking Doug in the chest. He grabbed the oar and made several critical rows before the violent waves knocked him down into the raft. I grabbed the oars and kept the raft straight until Doug climbed back up. Together, we then rowed through the maelstrom below.

Afterwards, one of our rivermates comments, "You two are just like brothers."

"We are brothers, Brothers from the Sky." 🐼

Jumps I Remember or Can't Forget

by Wild Bill Yensen (McCall '53)

The essence of smokejumping is, of course, the jump. All the "bros," young and old, will agree with that. I was indeed fortunate to be able to stretch my jumping years to 30 seasons. I started as a junior in college needing a good paying summer job to keep me in school and out of Korea. I was hired at McCall because **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) needed a pitcher for his spring baseball team and I was pitching for the University of Redlands. I was thrilled to get the job and earn the \$1.56 per hour as a GS-5 smokejumper. During jump training, I pitched four nine-inning games in eight days.

Of course, one of the most memorable jumps of all is the first! It was on June 29, 1953. After 52 years I still remember sitting in the old T-air looking out the open door at the shadow of the plane, watching the shadow get smaller and smaller as we lifted off. I said to myself, "What the hell am I doing here?" When it was my turn, I hooked up and got in the door. The spotter, **Gene Ellis** (MYC-51), slapped me and said, "Hit'er Billy." Out I went. It was all automatic after numerous times off the jump tower with the old hemp rope. When the old white FS-1 opened, I thought I was in heaven. It was great! The plane was gone, it was quiet, the world was down there, and all I had to do was try to land near the orange tarp. The trainer, **Seymour Peterson** (MYC-46), was yelling instructions on the bull horn. I was a little too stiff on landing, hurting my right knee a little, but I jumped up totally thrilled by that new experience. I was hooked! Of course I put my "L" out as I had been trained. If you forgot that, you did many pushups!

A jump I can't forget was my last practice jump on July 3rd. We jumped a fire set by the trainers. I jumped out of the Ford, and somehow my lines cabled up to the point that I fell two thirds of the way down before the chute billowed. There were so many twists I was still trying to untwist when I hit the ground. People on the ground thought I had a streamer.

Another unforgettable jump and the most memorable of all, was my first fire jump. It was July 11, 1953, my mother's 49th birthday. The fire was near War Eagle Lookout, up near the Salmon River. **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43), who started the McCall unit, was the spotter. We had the Travelair, so we could only jump two at a time. The Travelair shuttled back and forth

to the fire till we got eight jumpers on it. **Bob Thornton** (MYC-53) was my jump partner and we were the last two. I was scared shitless, but I went with the slap. All that I really remember was I couldn't get to the spot, so I landed about 75 yards from it in a snow bank. I was thrilled to be in one piece on the ground.

Being Wayne Webb's pitcher promptly got me into the loft and rigger training. When I was packing my first chute, good old "**Paperlegs**" **Peterson** (MYC-47) was at the next table watching me. He gave me all kinds of advice. I put the chute together and tore it down the required number of times and then put it in my bin. On July 31, we got a Ford-load call for Blind Creek on the Challis. As luck would have it, all the way to the fire at 80 mph, "Paperlegs" sat next to me and needled me the whole trip. "Are you positive you tied off the apex with three wraps of breakcord?" and on and on. He had me so scared when I jumped that when the old FS-1 opened I was so relieved that I didn't pull a string on it all the way down. I landed in a bunch of boulders with one small patch of dirt for my feet and was OK.

The next jump I can't forget was on Oxbow Creek near the Snake River on Aug. 12, 1953, and my first injury. When I hit the ground my right foot went into a gopher hole and, as I went into my Allen Roll, I heard a big pop! I had sprained my ankle.

On Sept. 1, I jumped with "**Bud**" **Filler** (MYC-52) on Stub Creek on the Salmon. Bud wrote about this one in his book, *Two Man Stick*. I treed up big time and had a letdown with a break-over of over 100 feet. Then I had to climb down from the tree with pole spurs. Bud pulled my chute out of the tree and there went my rope. That was the most dangerous thing I ever did in 30 years of smokejumping!

A jump I would like to forget was on Sept. 9, 1953, on Red Mountain on the Challis forest. **Reid Jackson** (MYC-49), the spotter, grabbed a heavy drift chute. It went down fast so I was afraid he wouldn't carry me far enough and, sure enough, he didn't. However, he was the boss, so I went. I turned into the wind and planed all I could. I was blown over the jump spot and hit the top of a tree on the very top of the ridge. I remem-



Merle Cables replaces PG bag with 30-30 (Courtesy B. Yensen)

ber grabbing the very top branches and, as they broke, I fell backwards. The next thing I knew, I was getting up off the ground and hit my head on a log. I was in a jackpot of logs under that tree with my chute fluttering down upon me. The chute was reopened, when I was about half way to the ground, by the wind coming up the hill. My jump partner, **Ray Johnsen** (MYC-52), had landed in the jump spot, hitting a rock and breaking his ankle. I could have been killed but came out unscathed. The Ford flew to Challis, landed and waited for the wind to go down, then came back and jumped another load around sundown. Wayne Webb said he hit harder on that jump than any in his long career.

My next memorable jump came on Sept. 14, 1954. **Merle Cables** (IDC-48), my brother-in-law, and I jumped on Sheepeater Ridge. I wrote this one up in *Smokejumper* several years ago. Merle jumped with his 30-30 and killed two deer. He was a college student on the GI Bill and got his winter meat on my last fire jump of 1954.

A jump I would just as soon forget was on West Creek on the Challis on White Knob. It was as bad as it can get - three o'clock in the afternoon, 100 degrees, and jumping out of the Ford at 10,000 feet! The smart guys landed in the trees, but I headed for a nice patch of sagebrush. I hit so hard I was stunned for five minutes. I lay there thinking I would never get up. I had never hit the ground that hard before or since. I shook one arm and it worked, I shook the other arm and it worked, then I did the same with both legs and they worked. So I got up.

After getting out of the Army, having been drafted and spending two years in Germany, I came back to jumping in '58. My first fire jump was on BLM land in Oregon near Robinette. We were jumping a Twin Beech with a brand new pilot and **Carl Rosselli** (MYC-48) as the spotter. The jump spot was about 1000 acres of sagebrush. Rosselli threw a set of streamers to check the wind, and then he put me in the door. The pilot expected us to drop another set of streamers, so he flew the next pass at normal speed, about 150 knots. I guess

Carl figured it didn't make much difference where I landed in a spot that big, so he kicked me out. When the old FS-1 flat pack opened it knocked me silly! I saw stars, planets, comets, and supernovas light up in my head. Had I not had good body position, I might have really been hurt. Those old FS-1 chutes had stamped on them, "Do not jump at over 150 mph," and that's what we were doing! It's a wonder I didn't blow a panel. That opening was so hard, I think it caused me to go from 5' 9" down to 5' 8".

On a trip to Redding I jumped two fires. One was near Mt. Shasta and, on July 25, 1958, I was the first to jump a fire on the El Dorado Forest. It was east of Auburn and was a "biggie!" We jumped out of a Lockheed Loadstar. "Paperlegs" Peterson was the spotter. I had my first and only Mae West. I could see that the lines that were over were on the side and, if I worked on them, I could get them off. I did manage to free them and steer the chute. By then I was so low that I only had two choices: a big oak tree or a big pile of rocks! I chose the oak tree, which may have not been the best choice as I hit the top of the tree and stopped. The chute covered me as I started falling through the tree. I went "ass over teakettle" down those big branches till I found myself hanging from my left foot with two shroud lines holding me. I yelled, but no response from my J. P. as he was half a mile away. If I cut the lines holding me, I would kill myself on a rock five feet below my head. I had to do some upside down gymnastics to get out of that alive. Moreover, we had to hike fourteen miles through poison oak to get back to base. I suffered from that but stayed away from poison oak for the next twenty years.

My next memorable jump was on Clayton Ridge on the Challis on Aug. 12, 1958. We jumped out of the Ford with Merle Cables as our spotter. We had 40 acres of sagebrush for a jump spot. The wind was up high, and the streamers went straight down the last 200 feet. Merle threw several sets of streamers and got the last two sets right into the spot. He carried us about three miles from the spot, getting all of us into those 40 acres of sagebrush. We all landed safely. That was the longest horizontal ride I ever had.

Several years went by as I had to go to Army summer camps to fulfill my military obligation. I came back to smokejumping in 1961. On July 30, 1964, I had my only fire jump of that year. It was in a very tough place, right behind Old Nick in very rough country on the Krassel District of the Payette. I had an inversion and had to find my guide lines through the twists and then drive down backwards, looking under my arms and between my legs. Somehow I managed to land in the jump spot. On that fire I jumped with some pretty well educated people: **Jim Lancaster** (MYC-62), a college senior, **Dr. Dave Hemry** (MYC-64) and **Dr. Jack Seagraves** (MYC-63).

A very memorable jump was on June 27, 1966. We flew to Nevada in a DC-3 that had been used for spraying bugs. It stunk inside and several guys got sick. Our fire was a stand of bristlecone pine on top of Troy Peak on the Humboldt Forest in central Nevada. We hit the ground at 11,000 feet elevation. We found a USGS survey marker just above where we landed, and it said 11,200 feet. Lucky we jumped in the morning in cool air. Bristlecone pine is the oldest living thing, and we saved a big stand of that gnarly looking tree.

That same year on July 22, **Del Catlin** (MYC-47) spotted four of us out on the Boise on a fire in Pistol Creek. We jumped out of the Turbo Porter. That airplane could fly very slow and turn very short. The canyon was steep and narrow, so we jumped at about 3000 feet above the spot. I was first out. When I hit the ground, I looked up and there were three chutes in the air. Del got us out so fast we were all in the air at once.

My next memorable jump is one that was terrifying! It was on Lost Packer on the Salmon Forest. We jumped out of the Doug with Wayne Webb as spotter. The streamers showed drift from over the canyon, a U-shaped glaciated 3000 foot gorge, to a nice jump spot on top of the mountain. We got out over the canyon and Big Ernie, or something, caused the wind to do a 180 from the time we dropped the streamers till we jumped. I was first out with **Al Stillman** (MYC-59) behind me. I headed for the spot and found I was losing ground, going backwards. I'll never forget watching the top of the mountain disappear. I was committed to go down into that canyon where there was no place to land. About 500 feet down was the ledge that the fire was on, and at one end was a scrawny lodgepole pine sticking out of the rocks. I took dead aim at that tree and did the best job of chute handling of my life. I hit that tree with arms and legs spread, wrapping myself around it and saying, "Catch me, you sweet son-of-a-bitch!" I survived and so did Al. He only weighed about 130 pounds. He landed on a rock ledge no more than two feet wide, and he stood up and grabbed the rocks. Had he fallen backwards he would have gone at least 2000 feet nearly straight down into jagged rocks. Big Ernie dealt us a bad hand that time.

The next year, on July 3, 1967, I got my first fire jump on the Salmon River on Rabbit Creek. I had a NED for a jump partner. We got out right over the Salmon River and headed for a tight spot near the top of the ridge. All of a sudden I looked up and here comes the NED heading right into my lines. I reached up, grabbed his boots and said, "Turn right, you idiot!" He did, and I got him out of my lines. We both landed safely. Had I not caught him and got us untangled, who knows what would have happened?

Later that year I jumped Corduroy Creek. The first stick got blown way off line, so the spotter, **Dale Schmaljohn** (MYC-60), threw two more sets of streamers and I was next. The jump was fine till I got to about 500 feet, and then I got a wind blast that took me over the treetops at a very high speed. My chute snagged a lodgepole pine about 75 feet high and bent it nearly double. It broke when I was only ten feet off the ground so I landed pretty softly, but then that damn treetop came down on me. The helmet and jump suit did their jobs and I survived again.

In 1970 I was sent to La Grande as back-up. It turned out I was the only spotter. I spotted fires for a week while every one else jumped around me. I went to **Lee Walton** (RDD-63), the base manager, and bitched that I wanted to jump. He said he appreciated all the spotting I had done and requested another spotter from NCSB. The new spotter was **Mike Tabler** (NCSB-67) and it was his first spotting assignment. We got a fire call for Mahogany Creek near the Snake and Imnaha Rivers. We were in the Twin Beech we called the "Jumper

Dumper," and it had a spotter's window in the belly forward of the door. Tabler threw the streamers. As we watched them drop, I told him to line it up and I would go when I wanted. I don't think he heard me. When we got over the place just a bit upwind of the spot, I jumped. **James "Duke" Norfleet** (MYC-70) was next, and he watched where I got out. He said about four seconds after I jumped, Tabler turned around and slapped at thin air as I was gone. He grabbed Duke by the throat and jammed him against the wall and said, "Don't you dare jump till I slap you!" Duke said, "Yes, sir." On the next pass Duke got out the same place I did. We landed right next to the fire in a grassy spot. The other two guys were carried way too far and landed in the rocks. They were lucky not to get hurt.

In 1971 I had my only trip to Silver City, New Mexico. **Rod Dow** (MYC-68) and I were jump partners, and we jumped about ten miles from the Gila Cliff Dwellings way up high in the Jeffery pines. It was the only fire jump I had where I floated through a rain cloud and got wet on the way down.

The next memorable jump was on Disappointment Creek on the Payette on Aug. 18, 1972. I wrote this one up in *Smokejumper*. The canyon was about 4000 feet deep and steep. A 90-degree wind shift blew us out over the canyon. I could see that for every foot out it was two feet back up. I used a trick I had learned from "Paperlegs" years before and tried slipping. I grabbed three lines and climbed them till I got hold of the skirt and fell out of the sky. I let go just above the treetops and landed safely. **Scott "Mouse" Warner** (RDD-69), my jump partner, was farther out and when he saw me slip he did, too. It saved him from going clear to the bottom. I was only fifty yards down in the canyon, so I got out, tooled-up, lined the fire and was cooking supper when Mouse finally got out of the canyon.

On Aug. 29, 1972, I jumped on Range Creek on the Payette, and I thought it would be my last jump. When I got back I had to retire as I would be 40 years old in November. I had to resign, which I did.

I'm really happy that the National Smokejumper Association talked sense into the Forest Service and convinced them they were losing valuable man power. At that time there was a physical fitness test. They had successfully argued that if a guy over forty could pass the fitness test, he could continue to jump. Del Catlin called me in the middle of the winter

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and told me I could come back as a temporary, which I did for the next fourteen years.

I came back in 1973 and passed the fitness test. On Aug. 23 that year I jumped a fire up on Steamboat near Warren with **Mike "Spanky" Young** (MYC-71). I will never forget this one! Del Catlin was spotting. We had to strip spot and fly sideways to the wind because of the steepness of the mountain. When the streamers went out, I felt the plane drop. The streamers went straight into the spot, so Del had us hook up. When he slapped me, I felt the plane drop but out I went. I felt the opening, looked up to see a full canopy and was just getting hold of the toggles when I landed in a tree! I figure it took about seven seconds from going out the door till I was in that tree. We had jumped in an all-time sinker. Catlin never thought of timing the streamers. Both Mike and I hung up and survived the shortest jumps of our lives.

In 1974 on June 25, I jumped with a Doug load on Squaw Basin in the high Uintas of Northern Utah. I was first out and hit at about 9500 feet. We tried to fight this fire with primitive tools: pulaskis, shovels and crosscuts. It blew up and went from an acre, when we jumped, to 6000 acres when we stopped it six days later. After the second day of blow-ups, the Governor of Utah said, "That fire is burning my favorite elk country. Forget the primitive area rules; get chainsaws, pumps, helicopters, the whole nine yards and put that fire out!" I was a sector boss at the head of the fire when we stopped it. That was one of the hardest days I ever put in. We met that fire with pumps and fog nozzles and stopped it.

On Aug. 4 that year, I jumped Brush Creek on the Payette. On that jump I caught a ground wind that gave me a backwards "Nantucket sleigh ride" through about a hundred yards of skunk cabbage before I could pop my capewells. That ground wind caught me and must have been going backwards at over forty.

1975 was a poor fire year. On July 7, I jumped a fire on Mt. Chopaka in Washington on the Canadian border. We jumped out of the Beech 99 with no step. I got a bunch of twists and when I got untwisted I had two choices: big rocks at the bottom of a rock slide or small rocks at the top. I took the top but I hyperflexed my right ankle. I was able to fight fire for a couple of hours before my ankle swelled up. My second injury put me off the jump list, but only for three days. Later that year I saw a UFO but that is another story.

The next fire jump, the one I am most proud of because I probably saved many injuries, was on Aug. 15, 1979. We were sent to Mortar Creek on the Challis, which had been burning for a couple of weeks. They wanted us to jump near the peaks and dig line down to the Middle Fork. We flew over a knife-edge ridge and threw streamers. When the streamers went past the ridge top they took off like bullets. They did this on both sides of the ridge. After seeing this I told the spotter, "We are not jumping here!" We went down lower and jumped in a safe area. A copter took us safely to the ridge, no one got hurt, and we put in the line that stopped the fire. Had we jumped in those sinkers, we would have broken numerous legs and ankles.

On Aug. 28, 1981, I jumped the Leggit Fire on the Boise. I came down a steep slope. When my heels hit they went out from under me, and the next thing to hit was my butt. Natu-

rally I hit a rock and black and blued my butt. We fought the fire for two days and I was in a world of hurt. I could stand up and work, but could not sit or lay down.

On July 7, 1985, I jumped the Sheep Creek Trail Fire on the Boise. I opened up and headed for the spot. To my amazement the Doug was below me dropping the next stick. I had caught a thermal and was blown back up high. I think I spent about fifteen minutes in the air on that jump because every time I would head for the spot I would be blown back up in the sky. I finally gave up and went for a different place and landed 200 yards from where I wanted to go.

On a training jump in Bear Basin in 1985, I caught the backside of an air burble and got slam-dunked from treetop level. I did a great Allen Roll and got up with only a sore ankle. I thank the early training I had in the 50s for surviving that one.

On July 7 of that year I jumped Purple Mountain on the Siskiyou in Oregon. It was the first jump I ever had where I sat in the door and looked at the Pacific Ocean. We jumped for a ridge top. When I was low enough to see detail on the ridge, I saw very, very dense brush and wanted no part of that. Instead I chose some madrone trees, the tops of which looked like a lawn. I disappeared into those trees, went right through, and hit the ground very softly. I pulled on my chute and it also came right through the branches without a snag. That brush I avoided was so thick it took me half an hour to get to the first cargo chute I could see. Thank goodness it was a chain saw. I had to cut trails through that brush to every chute that landed up there. I ran two gallons of gas through the chain saw that day and earned my pay big time. This jump was neat because we took off from the old Cave Junction base airstrip that I had avoided for years because of poison oak. Luckily there was no poison oak on Purple Mountain.

My last jump was of course very memorable. It was on Aug. 23, 1986, on the Mountain Home District of the Boise. My old friend, **Barry Koncinsky** (MYC-74), was the spotter. I jumped with **Mick Volpe** (RDD-75), **Bob Shoemaker** (MYC-76) and **Mick Moore** (MYC-77). I knew this would be my last. My wife, Arlene, was there to see me off as she had done many, many times before. It was a good fire: a little hard work, a good BS time around the camp fire, a short packout the next day, a trip back to McCall, and my jumping career was over.

As I said before, the jump is where it is at! The elation and freedom you see and feel in a parachute jump as you sit there high above the real world is the essence of smokejumping. Then on the ground you work with the best people on this planet. The "bros" of smokejumping (gals count too) are the best of the best! I have been around smokejumpers for over fifty years, and they are all about the same: nutty, smart, adventurous, strong, athletic, and last but not least, real. There are no phonies in smokejumping because we all have to face that open door and that decent into the unknown. When we get down, we do our job and hustle back to do it again.

My old pappy had a toast that is very appropriate to smokejumpers. He would say, "Here's to us. Who's like us? Damn few!" 🍷

Bill can be reached at: 150 S Crystal Lakes Dr Unit 37, Saint George UT 84770 or Yensenw@infowest.com



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1963 an Air America C-46 was shot down over Laos. Five people, including **Gene DeBruin** (MSO-59), parachuted from the flaming aircraft and were captured by the Pathet Lao. We have run several articles on Gene in *Smokejumper* and *The Static Line*.

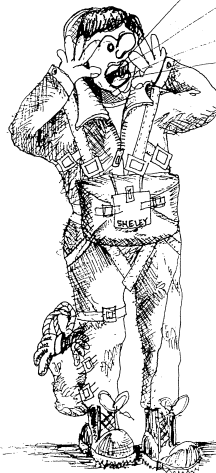
A little over two years and an unsuccessful escape attempt later, Lt. Duane Martin (USAF) was added to the group of five. In February 1966, Lt. Dieter Dengler (USN) became the seventh prisoner in that camp. In July of that year, these seven individuals carried out the largest POW escape of the Vietnam War. Dieter Dengler's successful escape has been chronicled in the documentary *Little Dieter Needs To Fly* by Werner Herzog and also in Dengler's book *Escape From Laos*.

Among the Air America crew was Thai kicker Phisit Intharathat. Thanks to Gene's brother, **Jerry DeBruin**, and **Fred Rohrbach**, I had access to Phisit's 52-page narrative that relates an amazing story of survival and courage. Phisit is an Associate Life Member of the NSA and was in attendance at the 2004 reunion in Missoula.

While working on the daunting task of condensing the work down to half of the original document, I read Dengler's *Escape From Laos* to get a better mental picture of the time and also to see it from another person's point of view. In Dengler's book, Gene DeBruin was really developed as a person. The addition of this knowledge changed my plan of attack for the story. I now had to incorporate Dengler's story into Phisit's narrative and do justice to both. The chronology was a big problem. There were many conflicts in dates and times that took some real sorting out. The names of the prisons were confusing. Thanks to Fred Rohrbach for some correction and direction here.

After getting Phisit's 52-pages and Dieter's book down to 26 pages, a picture library needed to be obtained to put faces on individuals and place the readers in the jungles of Laos. Fred travels to Vietnam numerous times each year and obtained pictures from Phisit. Fellow Gobi jumper, **Johnny Kirkley**, came up with a great set of Air America photos from his collection. The Air America Association people were very helpful in getting the correct names of AA personnel in the article.

Even with editing, the story will need to be run in several issues. The first part will be the lead story in the October issue of *Smokejumper*. I've run the draft of the article by several people and their reaction has been the same; "You can't put it down." Unfortunately, you will have to put it down, as I will need at least three issues to print the story. Phisit's survival of over more than three years as a prisoner in some of the harshest conditions imaginable is inspiring and extraordinary.



The account of Gene DeBruin is even as heroic and touching. Gene gave up any chance of escape to partner with a friend who was the oldest and weakest of the group. From a future issue of *Smokejumper*:

"Duane (Martin) and I kept running. We heard the sound of someone coming to our left and ducked into the bush and froze. The familiar red head appeared and there was Gene and Y.C. We started to move off

together but Y.C. held us back. Then Duane ran on ahead while I stopped and took hold of Gene's hand. 'Go on, go on,' he said. 'See you in the States.' I looked into Gene's face and got all choked up. I tried to say something but the words wouldn't come. I pumped his hand, began running, then stopped and waved at him and Y.C." 🐼

Help Needed on "Lost Jumper" Search

We now have approximately 1700 ex-jumpers that the NSA cannot locate. NSA's Membership Chairman, **John McDaniel** (CJ-57), invites any member who is computer literate to join him in an effort to locate the 1700 "missing" jumpers using a computer search engine(s) and your free time.

The names, based on rookie training base, will be parceled out, and each volunteer will be responsible for his/her own segment. The size of the segments will depend on the number of volunteers. Any volunteer who finds *five* of the missing will get an added year to their membership.

If you are interested in helping the NSA expand its membership, you are invited to contact John at jumpercj57@hotmail.com to get your name on the list and receive specific instructions. The more volunteers we get, the easier this task will be. 🐼

Russian Smokejumpers: The Pre-War Years

by Bruce Ford (Missoula '70)

In July 2006, Avialesookhrana, the Russian Aerial Fire Protection Service, celebrated its 75th anniversary. This civilian government organization is responsible for protecting Russia's vast forests from fire, insects, disease, and other dangers. Its activities range from suppressing fires that threaten reindeer pasturage in the far north to dropping leaflets bearing fire-prevention messages over remote villages. At its height, AFPS was the largest aerial fire service in the world, employing thousands of smokejumpers and rappellers and hundreds of aircraft. Its history parallels and often anticipates developments in the West.

AFPS's origins can be traced back to the twenties, when the USSR was increasingly using airplanes for forestry work, primarily for aerial photography, forest inventory, and surveys of insect damage. In the course of these flights, fires were also detected. The need for experienced foresters in the air led, in 1931, to flight training for S.P. Rumyanstev, G.V. Stadnitski, and G.G. Samoilovich. These flying foresters became the first Russian practitioners of a new profession, that of pilot-observer.

To determine the feasibility of systematic aerial fire detection, officials proposed an expedition for the summer of 1931 near Urin in the Nizhnigorodski region. Operations were under the auspices of the Leningrad Forestry Research Institute. The three pilot-observers and a ground man, V.V. Antipin, assembled maps and navigational equipment and began in June by checking the accuracy of plotting fire location from the air. They accomplished this by building bonfires at known locations and comparing the aerially plotted coordinates. Accuracy for two-thirds of the plots was within two kilometers, and for the other third within five kilometers.

AFPS Is Born-1931

On July 7, the first operational detection flight was flown for an hour and a half in a U-2 biplane. This date is taken as the birthday of AFPS. In the course of the expedition, 1.5 million hectares were covered in 40 hours of flight at around 3,000 feet, and 14 fires were detected. In 1932, a members

of a similar expedition in southern Karelia and the Leningrad region flew three planes for 144 hours and detected 92 fires burning a total of 814 hectares. Throughout the early thirties, the program expanded aerial patrols and refined coordination with ground-based authorities and firefighting forces. Local forestry authorities were apprised of a fire's location, size, behavior, and recommended manning level by message dropper, usually within 20 to 25 minutes of a fire's detection.

The early thirties also saw experiments in dropping bombs filled with fire-extinguishing chemicals and the first use of fireline explosives. Dropping fire-retardant bombs was ultimately deemed impractical, as they would fling burning material up to 100 meters and start new spot fires; the retardant would vaporize so finely as to be ineffective in extinguishing fire beyond a 7 to 8 meter radius. Sh-2 floatplanes were used for patrolling areas with large concentrations of water bodies.

In February 1936, aerial fire operations were given a formal structure with the formation of the All-Union Government Forestry Aviation Trust, or "Lesavia," based in Leningrad. Four permanent bases were established, at Semyonov in the Gorkiy region, at Krasnoborsk in the Archangel region, at Krasnoyarsk in Siberia, and at Solikamsk in the Perm region. Regular patrol routes were established, and by 1939, they were



Northern Airbase assistant chief and head pilot-observer Evlania Gruzdova (right) checks patrol route with pilot-observer V.M. Kovesnikov, Archangel Region, 1953. Gruzdova trained as a pilot-observer in 1942 and actually served in the stated capacity from 1956-67. Her account of her first operational flight is given at the end of this article. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)



Jumpers training to jump from the second seat via the wing, and directly from the third seat. Northern Airbase, Archangel, 1950. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)

logging around 7,000 flight hours yearly. The four bases had 11 operational sub-bases and numerous landing strips cut out of the taiga along the patrol routes. Lesavia also conducted a widespread fire-prevention campaign, which included dropping informational leaflets over remote settlements.

Aviation Grows In Popularity

Plans for dropping men and supplies by parachute to fires were first worked out in 1934. The rise of smokejumping in the Soviet Union must be considered in the context of an explosive growth of interest in aviation there in the thirties. The USSR had its own counterparts to U.S. aviation heroes such as Lindbergh, and a raft of young adventurers aspired to conquer the sky. With an eye to national defense and to fuel patriotism, Stalin encouraged wide participation in the single-minded goal of pursuing ever more daring aviation records. In April 1935, the government decreed mandatory jump and aviation training for both sexes from ages 16 to 24 among the nearly 5 million members of the Komsomol, the Communist youth organization. *The New York Times* reported the program included "at least one jump from a parachute tower during 1935." These towers, from which a captive parachute descends at reduced speed, began to sprout like mushrooms across the country.

Since the early thirties, thousands of young men and women had been taking advantage of government-sponsored skydiving, and some were soon setting records for altitude and

delayed openings. On September 22, 1935, *The New York Times* reported: "An outstanding performance is that recently established by Anna Shishmareva and Galina Pyasetskaya, students at the Moscow Physical Culture Institute, who jumped without oxygen apparatus from a height of 26,200 feet...Other records that belong to the Soviet Union are Batitski's leap from 24,500 feet at night, the delayed opening at night of M.G. Zobelin, director of the all-union parachute meet, from 11,880 feet, and [Nicolai] Yevdokimov's daylight delayed opening from 26,300 feet."

Military applications of parachuting were also growing apace. The first All-Union Aviation Festival near Moscow in August 1933 featured a 46-man mass jump and the cargo drop of a tank. Around 500 troops were dropped during war games near Kiev in September 1935, and by September 1937, 2,200 paratroopers were participating in a simulated assault on a "Western invader" at games in Byelorussia. Parachute applications had also included the dropping of doctors to attend to medical emergencies in remote places. Parachuting had become something of a national mania.

The First Russian Smokejumpers-1935

The first experimental smokejumper drops were undertaken in the Gorkiy region in 1935. A group of three under the direction of Georgiy A. Mokeev made 50 jumps from a U-2 using PT-1 parachutes and determined the optimum drop altitude to be 300 to 400 meters. Mokeev was a researcher at



Rappeller and SU-B drum-type descent device for helicopter rappels up to 45 meters. Central Airbase, 1970. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)

the Central Forestry Research Institute and one of the most active proponents of using parachutes in forestry work, though he had come to jumping at a relatively advanced age.

In the Archangel region of Krasnoborsk, spring 1936 saw Mokeev overseeing training for the first group of 17 Soviet smokejumpers, including one woman, Claudia Feodorovna Obrucheva (later Muzhinskaya). The primary task of these jumpers was to mobilize and direct ground firefighting forces from villages and towns closest to the detected fires. This was necessitated by the nature of the U-2, a two-place biplane with room only for a pilot-observer and jumper. Standard procedure was for the jumper to climb out on the lower wing and jump in or near the village, no doubt precipitating great astonishment among the inhabitants of these isolated hamlets.

Mokeev set forth the necessary qualifications for smokejumpers: "[The] future professional should be, first of all, a good parachutist, as he must execute jumps...outfitted as a firefighter...[I]n addition, the smokejumper should be a first-rate specialist in suppression of all kinds of fires using all existing methods. Inasmuch as the smokejumper is an aviation worker, he is obliged to fly long distances by airplane in varying meteorological conditions and in heavy smoke; he must be able to orient in the air, know the basics of aerial navigation and of airplanes, and recognize weather conditions suitable for parachute operations." Further, "all activities of the

smokejumper demand good physical development, agility, and constant physical training."

On June 12, 1936, a parachute instructor made the first jump to mobilize local residents to fight a forest fire. This was from a U-2, near the village of Osenki in the Gorkiy region. The same month, Mokeev made fire jumps near the villages of Telki and Kutev.

In 1937, the Krasnoborsk group of 17 jumpers mobilized a total of 4,500 firefighters on 80 fires. To aid accuracy in jumping small spots near fires, a standard drift chute was adopted for gauging wind; it was a meter in diameter and weighted to fall at 5 meters per second, the average descent rate of a jumper.

In 1938, forest aviation set the goal of using jumpers alone to suppress fires, without the aid of the local populace. To this end, the Krasnoborsk base was staffed with a greater concentration of jumpers and equipped with supplies for actively fighting fire. Thus the organization began, on a small scale, to move toward using aerially deployed firefighting crews. That year 141 jumps were made to mobilize locals, and nine fires suppressed solely by smokejumpers. In addition, 4.4 tons of tools, fire-extinguishing chemicals, and provisions were supplied by air. Experience was showing that fires were most effectively fought by smokejumpers, but wider application had to await the availability of larger aircraft.

Partnering With The Parachute Industry

In the late thirties, there was much interaction between "sport" parachuting organizations and forest aviation. An active campaign was instituted to draw forestry people into jumping, and experienced skydivers were recruited to train and upgrade the qualifications of smokejumpers. This close relationship has continued to the present day.

A native parachute industry had existed in Russia since at least the teens and twenties. Beginning in 1910, G.E. Kotelnikov, the largely self-taught father of Russian parachute design, set himself the task of perfecting an emergency chute for aviators. Though initially rebuffed by the tsarist bureaucracy, he continued development of new and advanced designs through the thirties.

The PT-1 parachute system first used by smokejumpers included a main and reserve together weighing 17.5 to 19.5 (38-43 pounds) kilograms and made of very durable silk and perkal (a textile). The main's quick opening (2.5 to 3 seconds) made it effective even at low altitude, and it was used in a record low-altitude jump of 80 meters (260 feet) in 1933. The container was equipped with shoulder straps for packing out through the forest after jumping. Another early smokejumper parachute system was the PD-6, whose reserve was permanently attached to the main harness. Despite the inconveniences this entailed, the PD-6 was long used in forest aviation. Pilots and pilot-observers used a seatpack emergency chute, the PL.

On the eve of the USSR's entry into World War II, smokejumping was a well-established program with detailed operational protocols. In 1940, there were 70 Soviet smokejumpers and a fleet of 110 airplanes patrolling an area of 109 million hectares; that year, jumpers participated in

suppressing over 500 fires.

The Soviet Union Goes To War

On June 22, 1941, German armies attacked the Soviet Union, precipitating a long hiatus in smokejumping. Jumpers, pilots, and aircraft were quickly mobilized for the war effort, and the U-2s were adapted for use as light, night bombers. Virtually the entire Krasnobor aviation group of planes, pilots, and pilot-observers went immediately to the active army, and within two months, nearly all the jumpers were at the front. The Lesavia organization was evacuated from Leningrad to Kirov and began assembling replacements for the mobilized staff. Aerial forest protection was sharply curtailed, particularly in central Russia, but nevertheless continued throughout the war.

Many women were trained to fill the ranks of pilots, mechanics, and pilot-observers. At Krasnobor, in 1942, 18 women were trained as pilot-observers and 10 as pilots for the P0-2, a newer version of the U-2. One of them, Evlania Gruzдова, who later served as chief pilot-observer for the Northern Airbase until 1967, recalled her first operational detection flight: "The U-2 crew was all female: pilot Varvara Strokova, mechanic Valentina Mikhina, and myself as pilot-observer. The fire was... 50 kilometers from the nearest town. The plane was open, the report forms and flight log stowed in an aluminum holder. The wind would tear papers from your hand, and there was a pencil in the briefcase. I sized up the fire quickly but was confused by the presence of a small settlement of a few houses on the Pinegi River, as it was not shown on my navigational map. Communication with the pilot was through a rubber hose, and Varvara ignored it, as the noise was so loud. And there was also a lot of turbulence. I didn't know the name of the village where we were dropping the report. On seeing the plane, many people came out on the riverbank. We came in across the river to drop the



jumper squad leader ignites fireline explosives. Explosives had been used for fireline construction since the late forties. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)

report, and I was afraid it would go in the water, but it worked out okay: they got the report. It turned out this was the newly built settlement of Osyatkino, for rifle stock production. The whole village put out the fire; there was nowhere to get outside help. There was no telephone. We also notified the forestry headquarters about the fire. For finding this fire, Varvara and I were rewarded with suede material to make slippers."

Many of the women trained in the war years continued to work in forest aviation into the fifties and sixties, until retirement. Smokejumping remained an empty occupation until after the war, when the tide of returning veterans and newer, larger aircraft allowed the rebirth of aerial firefighting in a new form. 🐿

The principal source for this article was E.A. Shchetinsky's history of Avialesookhrana, Avialesookhrana Rossii (Moscow 2001). Other sources included The New York Times and historical material provided by Avialesookhrana.

Bruce Ford can be reached at 440 N. Adams St., Missoula, MT 59802; or at bgoford@centric.net.



Assortment of retardant bombs dropped from Po-2. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)



Items from the Fire Pack



Something Worthwhile

My first CPS camp was in South Dakota constructing an earthen dam. After more than two years, I got a chance to transfer to Camp 103 and the smokejumpers. Jumping and fighting fires was a thrilling and exhilarating experience and the enthusiasm never waned. Every time I put a fire out, I felt I had accomplished something worthwhile. I lost sleep waiting for the next jump.

Every jump was a separate adventure.

Clarence Tieszen (Missoula '45)

Unique Collection Of People

Levi was a CPS-103 smokejumper in the summer of 1945. He served the full fire season and was discharged back to his home Hutterite colony in South Dakota. Levi viewed his CPS years as a school and later said, "CPS was my first college!" Thrilled with his experiences (CPS) and secure in the knowledge that, for four years, he had rubbed shoulders with a unique collection of people, he was ready to challenge any kind of "stuffed shirt" pronouncement not carefully subjected to reason. Levi started a 32-year teaching career teaching English, German and Hutterite Christian History in his home colony. The Hutterites are the oldest and most successful Christian communal society in the world, having existed for more than 450 years.

Notes from Roy Wenger on Levi Tschetter (Missoula '45)

A Flight Instructor

I transferred to the smokejumper unit as a Flight Instructor and camp clerk. A number of the smokejumpers had pooled their money to purchase a trainer plane. I found a tandem Taylorcraft in New

Jersey and flew it to Hale Field in Missoula. Later the camp office and messhall were moved to the Savanac Nursery at Haugen, Montana. I also taught Morse Code during the off hours in the evenings. On January 20, 1946, Smokejumper Camp 103 closed. Art Wiebe and I loaded up the camp pickup with all the records and remaining CPS office equipment and headed for Missoula. They discharged me at the airport.

Richard Weaver (Flight Instructor CPS-103)

An Independent Thinker

I was born into an Ohio community of small farmers. The great value of the independence which farm ownership brought with it was the privilege of divergent thinking on issues of the day. There would be no immediate face-to-face opposition and no immediate economic pressure to conform. One did not need to cater to any one group or political party. One could discuss any school of thought or philosophy or creed as an independent farmer. In simple non-elegant words, this message was taught by my father and mother.

Roy Wenger Ph.D. (Administrator CPS-103 Smokejumpers)

Strong-Smelling Cat?

I was born on a farm in Indiana and part of my growing-up years were during the Great Depression. I can well remember the continual string of hitchhikers going along the highway going east and west looking for a job. Many stopped for a sandwich or a bowl of soup or to ask if they could sleep in the barn. We didn't turn them away and don't ever remember anyone stealing anything. My older brother and I had a trap line to make some money for the family. We checked the line before

going to school in the morning. One morning we caught a strong-smelling animal. I washed up real good and changed my clothes, but the girls on the bus soon made me aware that I should have skipped school that day.

David S. Yoder (CPS-103 Cook)

First Fire Jump In Idaho

Early in 1943 I heard about smokejumpers and I signed up immediately. Later, along with Phil Stanley (MSO-43) and Dave Flaccus (MSO-43), I made the first fire jump in Idaho. I was also on the fire when Ed Harkness (MSO-43) broke his leg. On the way to meet the packer, who was going to carry Ed out, I found a small lightning fire and put it out. During my last year (1945), I was on a patrol project and Wag Dodge (MSO-41) was our squadleader. After CPS I began an electrical business in Gridley, Illinois, and worked that until retirement.

Loren Zimmerman (Missoula '43)

Never a Better Collection of Individuals

I was born in Santiago, Chile, where my parents were missionaries. We returned to the U.S. in 1922 and moved near the University of Chicago, where my father was working on his Ph.D. at the Divinity School. I graduated from Northwestern in 1939 and was drafted into Civilian Public Service in 1942. I worked on a water-flow project (I was a physics major) at Camp Coshocton (Ohio) and volunteered for the smokejumper project in 1944. The 1944 season was a slow one, so most of us made about three fire jumps. Never before nor since have I been associated with a finer collection of people than the CPS-103 group.

Murray Braden (Missoula '44)

Our Squadleader Was An Ex-paratrooper

I entered the CPS in 1944 at Belton, Montana, and volunteered for the smokejumpers. I was too light but was accepted the next year. During training our squadleader was an ex-paratrooper named **Carl Naugle** (MSO-45). After CPS, I went to work at Swan Lake, Montana, stacking green lumber, one of the hardest jobs I ever had.

Ralph Belzer (Missoula '45)

One Guy Has Had 20 Years Of Education!

Finishing up at Gettysburg College in 1936, I did three years as a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. I then went to teach at the University of Puerto Rico before being drafted into the CPS in 1942. I joined the smokejumper unit in 1945. One day in our barracks in Twisp, one of the fellows was reading a report on the educational background of the

CPS smokejumpers. He exclaimed, "One guy has had 20 years of education." I concluded that I was that guy. After CPS, I finished my Ph.D. work, taught a year at Princeton and finished my teaching career at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

Bill Bristol (North Cascades '45) 🦋

The Death of PFC Malvin L. Brown: "In The Interest of Public Welfare"

by Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74)

Throughout 2003, each of the nation's nine smokejumper bases was presented with a plaque honoring the 30 smokejumpers whom have died in the line of duty since the program's inception in 1939. At that time little was known about Army PFC Malvin L. Brown, the first name on each of these plaques. Since the plaques were presented, additional information about Malvin's life has been found in period newspapers, the National Archives, Army records, U.S. Census reports and interviews with those who worked with him.

The 1920 National Census places Malvin's family in Baltimore, Maryland, nine months prior to his birth on October 11, 1920. His "Enlistment Card" confirms his place of birth as Maryland. He was the fifth child of Steve and Ethel Brown. According to Army documents, Malvin joined the U.S. Army in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 9, 1942, at the age of 22. He listed his home address at that time as Haverford, Pennsylvania. From his military "Emergency Contact" form, we know that shortly after joining the Army he married Edna L. Brown, and that during WWII she was living in Narberth, Pennsylvania, about three miles east of Haverford. She was also listed as his primary beneficiary, followed by his sister, Dorothy Atley, of Haverford, Pennsylvania, and his mother, Ethel Green, of York, Pennsylvania.

At that time few African Americans were allowed in combat positions. Most were assigned to service units working in supply, transportation, security or food service. At some time after taking Army basic training, Malvin heard about an all-volunteer African American paratrooper unit made up of transfers recruited from other Army units. Paratrooper volunteers were required to be 18 to 32 years old, not over six-feet tall, and not over 185 pounds. Malvin met these requirements, volunteered and was accepted by

the newly formed 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. At first he was stationed at Ft. Benning, Georgia, for paratrooper and infantry training. Then in July of 1944, he was relocated to Camp Mackall, North Carolina, for combat training. From there he entered training as an Army Medic.

Some military brass doubted that African American soldiers had the ability, intelligence and fortitude to be paratroopers. Malvin was one of hundreds who would prove them wrong that year. Once trained, the 555th could not be deployed until they reached battalion strength. For a variety of reasons, this did not or was not allowed to happen. Then on May 5, 1945, orders were received. The 555th's new permanent duty station would soon be Pendleton, Oregon. They traveled by train across the U.S. in just a few days. Segregation was the norm in parts of the country at that time. Many restaurants, restrooms, rail cars and drinking fountains were unavailable to these soldiers as they traveled west. Even German POWs were allowed more access to facilities.

Their reception in Pendleton, Oregon, was similarly cool. A community of only a few thousand people, it was known for its rodeos and cowboy traditions. The locals were unprepared for the arrival of nearly 200 African-American men in their town. The fact that a large percentage of their own men were away fighting in Europe and the Pacific only fueled the concerns of some locals. It is said that only two bars and one Chinese restaurant in town would serve them. The attitude between the locals and the men of the 555th was said to be distant, but not hostile. The 555th had orders to avoid going into town. The Base Commander tried to provide on-post entertainment for them in the form of baseball, basketball and handball activities. The 555th even made a demonstration jump for the people of Pendleton. When leave was granted, it often included transportation to

one of the larger West Coast cities.

Known as the second best kept secret of WWII, next to the Manhattan Project, Japanese balloon bombs had begun arriving in North America during 1944 by way of high altitude winds that would eventually be called the jet stream. These mostly-paper balloons, filled with hydrogen, carried four incendiary bombs and one antipersonnel explosive charge. Japan launched more than 9000 balloons in all, and it is known that over 300 of them reached North America. As the 555th moved operations to Oregon, a woman and five children on a church picnic happened upon a downed balloon in south-central Oregon near the town of Bly. They were all killed when one of them tried to move it and it exploded. As the war closed in on their homeland, Tokyo Radio announced that Japan had launched attacks on the North American continent by means of a new secret weapon. The report read in part, "Explosions and fires caused by Japanese balloon bombs have struck terror in the hearts of the people of the central and western districts of North America. Since last fall, fires have raged in the cities and forests of the United States and Canada." Even though the report was vastly over stated, U.S. war planners were concerned that balloon bombs might ignite massive forest fires during the coming summer of 1945, diverting manpower and resources away from the war effort. Intelligence reports suggested that future balloons might also be used to carry chemical or biological agents, such as those used by Japan in China. A massive civilian and military effort was put into motion to combat the threat. One of several ways the war planners addressed this "unusual risk" was to cross-train paratroopers as smokejumpers and bomb disposal experts and make them available to western forest fire managers.

Since 1940 the Forest Service had been using airplanes and parachutes to deliver men and equipment to remote backcountry fires throughout the west. The Forest Service would put the soldiers of the 555th through intensive training. It began on May 22, 1945, with two weeks of fire suppression training. During the third week they were trained in bomb disposal. Then, starting June 15, group after group of them entered a new kind of jump training. They learned to land in and remove themselves from trees and to recover their equipment and parachutes from those trees. They each made two jumps into clearings and one into heavy forest. Their parachute was a new maneuverable type designed by civilian trainer **Frank Derry** (MSO-40). It made circling turns possible giving them a wider and safer choice of where they landed. Now these paratroopers would also be known as "Smokejumpers." They would deliberately be doing something paratroopers usually try very hard to avoid, landing in trees. Their mission would be highly classified, a top secret plan for the recovery and destruction of Japanese balloon bombs with the added mission of suppressing forest fires started by those bombs or by lightning. The arriving balloon bombs and use of Army troops was to be kept secret in order to prevent the Japanese from gauging how effective the balloons had been during the previous months. If these African American Paratroopers



Triple Nickles, Oregon, 1945 (NSA file)

were not allowed to fight elsewhere, parachuting into rugged mountainous terrain and forests to battle forest fires would be a way they could do their part for the war effort and demonstrate their willingness to face danger when given the chance.

In a recent interview, one member of the 555th indicated that Malvin Brown was a late arrival at the Pendleton base and was just beginning his smokejumper training. He arrived late due to taking training as a medic. The 555th medics were probably kept very busy. In the six months the Battalion spent as smokejumpers, more than thirty men suffered injuries. One report from the Mt. Baker National Forest listed the following injuries: one broken leg above knee, one knee out of place, and one crushed chest. Another from the Chelan National Forest reported one broken leg between hip and knee, one internal injury, and two sprained ankles. This may seem excessive by today's standards but was in fact quite remarkable when one realizes that on average they jumped 37 men per fire. Factoring in their rudimentary parachutes, minimal training and that spotters sometimes judged wind speed and direction solely by looking at the smoke, their low injury rate was nothing short of extraordinary. One member of the Pendleton based 555th put it this way: "These were no easy jumps. The purpose of the jump was landing in a tree, because if you didn't land on a tree and you landed on the ground, God knows what you were going to hit." Offering another viewpoint, Base Commander Bradley Biggs recalled in his book *The Triple Nickles*, "While we were trained to handle ourselves if we landed in trees, most of us went for the clearings from force of habit and past experience."

On Monday, August 6, 1945, a call came to Pendleton for 15 military smokejumpers to fly to Medford, pick up a guide and jump fires near there. According to a dispatcher's logbook, "All of the Forest Service jumpers (at the Siskiyou

Smokejumper Base) have jumped and there are still lots of fires unattended.” This initial direction to go to Medford and back up the Siskiyou jumpers probably led military commanders to assume that the fires this planeload of men would jump was on the Siskiyou. In fact their mission took them north from Medford for 85 miles to the Umpqua National Forest. The medic normally assigned to this group was sick. Malvin volunteered to fill in for him on this particular day, even though he had not yet completed all of his smokejumper training. The Umpqua had several fires on which they wanted to use smokejumpers. Six men jumped two fires north of Diamond Lake, near the crest of the Cascade Mountains. The rest of the planeload then headed for another fire further west near Steamboat Creek. Nine jumpers, including Malvin, would jump this fire. Six more would jump the next morning. The fire was located near Lemon Butte, 38 miles northeast of Roseburg, Oregon, in Lane County. At a much lower elevation than the first two fires, this one was burning in the tall timber of western Oregon where two-hundred-foot tall trees are common.

According to forest records, the fire was located south of the summit of Lemon Butte on a small side ridge. With the help of a 1946 air photo, it can be seen that a spotter, looking for a good jump spot near the fire, would likely select a circular two-acre opening located about half way up the south slope of the butte. Just to the southeast and downhill from this opening, a small drainage forms and falls away steeply to the bottom of the canyon. This drainage is filled with old-growth trees. Jumping for the opening from the usual 1200 feet, it would not have taken much wind on that summer afternoon for one or more of the nine jumpers to end up in this nearby drainage and its massive trees.

The reports say Malvin landed in the top of a very tall, leaning fir tree. Normal procedure to get out of a tree would be to attach a rope to himself and his parachute, then one at a time, disconnect the metal fasteners that connected him to his parachute and slide down his rope to the ground. No one knows for sure what went wrong, but on August 6th, Malvin began to slide down his rope, but somehow lost his hold on it. Reports say he fell approximately 150 feet into a rocky creek bed far below. Death was believed to be instantaneous. Cause of death was officially listed as basal skull fracture and cerebral hemorrhage.

Malvin Brown's 150-foot fall was probably due in part to the length of rope he had been given and in part to the fact that he had not yet completed all of his smokejumper training. The Triple Nickle web site and Lt. Col. Bradley Biggs' book *The Triple Nickles* both indicate that the 555th's letdown ropes were 50-feet long. Missoula, the source of the 555th's equipment during 1945, also used 50-foot ropes through 1947, according to sources. The combined length of his parachute and the distance he fell indicates the tree in which he landed must have been nearly 180-feet tall. When Malvin landed in that tree, he would have been suspended among its green branches and unable to see the ground. Threading his way through the limbs as he descended in that leaning tree, Malvin would have eventually emerged from the canopy on the downhill side of the tree due to its

lean. At this point an awful reality would have presented itself. The rope from which he was hanging came nowhere near the ground and he could not climb back up the rope into the tree's stronger branches. Having not yet completed all of his training, he may not have learned how to tie a knot in his rope so he could hang there until help arrived. With the extreme stress he was now under, clear thinking would be difficult. We can only guess what happened next. Did he lose hold of his rope while trying to grab a nearby branch? Did he fail to see the end of his rope coming in time and slid off the end of it? Or, did he hold onto the rope until his strength gave out? The end results were the same regardless of why or how it happened.

Headlines in the *Roseburg News Review* on Wednesday, August 8, read, "Paratrooper Dies in Forest Fire Fight...One Army Negro paratrooper was killed and another critically injured." One of the officers who had jumped the Lemon Butte Fire with Malvin had suffered a spinal fracture. Newspapers in seven of Oregon's major cities each reported Malvin's death in their August 8th, 1945 issues. That same day each of those newspapers also reported the first ever use of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

One of those newspaper articles suggests that someone may have tried to cover up the fact that the paratroopers' letdown ropes were inadequate for the tall timber of the lower Umpqua. As stated previously, the paratroopers' ropes were reported by multiple sources to be 50-feet long. There is, however, one exception. The *Roseburg News Review* newspaper story dated August 8, 1945, reads in part "...Each jumper is equipped with 200 feet of rope..." It is unlikely that a reporter would make up the 200-foot rope length on his own and none of the Forest Service smokejumper bases elsewhere in the country were using 200-foot ropes. Did the U.S. Army, who held tight control over the press during WWII, provide the newspaper with false information in an attempt to cover up the fact that the paratroopers' ropes were inadequate for the tall timber they had parachuted into? If a newspaper reported paratroopers were given 50-foot ropes while jumping into or near 200-foot trees, the public might well have demanded an explanation.

According to newspaper reports, his fellow paratroopers carried the body of Malvin Brown down to the trailhead. They arrived the morning of Wednesday, August 8, two days after he had jumped. Topographic maps and old air photos show that they would have traveled through timber and brush, down an 80% slope for 1000 feet to the North Fork of Cedar Creek. Next, they would have had to carry him three and one half miles down that creek, without the aid of a trail, to the Steamboat Creek trail. Finally, he was carried the remaining 12 miles to the nearest road. The commanding officer at Pendleton announced to the Battalion, on that same day, that PFC Malvin L. Brown had died "in the execution of a special mission in the interests of the public welfare and the Army."

On August 9, an investigator for the Forest Service arrived in Roseburg, Oregon, to look into the cause of Malvin's death. His name was Frank Derry, the man who had designed the parachute the 555th was jumping and the

person in charge of training all parachutists employed by the Forest Service. No copy of his report has been located.

According to the Army Inspecting Surgeon's Report, Malvin's remains arrived in Walla Walla, Washington, on August 8th 1960. Two days later, on August 10, a military escort departed Pendleton, Oregon, with orders to accompany his body back to Narberth, Pennsylvania, for a military service and internment. It was recommended that the family not be allowed to view the remains. The Army paid for his casket, a hearse and transport to Pennsylvania. His wife, Edna, paid the cost of his internment. The U.S Army paid her back by government voucher, nearly two months later on October 4, 1945. No information has been found to indicate where he was buried. To date, no records have been found which indicate that his wife ever received any kind of a pension or compensation. He made the ultimate sacrifice

for his country, yet the U.S. Army and the Veterans Administration have no record of where he is buried, so he receives no recognition as a veteran.

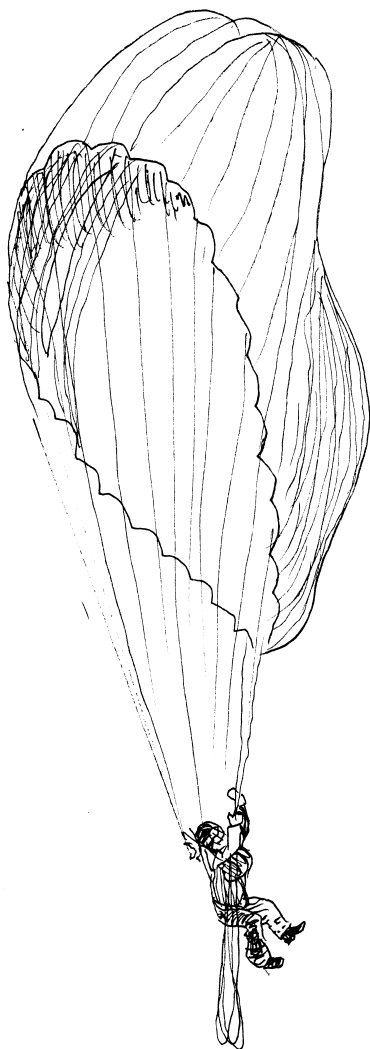
Malvin left behind, in Pennsylvania, his mother and father, at least two brothers and two sisters and a wife. Due to the secrecy of the mission he was on, they may never have learned anything about the work he was doing and how he died. Efforts to locate even one of those family members continue, but have been unsuccessful.

Private First Class Malvin L. Brown holds a significant place in the history of smokejumping and the 555th. He was the first smokejumper to perish in the line of duty and the only member of the 555th to die while they were assigned to the western states. 🕯

Mark Corbet can be reached at: pegmark@juno.com

A Slip Jump

by Jim Wissler (Missoula '48)



In 1948 the seven training jumps culminated with what was called a "slip jump" from 3000 feet. Once out the door and the main deployed, we rookies checked everything and then selected three suspension lines and began hauling them in.

If you could collapse the chute enough by doing this, you'd fall faster and get down out of a high wind situation quicker. I understand that this practice has been discontinued.

At that time, being in the best physical condition of my life, I got to within about three feet of the skirt of my chute before I eased the lines back out and went on with my descent.

What I didn't know until later was that there had been bets placed on whether **Henry Thol Jr.** (MS0-48) or I would come closest to the bottom of the chute. From what they could tell from the ground, it was a draw. Henry was a tough outdoor kid, and the next year at Mann Gulch he got farther than most, but the fire was faster. 🕯

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

AFTER THE SALE OF U.S. seaport management to the Dubai government went up in flames this past spring, the Administration now proposes to privatize 31,625 technical and professional positions in the Forest Service, including all Smokejumper positions. That is two-thirds of all of the employees in the Forest Service. The winning bidders likely would be free to hire and fire smokejumpers, firefighters, law enforcement officers and rangers, 1,000 biologists, 500 geologists, 2,000 scientists and researchers and 3,000 foresters. Bidding would be open to companies like Halliburton, Kellogg Brown and Root, Blackwater USA and foreign governments.

A check of the private security firm Blackwater USA's web site reveals they have formed a "parachute team." According to the website, the private parachute team "will compete internationally and demonstrate the latest parachuting techniques and technologies and test and evaluate new parachuting equipment and techniques for improved operation and safety for specialized customers." Specialized customers like the Forest Service and BLM? As far as safety is concerned, we already know that there is no organization, military or civilian, that can come even close to the

parachuting safety record the smokejumpers have earned.

We will have to wait and see if Blackwater USA is positioning itself to bid on smokejumper services. It is hard to imagine anyone in the private sector investing the time and money to build a private smokejumper service in hopes of making a profit given how the government has treated the private air tanker industry. I can't believe that the private sector can provide smokejumpers at any meaningful cost lower than what the government is providing now. But this idea is based on political ideology rather than good business or good government.

Blackwater USA was employed to assist the *Hurricane Katrina* relief efforts on the *Gulf Coast*. According to a company press release, it provided airlift services, security services, humanitarian support services, and logistics and transportation services. Unofficial reports claim that the company also provided law enforcement services, such as securing neighborhoods and confronting criminals. With a record like that, can private sector smokejumpers be far away? How about Blackwater USA providing Type I and II incident management teams?

A post on the NSA website forums section speculated that perhaps it is

time to consolidate all Federal wildland firefighting activities under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management. I will take it a step further and propose that a Federal wildland fire protection agency be created that is separate from the resource agencies but still under the umbrella of the Department of the Interior. Given the recent history of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security, Federal wildland firefighting operations belong under the oversight of the Department of the Interior. A single federal agency in charge of fire protection could also oversee fuels reduction projects, prescribed burning, aviation and other fire related activities. A separate agency would also eliminate the practice of resource agencies hoarding assets during times of high fire activity and allow resources to be distributed equitably.

The proposal to privatize the Forest Service came shortly after a short-sighted proposal to sell 300,000 acres of prime roadless forest service land to fund rural schools.

A tip of the hard hat to **Tim Eldridge** (MSO-82), for helping me arrange a tour of the Missoula Base for 65 members of the Colorado Industrial Pretreatment Coordinators Association and their families in May. 🧢

All I can say is "Thanks Bros!"

Wild Bill Yensen (MYC-53)

On April 10, 2006, I was trimming some palm trees to save my homeowners association some money and screwed up and fell about twenty feet. My chainsaw was hooked to my right leg and, when I hit, it broke the top of my right femur. Broke the saw, too!

Leo Cromwell and Jerry Ogawa put the word out. The cards and emails I got from the Bros blew me away! I tried to answer them all, but in case I missed any I want to thank you all for: (A) giving me shit for falling and (B) wishing me a speedy recovery.

On the way down I figured the only way to survive would be to distribute the shock as much as possible (jumper training), so I laid out and landed flat on my back. I survived with only a gash on my right elbow and the broken leg. I was black and blue all over. They operated and put a titanium device with screws to hold the bone in place. I cannot put weight on it till the Dr. tells me to. My leg muscles were bruised up big time. Now my elbow is all healed, and I'm getting nearly full flexibility in my knee and hip joints. I'll be ready for another NSA project up in the Sawtooths at the end of July. 🧢

Recollections of Time and The Gobi

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

There are two things that must stand out in the minds of everyone who has spent time at the Gobi: the job and the people. Being the editor of *Smokejumper* magazine, I spend two hours each day writing about smokejumping and reading letters and historical documents. Starting back with the CPS-103 (conscientious objectors) jumpers from WWII to the current BLM Boise crew, they all feel that they jumped at the best base with the greatest people. Now I know that all the bases were loaded with special people. I learned that when I jumped a season in New Mexico with a crew of Missoula and McCall jumpers. It was reinforced by four seasons in Alaska and a different crew.

That being said, no other base could compare with Cave Junction. What makes the Gobi so special? One big factor was the size of the crew. CJ was one of the smaller and more isolated bases. You also have to say that the Air Project Officers did a great job in selecting the crew over a period of years. I've often wondered how **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) selected such a quality group of individuals and characters. One reason is that Jim went on the recommendations of the jumpers who were working at the Gobi. They would find new rookie candidates. No one wanted to recommend anyone for the job who was going to fail or who was not a top-notch individual.

Being so deeply involved with the National Smokejumper Association, I see another big difference between the current jumpers and those from the "old" days. I really like to see the successes that the jumpers have achieved in later life after they left the Gobi. From climbing Everest, flying around the moon, serving in the diplomatic service in the Soviet Union and, in general, being contributors to the fabric which makes the United States the best country in the world. I feel that there is something missing in the current "professional" smokejumper era that we had as individuals in past years. The Gobi was just a part of our development and not our whole life. I've always liked it when I hear that key positions in management, business, teaching and politics are filled with former jumpers. It's great to see the guy flying jumpers having once been one.

If we Gobi jumpers have been successful in other endeavors, just about all of us can trace it to habits and attitudes developed at Cave Junction. Besides teaching, I spent 34 years with the Forest Service, working in the later years with fire crews in California. All of my people were ready to *start* work at 8:00 with tools, lunches and boots on. The rest of the organization was sitting at the coffee table around that time. Concepts like starting work on time, working hard the full day and taking a menial task and doing it well started with many of us on the Gobi.

In the early 60s, playing on the softball team was not an option. With **Cliff Hamilton** (CJ-62) at 3rd, the "Jumpers" dominated the league. Our second team in the league, "Brand X," was started so that we had everyone involved. However, we

couldn't find a bat large enough to look natural in **Larry Welch's** (CJ-61) hands. It was said that the **Peters brothers** (**Garry** and **Larry** CJ-63) were hired strictly for their athletic ability.

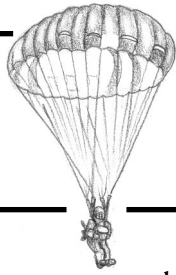
The "rising sun" Gobi made its first public appearance on loft-stenciled t-shirts made for the Gobi Athletic Club and the track meets in Medford. With the **Moseley brothers** (**Charley** CJ-62 and **Billy** CJ-63) and **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64), we had all the white speed available from the state of Alabama. Throw in **Jerry Schmidt** (CJ-62), who was All-America in Cross Country, and we probably could have ventured to the Eugene track, if time allowed. The Peters brothers switching places halfway through an 880 race almost went undetected except for the guy on the PA system.

How do you get an upper body workout and still have a great time? Answer: You play pushup volleyball for a measly five pushups for points lost. Sound easy? Try losing 3 games in a row 20-5.

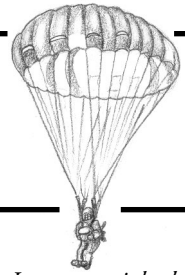
I remember **Dee Dutton's** (MSO-51) first year on the Gobi. One morning the volleyball was particularly intense. The name-calling was very creative; people were being verbally sliced so that Zoro couldn't have done better. Besides the tremendous number of pushups being done, the side bets for beer and money were getting to Las Vegas standards. Being a P.E. teacher, this was great. There are times when a class (jumpers in this case) gets into the zone and it gets too good to stop. We played past the normal one hour and right up to 10:00. I could see the window at the main building and pictured Dee looking out. He probably wondered when we were going to work.

I figured that once you get into the groove, you need to run with it. 10:00-time to quit and get to work? Will I get fired at noon? What the heck—kool aid break and back to the court. **Lockwood** (Keith CJ-64) was bleeding from a spike by a fist that had gone through the net and landed on his face. At least we didn't have any injuries similar to the one that had downed **Mick Swift** (CJ-56) a couple years earlier when he fielded one of my excellent spikes with his gonads. This was too good to quit. **Terry Egan** (CJ-65) was in top form using the "Redmond Shuffle" to the best advantage of the opposing team. We quit in time for lunch!

I think that a volleyball game showed the attitudes we had going on at CJ. The government has improved in their use of the jumpers in the last 30 years. No longer do they keep their top firefighters "prisoner" at a base and save them for fires that never happen. It always amazes me that the Forest Service kept us in reserve for those infrequent lightning storms while fires burned throughout the western U.S. Any coach knows that you figure out how to get your best players in the game even if it means playing a new position. But we sure would have missed 5,000 pushups and the ability to take and receive verbal abuse from some of the best people that we ever met in our lives. 🙏



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

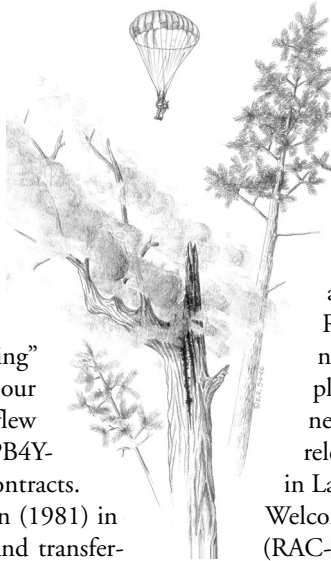
Congratulations and thanks to **Davis Perkins** (NCSB-72), **Jim Lehfelddt** (MSO-56), **Barry Hicks** (MSO-64), **Lyle Haugsvan** (NCSB-60), **Bruce R. Lehfelddt** (MSO-54), **Andy Stevenson** (RDD-65), **Lester McDivitt** (NCSB-48), **Robert Cushing** (MSO-59), **Ralph J. Mellin** (MSO-60), **Lee Ellenburg** (MSO-60) and **Ron Morlan** (RAC-69) who just became our latest Life Members.

Rudy Park III (RAC-66) moved from the "missing" list to NSA member when he found us over our website. Update on Rudy after jumping: "I flew Captain for Hawkins and Powers on both the PB4Y-2/Privateer and the C-119/Boxcar on fire contracts. From there, I went to work for ERA Aviation (1981) in an executive position, beginning in Alaska and transferring to Hawaii to start the Pacific Operations, including Asia. From Hawaii I transferred to the Gulf Coast operations to initiate a manufacturing program in Washington D.C. Next stop was moving to Europe with responsibility for starting international operations, which primarily involved supporting international offshore oil drilling operations. Finally, I moved back to the USA in 1996 to Reno where we now reside and are involved in real estate development."

Jerry Dixon (MYC-71): "All jumpers who have raised children and watched them become teenagers would understand this. My 17-year old, Kipp, is now two inches taller than I and strong enough to pick his mother up and put her on the refrigerator. At a recent basketball game, he stole the ball and outran the opposing team to score a lay-up. After the game someone asked him how he could run so fast and make such good moves. He raised his arms as if to signal the answer was so obvious, 'My father was a smokejumper from the Salmon and Yukon River countries.'"

Got heads up emails from **Carl Gidlund** (MSO-58) and **Tom Kovalicky** (MSO-61): "The U.S. Forest Service is studying how to contract out more than two-thirds of its total workforce by 2009, according to agency planning documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. 500 fire-fighting jobs in the aviation program, including the famed smokejumpers, will be examined for outplacement to interested contractors. In 2003, an outsourcing plan of similar scope, designed to meet Bush administration outsourcing quotas prior to the 2004 election, was halted by Congressional action."

This might not be a bad idea as far as smokejumping is concerned. Think of the Smokejumper Operations division of



the Halliburton Company. Jumpers might be making \$100K or more a year as contractors. They could be involved in port security in the off-season and make another 100 grand. Somehow, I can't figure out how contracting out these jobs will save taxpayer money? (Ed.)

Bill Fogarty (MSO-57): "I spoke with **Forrest 'Buster' Moore** (RDD-57) on the phone this afternoon (March 8). He had an Aortic Valve Replacement March 1, 2006, in Columbia, MO. The need for the replacement apparently came as a complete surprise. He had no symptoms, other than shortness of breath, while working out at his gym. He was released from the hospital March 6 and is now home in Laurie, MO, and doing fine."

Welcome to new member **Charles 'Smokey' Cranfill** (RAC-66): "I did not know there was an organization for smokejumpers. I jumped out of Redmond the summers of 1966, 1967 and 1968. Before that, I was a USFS smokechaser at the Wise River Ranger District of the Beaverhead N.F. I'll always cherish my days as a wildland firefighter, especially as a smokejumper. Those were the most meaningful times of my 37+ years federal career!"

Chuck Pickard (MSO-48): "Hey, you Missoula jumpers! I'm sure some of you recognize the person sitting next to Wally Dobbins on page 24 of the April issue as **Al Cramer** (MSO-43). One heck of a nice guy, strong as an ox and a great woodsman. Al joined the smokejumpers in '43 and worked his way to squadleader/foreman through the war years. I am sure the CPS jumpers will remember him. Al was over six feet tall, with curly hair, a big grin, thick glasses and always wore black jeans cut at his White boot tops. **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41) always called him "Moose."

Just got a call from **Charles D. 'Chuck' Parker** (MSO-47). Chuck says that is him sitting next to Wally and the third jumper in the background is **Clayton Ogle** (MSO-46).

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "The only province in Canada to require fire shelter use (BC) has now dropped them. This is what I was getting at in the poem I wrote, 'NOMEX Fashion Show.' If it was up to me, I would go out on the fire line the same way we did years ago - cotton jeans, aluminum hardhat and fire shirt. At least the Canadians are using their heads to think things through."

Lee Gossett (CJ-57): "Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed reading your editorial story about the rowdy high school kids and the 'Commando Training' you put them through. You're right, you could never get away with that today, much as it would help. I remember well my rookie training at CJ in 1957. I had just finished high school track and fancied myself in pretty good shape, but then **Rod**

Newton (CJ-51) took the rookies on a little run. There were only three of us that kept up with Rod. The other two were **Bill Bowles** and **Dennis Bradley**. I thought I was going to die, but I would at least give it my best effort. I remember that, when we finally stopped for a break, Rod turned around, hardly panting, and said these words that I have never forgotten, 'I don't ask much from you fellows, I only ask you do as much as I do.' Funny how words like that stick with you. When you are trained by the likes of Rod Newton, **Jack Harter** (CJ-51) and **Orv Looper** (CJ-49), training takes on a whole new meaning."

Dick Flaharty (MSO-44): "Jim Wissler's account of 'Your Static Line's Not Hooked Up' in the April issue of *Smokejumper* reminded me of an incident that took place in 1944. Addison Carlson, known to all as 'Ad', trained and jumped with the '43 CPS crew. In the spring of '44 he returned to jump for a second year and was scheduled for a warm-up jump to get back into the swing of things. The story has it that in '43 the static line was hooked up with a spring-loaded hook that just snapped onto the wire in the plane, whereas the '44 hook had to be placed on the wire and the static line tugged to lock it in place. Ad placed his hook on the wire but forgot the tug, so, as he exited the plane, his static line slipped off the wire and followed him out the door.

The trainers on the ground saw him falling and used the amplifier to yell up, telling him to pull his emergency chute. But Ad seemed to not hear and kept tumbling down. Then, when all the witnesses feared the worst, he finally pulled the ripcord and made a safe landing. When asked later if he knew he wasn't hooked up, he responded that he was well aware of what happened because the hook was hanging in front of his face as he was falling and that he took his time pulling the rip cord because he wanted to enjoy the free fall!"

Greg Whipple (MSO-59): "It just occurred to me that you might find it interesting that my son **Morgan** (MSO-89) is presently working in Baghdad, Iraq. He has been there for a couple weeks and is working as a police instructor for Dyncorp International, a contractor with the State Department. He is presently working out of Camp Victory, which is situated on the outskirts of Baghdad."

Arlene Yensen: "**Bill** (Yensen MYC-52) fell 20-30 feet out of a palm tree that he was going to trim, on Monday (April 10). He broke the femur near the hip and it spiraled down the bone. He's in the hospital for one or two more days and he won't walk a lot for two months or so."

Leo Cromwell (IDC-66): "I talked to Wild Bill a couple of days ago and he had finally got out of the hospital. He said he was black and blue all over and will be laid up for three months or more. He is getting around with a walker but can't make it down stairs. He still hopes to do the NSA trail project in July."

Mike Fitzpatrick (RAC-78): "I can think of about 50 good reasons for outsourcing the (smokejumper) program and only a few negatives, chief among them the loss of leadership in fire in a program desperately in need of same.

Unfortunately, jumping is such a seductive career, most

of us spent far too long in the ranks instead of getting to the top of the fire organization and looking after the health of the program. On the other hand, you have to consider how a private operation might have a lot of positive advantages. I'd bet that such an organization would be hard pressed to meet the demand for its services. (That's the case now, but we'd no longer be treated like the red-headed step-child). I think they could also look into negotiating with foreign timber concession holders in the Russian far east who are worried that the Russian program can no longer provide the protection they need. If you thought bears were a problem, wait till a Siberian tiger wanders into camp."

Charlie Roos (RAC-97): "I've been flying Canadair Regional Jets out of Philadelphia and living near Orlando. My off time is spent in an epic battle with an old house and spending as much time as possible exploring Florida."

Tommy Albert (CJ-64) on Flight 93 movie: "I have been avoiding this movie as I felt it would be too painful to view. On that morning, I was working a large forest fire out of Stockton, California with multiple air tankers and helicopters. When we arrived at the airport everything was at a stand still and we were informed we probably wouldn't be flying, but to stand by. The word then filtered into the standby shack that we were going to fly but the FAA was working on the procedures to do so.

It was difficult concentrating on flying that morning. Not so much when you were performing the actual low-level fire runs, but when you were orbiting, waiting for the next air tanker. It was like flying in two different worlds. My relief showed up and I was dispatched from the fire to Sacramento to fuel. It was like flying in the Twilight Zone. Sacramento's airspace is normally very busy. I had my own personal controller. I was the ONLY airplane flying in their airspace with the possible exception of a fighter cap flying high overhead. As it turns out, I was one of only 42 civil airplanes that flew in the contiguous United States airspace the afternoon of 9/11. It is a day I will never forget." 🕊

Snowstorm

Spull ye, stark wind from the North!
Blanket us with snow – douse out summer's torch.

Your first snow fills hearts with delight
As petite flakes of heaven float down and alight.

I seen not a rainbow, customary of spring,
Just winter white; star – studded icing.

Quilt Mother Earth with crystallization.
Cover the scars of man's laceration.

Blizzard the crags and swallow the valleys!
Drive us to clear walks and plow through alleys.

Using frost as your medium – sketch on our glass,
Drift over our eaves and close down the pass.

Perhaps, ye were meant to slow down life's pace –
Rekindling warmth of family around the fireplace.

Hal Meili (Cave Junction '52)

Donning the Shadow Rider's Outfit

Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

The western artist and author Charles M. Russell wrote in his book *Trails Plowed Under*: "I am old-fashioned and peculiar in my dress. I am eccentric (that's a polite way of saying you're crazy)." To carry on, Jake Clark, an Outfitter out of Ralston, Wyoming, once told me: "When these kids come to work for me, they don't have to know anything – I'll teach them the ropes - but they darn sure better look good."

In the days of the open range, they were called shadow riders. A cowboy was always proud of his outfit and, without a mirror, the sun and a good shadow provided the best personal look he could get atop his horse and rigging. According to Russell the real fashion leaders didn't get much pleasure out of life in cloudy weather.

"Teddy Blue" Abbott, in his book *We Pointed Them North* – Rec-

ollections of a Cowpuncher, wrote that the cowboy always put himself higher in social standing than the buffalo hunters, miners, settlers and sheepherders of the time. His outfit was one way to show it. When Teddy Blue asked Charlie Russell: "Where do you find all those good looking cowhands you draw?" Russell replied, "Over at the D H S." That was Granville Stuarts outfit up near the Musselshell. Mr. Stuart wore a clean white shirt every day and his cowboys followed suit (minus the clean) – mostly to impress his daughters.

The U.S. Forest Service kept that cowboy tradition alive – at least until 1978. Today it's just plain tough to get anyone inside one of the ugliest uniforms ever created.

So, if you like old fashioned and western – don't give it up. Instead, be proud. You're in good company with men like C.M. Russell. 🤠

What's in a Uniform?

Growing up in Colorado, the years so long ago
I couldn't wait to join up and ride with the U.S. Forest Service.
Those rangers were the best; outdoorsmen true at heart
And looked the part so trim and sharp, in greens and bronze and leather.

That dream came true as a younger man to wear the uniform
Of respect with class through service past; a forged bronze badge to last.
For the Hotshot Crew we marched right through the fire camp to chuck;
Our Bighorn rocker high above - that U.S. shoulder patch.

As smokejumpers, we saw at first the changing of the guard
A uniform of pee green press; permanent – polyester.
We laughed and thought this can't be true
But it's with us still today – a gold striped tie and
Golfing shirt; now rangers dress so gay.

And yes, it fits this modern look;
Cause our outfit is no longer-
Woodsmen wise in the Creator's way;
Just Washington responders.

Oh what I'd give my youth to be
In the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.
To gaze on down that Wet Mountain plain; then open, wild and free
As a C.M. Russell cowboy sketch or a Frederic Remington.

And know that rangers still rode high
The mountains, peaks and valleys.
Counting stock and building trail
In greens of wool; with shirts of bronze and
A "Use Book" bound in leather.

This poem is dedicated to the Lynch brothers: Denny, a District Ranger and Professor of Forestry at Colorado State back when forestry was a small family and Pat, also a District Ranger, who later kept the flame burning through "Western Heritage." It is inspired by Brad Russell, Cowboy and now Range Conservationist on the Washakie.

Authors Note: Both *Trails Plowed Under* and *We Pointed Them North* are back in print and reasonably priced in soft cover. Your used book store should still be able to get early editions printed in hard cover at a higher price.



Mt. Marion Fire, Willamette National Forest, August 2002. (Courtesy Mark Corbet)

Orv Looper-Bigger Than Life Foreman

by Lee Gossett (Redding '57)

I first met Orv in June 1957 at Cave Junction, Oregon, during my rookie training for the Redding crew. 1957 was the first year of the Redding smokejumper crew. Since there were no training facilities at Redding, we were trained at Cave Junction and moved on to Redding once we were qualified. Our quarters in Redding were pretty bleak as we were housed in a warehouse downtown and spent our days, when not on fires, building our training facility so the 1958 crew could be trained in Redding.

I remember this bigger than life foreman named Orville Looper. Having just finished my junior year in high school two weeks prior, smokejumper training was a major event in my life. The summer of 1957 was a real turning point for me being thrust into the adult life of a U.S. Forest Service Smokejumper overnight. I had some great role models that year and for the next six years as a smokejumper.

The first time I met Orv, I thought to myself that this is one tough dude and what ever he wants,

I will deliver. Orv placed the bar pretty high and all of us would add an extra 10% just for Orv. In many ways, Orv was a gentle giant and we all wanted to emulate him.

When the Alaska smokejumper unit first started in 1959, Orv was given the job as the boss and, here again, we had to start all over building our training facility. I joined the Alaska crew in 1960, and we all reported to Missoula for refresher training and then on to Fairbanks in the BLM DC-3. Several of the Redding crew followed Orv to Fairbanks and, here again, we became a family of smokejumpers.

Orv's door was always open to any of us, and it was my pleasure to have worked for him for six seasons. I only saw this giant of a man cry twice and both times it was when he received word that one of his smokejumpers had been killed in an airplane crash. The first was **Jim Edison** (CJ-56). Jim was killed on a carrier-landing in the Navy and the second was **Gid Newton** (CJ-55), who was killed while on a cargo drop with Air America in Laos.

I don't think anyone who has ever been spotted by Orv will forget the experience. When Orv yelled, "Cut," you would hunker over, cringe and wait for the slap you knew was

coming as your signal to leave the aircraft. Orv left no doubt in your mind it was time to depart the aircraft when he gave you that slap on your leg or back. Another memorable experience was playing liars poker with dollar bills on the long flights to the fire out of Fairbanks. When Orv looked you square in the eye and said he had the numbers, well, you sort of agreed with him. Nine out of ten times he was pulling your leg, but he really had a convincing stare and it worked on me every time.

Orv was a good friend, great boss, and he will be missed by many. I will be at the top of the list. 🍷



Orv Looper (NSA file)



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (FBK-96)

Spring is slow to arrive with a foot of snow still covering the shack in mid-April. Alaska's winter snow pack was moderate at best. Our pre-rookie head count is 60, but nobody will go on record to predict another epic fire season. More than 11 million acres burned in Alaska from 2004-2005.

Spirits are high and our second refresher training is almost complete. The fastest PT run recorded this year (held in 10 degrees) belonged to **Ben Dobrovolny** (FBK-04) at 1.5 miles in 7:44. **Chris Swisher** (FBK-03) was two seconds behind him. Transferring to our roster in 2006 is **Dawson Kelsey** (RDD-95) from Boise. Dawson finally made good on his threat to join our ranks, and we're better for it.

Alaska's rookie trainers meet eight rookie candidates in May. In his first year as lead rookie trainer, **Derek Patton** (RAC-00) is joined by **Mateo Corley** (FBK-97), **Jim Dibert** (FBK-99), **Randy Foland** (FBK-01) and **Chris Swisher**. **David Bloemker** (FBK-97) will cameo as lead parachute instructor. Our 2006 rookies will be the last class to benefit from the immeasurable contribution of Jim Kimball, soon to retire as training specialist at the Alaska Fire Service. Jim spent his time at AFS operating far above his call to duty. A highly skilled physical rehab and sports injury consultant, Jim is responsible for helping countless firefighters reach and maintain their goals, most notably rookie smokejumper candidates. Thanks to Jim for all of his inspiring work through the decades.

We have a number of position changes to report. **Rob Allen** (FBK-93) is now our operations section supervisor. **Tom Kubichek** (FBK-90) is our new lead spotter. **Matt Allen** (FBK-95) and **Robert Yeager** (RDD-92) are training this year as new spotters. **Doug Mackey** (FBK-99) is now a loft specialist. **Chris Silks** (FBK-91) is currently our acting crew supervisor. Though his acting consistently receives rave reviews, Silks says he isn't pursuing the full-time position. "Basically, it's sitting in a fart-room behind a computer screen, getting grief," he confessed. Nobody does it better.

Our paracargo section plans to forge five new recruits in the PC mold. Our 2006 PC rookies are **Greg Conaway** (FBK-04), **Jeff Cramer** (FBK-02), **Ben Dobrovolny**, **T.J. Gholson** (FBK-04) and **Chris Swisher**. **Gabe Lydic** (FBK-99) and **Jim Dibert** will spend 90 days each as lead paracargo specialists.

Our recent organizational shifts follow the departure of sev-



eral jumpers. **Chip Houde** (FBK-88) accepted the BLM fixed-wing specialist position for the state of Alaska. We still see Chip regularly and work with him closely. But his leadership and steadying presence within the crew will certainly be missed. Chip has the knack of mitigating crew wants and rants while articulating the needs of management – an elusive balance that Chip always struck with enthusiasm and respect. He lent his voice in trying times and in countless impassioned, entertaining efforts as emcee at crew functions. Off the jump list, but still a strong runner, Chip again undertook his annual mission of helping returning jumpers pass their PT test come rain or shine. It's a safe bet that Chip's surf retreat in Mexico will remain a popular winter destination among smokejumpers.

Jon Kawczynski-Frisch (FBK-96) is thriving in his new position at Paraflite Industries in New Jersey. Jon and wife Kirsten are making the best of east coast life. We couldn't be happier for them both. There's only one K-Ski and you are already missed in Alaska. Who else can get my goat like you, RB?

Mike Lambright (FBK-99) accepted the assistant fire management officer detail in BLM Alaska's Southern Zone. Mike's paracargo expertise and sense of humor has immortalized him in the PC ranks. His 'Joe Lunchbox' approach to problems helped keep PC operations running smoothly. Mike and wife Amy were married last fall in an outdoor wedding, blessed by many friends and glorious weather.

John Lyons (FBK-90) accepted a fire operations specialist position on the BLM Shoshone District in his home state of Idaho. In his 15-year jump career, John shined as a lead rookie trainer, and as our crew supervisor since 2004 – a position he was ideally suited for. Tough as a box of rocks but considerably smarter, John defined leadership by example while he was an Alaska Smokejumper. He bridged the tenuous divide between crew and overhead with tact and camaraderie. John was an old school hotshot and smokejumper, but he embraced the challenges of a changing jump world. He set a standard that will be difficult to match. John and wife Ellen were recently married, and we wish them all the best.

Former Alaska jumper **Craig Irvine** (RDD-75) accepted a position as a pilot at AFS. It's good to have Craig back in the regular ranks here in Alaska. **C.R. Holder** (MSO-70) retired as a BLM pilot in Alaska. It's been a pleasure flying with you, C.R., and always good to see you at the shack.

Our ramp will again feature three Casas and one Dornier Jumpship.

In the loft, **Gary Baumgartner** (FBK-88) reports encouraging results from field tests of Millenia fabric. Jumpsuits made of Millenia are 30% more puncture resistant and twice as abrasion resistant as jumpsuits made of Kevlar, which is also more susceptible to UV damage. Conservative estimates project the lifespan of our new jumpsuits to be about one thousand years, maybe even longer.

Field training continues with the Cypress Automatic Deployment Device (A.D.D.) now incorporated into our reserve parachute system though not yet activated.

In Interagency Smokejumper Delivery System (ISDS) news, a group of seven BLM and seven USFS jumpers met in Yuma, Arizona last March to evaluate the DC-7, Eiff and Attair main parachutes, including several new models.

Project work last winter included burn plan writing and prescribed fire assignments in the AFS military zone. In April, eight jumpers traveled to Dillon, Montana, to help former jumper **Paul Lenmark** (FBK-96) implement his annual burn prescriptions. Rain hindered ignition efforts this year, but not for lack of trying. We'll try next spring if Paul will have us.

In the realm of self-imposed adventure, starting with last winter: Greg Conaway, **John Fremont** (FBK-05) and **Kip Shields** (FBK-04) took an easy ride through South America on motorcycles, complete with surfboards mounted on side-racks. Conaway relayed a short laundry list of his surprise encounters with foreign drivers. "I got T-boned by a van in Venezuela, ended up on the hood of a car in Costa Rica, and had too many muddy wipeouts to mention," reported Greg, who managed to keep his hospital stays brief. "Yeah, and we could have saved eighty bucks by bribing the Nicaraguan customs agents outright. Instead we waited two days for a court date with a corrupt judge," added Kip, lamenting the folly of his youth.

Marty Meierotto (FBK-94) reports last winter was his best trapping season ever, nabbing more than 300 marten pelts. That's quite a haul, and one that brought Marty precariously close to breaking even on the venture. He'll be back in the red shortly as Marty and wife Dominique are expecting their first child in late summer.

Ben Dobrovolny spent close to three long months at a research facility in Antarctica last winter. He claims to have been doing "construction," but insiders say scientists were studying Ben to discover how he runs so fast in sub-freezing temperatures. After he finally escaped, Ben mysteriously showed up at the shack just days later - hungry, slightly confused, but happy to be home again.

Tom St. Clair (FBK-01) will lead a party of five non-smokejumpers to Denali's summit in May. Their ascent up the formidable Western Rib Route will take three weeks followed by a two-day descent. Tom claims there could be cell phone coverage near the 20,320-foot peak. We hope he spares his minutes and calls upon his safe return. Two weeks before his quest, Tom declared, "I've climbed higher and I've climbed colder. But it's just like fire - it's all about the weather. And I still need to go to the store."

In wedding and baby news, **Ivan Smith** (MSO-95) and **Stefanie** plan to marry in September. **Brandon Petersen** (FBK-01) and wife Lynn had their second child, son Sawyer Joseph

in March. **Jared Weber** (FBK-01) and wife Heather recently welcomed their third child, son Gavin. **Doug Carroll** (FBK-94) and fiancée Hillary are the proud new owners of the rustic Golden Eagle Saloon, located outside Fairbanks in the gold mining town of Ester. Crew attempts to rename the historic establishment have stalled. "Homewreckers" and "Broback Bar" were the most popular entries. Fortunately, Doug's reverence for tradition is holding fast, and the Golden Eagle still soars proudly over the new crew hot spot. "Home of the dollar beer, baby!" pitched Doug.

Boise Base Report

by **Grant Beebe** (NIFC-90)

As of press time, our rookies are just showing up, a class of 10. Additionally, **Kevin Maier** (RDD-02) and **Mark Skudlarek** (MYC-02) have transferred from the FS.

The new folks will help fill the holes left by a number of departures, the most recent being **Hector Madrid** (MYC-89), who will become the State FMO for New Mexico BLM. **Rich Turner** (MYC-00), **Sven Riebenschahm** (NIFC-03) and **Chris Boldman** (NIFC-01) have all decided to call it quits. **Mike Tupper** (FBK-85), who left for the Carson City BLM job last fall, has jumped ship again. He is moving to D.C. to help represent the BLM fire program in the capital.

We will have three jumpships this year, all Otters, and will share a fourth (Dornier) with Alaska. This year we'll have a new facility in Grand Junction, Colorado, an air center and smokejumper spike base that's been in the works for years.

Mike Boomer (NIFC-01), **David Zuares** (RDD-91) and **Derrek Hartman** (RDD-98) were selected as Fire Operations Supervisors. This is a new position created to compensate those who take on one of the toughest and riskiest jobs in the business, running Type 3 fires.

We're in the third year of our Smokejumper PT Test Incentive Program. The usual PT test incentive, "pass and keep your job another year," is in effect. Additionally, smokejumpers can opt to "max out" and earn points for each event of the PT test. Maximum points for any one event is 100. To earn 100 points, a jumper would need to do, in three minutes for each exercise, 120 push-ups, 25 pull-ups and 150 sit-ups. An 8-minute mile-and-a-half run or a 16:45 3-mile will also earn 100 points.

Jumpers are rewarded for either amassing at least 300 points for the four events or for improving their max-out score from their previous test. Any 400-point scorers will have their names placed on a plaque here at the base, but no one has hit that high mark yet.

Grangeville Base Report

by **Mike Blinn** (RDD-01)

GAC is ramping up for another barnburner this year. There has been a good bit of movement to and fro in the ranks. **Garth Fisher** (GAC-03) was married last fall. He then traded his boots in for flip-flops. He's running a bike shop on the Monterey boardwalk with his wife, Tiffany.

Winston Willis (GAC-01) headed east last fall and didn't look back. He's living in Rochester, Minnesota, and pursuing entrance to medical school.

Aicha Hull (GAC-03) won't be returning this year, as she

is finishing up her medical degree in Reno.

Sam Palmer threw in the towel and is working at Lewis and Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho. While he was on the injured reserve list last year, he had a lot of time to think. He decided there was a better way to make no money than building cargo and ramp hogging.

Gabriel Cortez (GAC-02) was traded to the Bandolier National Monument this year for a rookie. Their details will last through September. We tried to just give him away, but they insisted we take one of theirs and take Gabe back later. Our pilots even tapped out on us this year. Art Lindstrom will be buzzing around the Great Basin this year. **Nels Jensen** (MSO-62) may fly relief for us but is also slated to help with the 747 Super Tanker project this summer.

A bunch quit us, but there are also some new faces around. We rehired our sole surviving rookie from last year, **Russ Frei** (GAC-05). He was a detailer last summer and gave up his appointment to come back. We also hired **Joe Forthofer** (RDD-03) from Redding this spring. **J.P. Zavalla** (MSO-95) is coming back to GAC this year after a detail in California. **Mike Ward** (GAC-01) and **Kai Friedrichs** (GAC-99) were selected for the two GS-7 squad leader jobs that GAC flew this winter. We will have five rookies and three rookie detailers at GAC this summer. Last year we went one for four, we're hoping for better stats this time around. Our Twin Otter Pilot this year will be Rick Tilton. He is a resident of Cottonwood, just down the road from Grangeville.

Spring work was centered in Mississippi. **Jodi Stone** (MSO-02), **Jason Junes** (GAC-03), **Mike Blinn** (RDD-01), **Mike Ward** (GAC-01), **Isaac Karuzas** (RDD-01), **J.P. Zavalla** and **Kelvin Thompson** (GAC-95) went down for Burning and Fuels details of various lengths of time from January extending into late April. Most notably, **Alessandro Potenziani** (RDD-01) has augured into Wiggins, MS. When he returns in April he will have been in-country for three and one-half months.

Good luck to all the bros that moved on, welcome to those who are showing up. We'll see the rest of you later.

McCall Smokejumper Base

by Rick Hudson (NIFC-73)

The McCall jump base has nearly 40 inches of snow on the ramp and didn't see two consecutive days without a fresh snowfall for the month of March. Fire season is expected to be late in this region of Idaho because of the high-water content of the snow pack.

Hiring for McCall is limited to 70 jumpers including offers to seven rookies (NEDS) who start training May 22.

McCall jumpships will be two Twin Otters, J-41 and J-43, and turbine DC-3, J-42. Twin Otter J-41 is currently down in Mexico for a month participating in an atmospheric pollution study outside of Mexico City with Region 4 pilots.

The McCall base has entered into a new era of smokejumper operations in the last few years that includes major personnel and policy changes. A study is in progress this season to determine the feasibility of contracting or privatizing aerial resources, including smokejumpers, smokejumper pilots and smokejumper aircraft.

Currently the McCall base may offer up to seven "non-competitive details" to fill vacant squadleader and assistant foreman positions that have resulted from the inability to fill vacant positions in time for the 2006 fire season.

Personnel changes at the jump base include **Barry Konkinsky** (MYC-74) retiring to his sailboat on Payette Lake after 32 seasons and 475 jumps.

Francis Russo (MYC-92) has taken a transfer to the Payette Assistant Tanker Base Manager position after 239 hero jumps and 14 glorious years. The resignation of **Kasey Rose** (NCSB-88) with 300 career jumps will allow her to spend more time raising a future smokejumper: her son, Diesel. **Mark Skudlarek** (MYC-02) and **Pat Baker** (NCSB-82) have turned to "The Darkside" by transferring to Boise BLM.

Corey Berg (MYC-03) got married and has taken an appointment on the Superior National Forest in Minnesota. **Shawn Raley** (MYC-03), **Kris Kaaen** (MYC-03) and **Abraham "Dirty" Bird** (MYC-01) are exploring adventuresome occupations outside of smokejumping for this summer.

Thad Duel (MYC-56) passed away this winter from a rare form of blood cancer. After 32 years of jumping, Thad retired in 1987 as the operations foreman at McCall. Even in retirement he kept physically active, skiing, biking and playing tennis. During a powder day at the local ski area, Thad was always up early for the first chairlift up the mountain. Thad was an individual who held a unique outlook on smokejumping and life in general. His influence will not soon be forgotten in the jumper community.

The winter jump loft crew has been busy with manufacturing of new jumpsuits, jump harnesses, gear bags, and P.G. bags. A new P.G. Bag design by **Brett Bittenbender** (MYC-88) keeps the fire shelter from hanging so low in jump configuration and bouncing annoyingly against the back of the jumper's legs while working. The new, larger fire shelter is held internally and drops out of a "kangaroo pouch" for immediate use with a pull of a tab for quick deployment. A new let-down system design and spotter harness has been adopted for use this summer, as well.

Presently the snow pack has the trainers worried that they will have to dig out the training units by April 14. Local jump



Jumper Brendan O'Reilly, packout from his first fire jump on Umatilla, Wanaha-Tucanón Wilderness. Jumped July 7, 2002.

spots for refresher training will be limited and likely muddy. On March 27, seven jumpers began training for the New Mexico detail with jump training to take place in Missoula. Region 3 is very dry and they expect to be busy as soon as they get down to Silver City. Better forecasting of the 2006 fire season around the McCall area will be forthcoming by October.

Missoula Base Report

by Keith Wolferman (MSO-91)

Hope every one had a good winter. Ours was mild but we did have a good ski season due to an average to above average snow pack in the surrounding hills. **Andy Hayes** (MSO-79) holds this season's skiing days record at 68 days on the slopes. The biggest news these days seems to be our baby bust. Boys were born to **Steve Reed** (NCSB-95), **Charles Savoia** (MSO-01) and **Tim Laroche** (NCSB-02), girls to **Mark Cheff** (MSO-91) and **Lindsey Lalicker** (MSO-03), and, at this writing, a number of others have "buns in the oven."

We recently filled a number of appointments: GS-6 13/13s were accepted by **James Francis** (MSO-88), **Tim Laroche**, **Dan Cottrel** (MSO-01), **Dave Bihl** (MSO-01), **John Davis** (MSO-88) and **Billy Phillips** (MSO-01).

GS-6 6/14's were accepted by **Colby Jackson** (RDD-03), **John Veal** (RDD-01), **Sam Pfahler** (MSO-03), **Shane Eweing** (MSO-03), **Chris Lorass** (MSO-03), **Chad Scussel** (MSO-03), **Josh Clint** (MSO-03), **Jake Besmer** (MSO-03), and **Jordan McKnight** (NCSB-04), who is transferring to MSO this season.

Wayne Williams (MSO-77) accepted the fuels /projects GS-9 foreman position. **Rogers Warren** (MSO-00) accepted a job in the Northern Region Coordination center as the assistant aircraft dispatcher. This means we once again have our implant firmly in place. We are currently going at a furious rate with our early refresher and had a very large group this year (80+) - quite the baptism for **Mike Fritsen** (MSO-95) and **Keith Woods** (MSO-91), new in the training shop this year.

Snow pack was above average this year in our region. Long-range predictions have the El Nino pattern keeping things cooler across the northern tier and warm and dry in the Southwest but we'll wait to see. Nonetheless, **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91) is getting things ready for a busy go-round in Sil-

ver City as she is the foreman in charge this year. This is the first time in over 20 seasons **Wayne Williams** will not be rounding out the SVC crew, another passing of the torch!

Only time will tell as to what transpires with the ISDS Parachute

Project. The MSO DC-3 and a number of folks from BLM and FS bases participated in the evaluation testing jumps at the Yuma Military Proving grounds in late March. We put jumps on modified FS-14's, standard FS-14's and some of the vendor-provided Ram-Air canopies out of drogue-deployed BLM set-ups. Spotting from 10-13 thousand feet made for some interesting parachute rides. The committee is currently reviewing options and will make recommendations to the W.O. soon.

Once we finish refresher we will be gearing up to get folks out in the woods for projects and burning. We will be training a pretty big rookie class (30 or more), so that will be keeping a lot of our overhead busy. That's about it from here, hope to run in to a lot of the bros this season. Stay safe!

NCSB Base Report

by Matt Desimone (RAC-97)

A sizeable snowfall in the North Cascades and here in the Methow Valley made for an enjoyable off-season. Winter recreation, for those who managed to make it out of the jump shack, was juicy with backcountry, cross and skate skiing. The steelhead fishing was bountiful with larger than average fish and smaller than average crowds of fishermen.

It is now mid-April and patches of snow continue to cling to the hillsides just off the valley floor. Spring green-up is gathering full momentum and fuels management folks are a bit concerned that there will not be much of a burn window for the early prescribed-fire season. Guess we could be stacking a whole heap of sticks for spring project work... ugh!

In the news **Darren Belsby** (NCSB-86) and **Sarah Berns** (GAC-02) welcomed a new baby girl, Ayla Berns Belsby, into the community. Baby Ayla was born November 19 (Darren's birthday) and weighed in at 7 pounds and 6 ounces, which is about the same size of an average Methow River steelhead. Congratulations to the Belsby clan.

Scott Wicklund (NCSB-91), who was the winner of last fall's Termination Ball coin Flip, enjoyed his grand prize of a paid trip to Germany and Chamonix, France, where he claims to have "skied and drank like a Viking." Scotty is still complaining about the taste of Jaegermeister in his mouth every time he burps.

Jordan McKnight (NCSB-04) has taken a transfer to Missoula this year. We at North thank him for his two seasons of good work and wish him safe jumping over in the Big Sky Country. Sucker!

Matt Woosley (NCSB-84) took a promotion to the GS-11 Operations Supervisor here at the base.

Tim Lum (RDD-91) and **Simon Freidman** (NCSB-00) continue to stay busy serving time with the USAF Para-Rescue program on both foreign and domestic soil. Rumor has it that we may see them in late spring under Forest Service canopy.

Other happenings over the winter included, **Dale**

NSA Membership Chairman Needs Your Help

Do you know a jumper or ex-jumper who does not belong to the NSA? Help us recruit this person by letting me know where to contact him/her. Send the name and mailing address to:

John McDaniel

PO Box 105

Falun KS 67442-0105

or email: jumpercj57@hotmail.com

Your help will be greatly appreciated by the NSA, and your friend will thank you for your efforts.

Longanecker's (RAC-74) participation in ISDS data gathering jumps in Yuma, AZ, and **Inaki Baraibar's** (NCSB-98) two-tour duty as overhead on multitudinous fires in Texas and Louisiana.

Currently, we have six jumpers detailed to Mississippi locating, counting and mapping...uh...turtle holes... you gotta' love this job!

There will be a different Casa 212 parked on our ramp this year. Jump 9, of Big Horn Airways will be piloted by Captain Kevin McBride. Due to budgetary constraints, we will have no new hires this summer.

Redding Base Report

by Nate Hesse (RDD-01)

The Sacramento River reached flood stages twice this winter due to a number of storms that kept the ground saturated. Our early refresher encountered a few wet spots that had the bros steering for dry ground.

Two GS-8 Captain positions were filled this winter by **John Casey** (RDD-99) and **Luis Gomez** (RDD-94), who served as a foreman for a few seasons on a hotshot crew. Luis changed up the refresher this year by facilitating a staff ride to the Rattlesnake Fire on the Mendocino N.F., where 15 firefighters lost their lives in 1953.

We all got a good laugh during our first practice jump when Luis and Jessica's son, Dante, at 2 years of age, went barreling toward paracargo that was thrown. Once it hit the ground, his body couldn't keep up with his legs as he was yelling, "Presents, Presents, Presents!" Luis and Jessica are expecting an addition to the family in the fall. John Casey and his wife Stacy are expecting this fall as well.

In other family news, Sawyer Patrick Hokanson was born on Dec. 23, to **Mitch** (RDD-00) and Kama. Conner Edward Hesse was born on Dec. 28 to my wife Elena and me. Caleb David Clifton was born on Jan. 14 to **Ryan** (RDD-03) and Nina. Ryan accepted a job closer to his home and family in Truckee, California, and will not be returning.

Rookie training is in full swing; we currently have four candidates with a few jumps in already. Big Ernie kept the rookies cool during unit training by not allowing a break in the rain. The primary rookie trainers this year are **Bob Bente** (RDD-88), **Jerry Spence** (RDD-94), Luis Gomez, **Greg Fashano** (RDD-99), **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) and myself. In addition to the candidates, we will welcome back last year's detailer, **Derek Wheeler** (RDD-05). **Rico Gonzalez** (RDD-99) will lead a couple of jumpers to New Mexico for the Silver City detail this year.

During the rookies' first jump this year, they landed to see **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) propose to Kristi Andrews at the jump spot. **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00) is engaged to marry Shelly Lackmann this November. **Darby Thompson** (RDD-04) was also engaged this winter to his girlfriend, Agnes.

Several milestones for winter training allowed many jumpers to take 'S' and 'I' courses as well as assignments in Texas and Oklahoma. Jumpers also participated in prescribed burn projects in Whiskeytown N.P., Shasta Trinity N.F.

Klamath N.F. fire management met with jumpers to coordinate a fire use program that would utilize jumpers to achieve

adequate staffing, monitoring, and input on areas dedicated for fire use within the forest wilderness boundary.

Starting with a slight cutback to 40 jumpers this season, we didn't eliminate any returning jumpers. We did, however, have a couple of Redding bros transfer. **Justin Horn** (RDD-03) went to West Yellowstone and **Joe Forthofer** (RDD 04) went to Grangeville. **Chris Joyce** (RDD-01) will not be returning to jump, leaving for a military assignment. Chris met a girl from Denmark and will soon be married and starting a life there.

The Redding base suffered a tragic loss to a friend, smokejumper, and rookie brother, **Chris Gunter** (RDD-01). Chris passed away in December. His enthusiasm and quick wit made Chris a magnet for many. Chris, know that you are truly missed and remembered for your many accomplishments in this organization.

Many smokejumpers, past and present, attended the memorial service for **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53), who passed away in March of this year. Dick was the Redding Base Manager from 1968-1982. The family and friends of Dick put together a slideshow of Dick's life, which highlighted his commitment to his family and his many years with the Forest Service. It was neat to hear the numerous stories of a man with such dedication and fine character.

In aviation news, the Firewatch Program will be in full force this season with two Cobra Helicopters, one stationed in Redding, the other in San Bernardino. There will be one contracted commander for lead plane and air attack, and possibly a King Air mid-season. As far as jumper aircraft, the Sherpa will be delivering jumpers along with a contracted Dornier, equipped with big motors to get eight jumpers anywhere in a hurry.

The Aphis program in Sacramento called the Redding jumpers to a suspected Asian Long-Horned Beetle infestation last year. After climbing and inspecting the trees, the jumpers turned in a clean bill of health to the relief of the Aphis folks.

West Yellowstone Base Report

by Bobby Sutton (MSO-91)

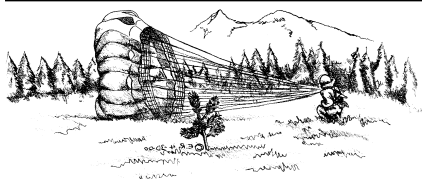
After a cold and snowy winter, the West Yellowstone Smokejumper Base has become active with a flurry of training, packing parachutes, the normal abnormal paperwork, and ordering equipment and supplies to support our 34 jumpers of 2006. The increase from 22 in 2005 is comprised of five rookies, five transfers and two detailers.

Nine jumpers just completed early refresher in Missoula and will be spreading over the country (while the remainder of the snow melts in WYS) to work on fuel targets and fire assignments with two heading to Silver City in early May.

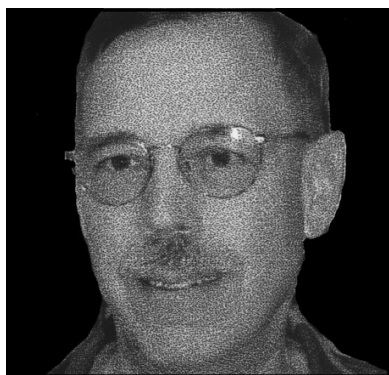
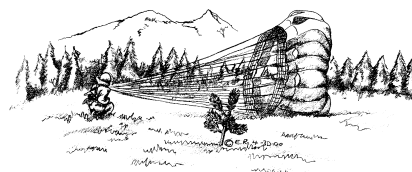
Bighorn Airways was awarded the 5-year contract to have a Dornier in West Yellowstone. The jumpers are very happy to have **Randy Leypoldt** returning as pilot and the Dornier outfitted with the updated engines.

2006 brings an outlook of jumpers being heavily utilized for fire use. With our numbers increasing, more of WYS jumpers will be able to perform as overhead on fire assignments.

WYS jumpers plan on continuing the tradition of mixing lots of fun while jumping fires with all of our other work and non-work activities. So if you are in the area, please stop by. NSA members are always welcome. 🍷



Checking the Canopy



Tom Decker
(Idaho City '64)

Get Gloves.

Smokey Stover's advice was to get a pair of gloves and a stocking cap to stuff in the leg pocket of the jump suit. The gloves were for gripping the letdown rope with tension while doing a letdown. Gloves saved on the rope burns. The stocking cap was to wear in the airplane when it grew cold on long flights with the door open. Good advice!

How much advice have we received in our lifetime? From a mother, a father? From a spouse? From a good friend?

"I need some advice," we say to someone that we trust for their older, wiser, more mature outlook on life. We think they've got it, and we need it.

But how hard it is to take advice when somebody says, "I've got some advice for you." We may not want to hear it. That kind of advice sometimes comes across as threatening and judgmental, but it may be exactly what we need to hear.

A priest in an Army chapel once said that humility was less about thinking poorly of oneself and more about the ability to take options. I've treasured that insight, and draw on his wisdom in tough times. Life is about options, and we need the humility to see them and take them.

"Get some gloves," was Smokey's advice for dealing with rope burns.

Faith brings options...if we have the humility to accept them! The advice of the faith is to "Fear God," "Love your neighbor," "Pray without ceasing," "Fear not." And the word of the risen Christ, "Peace."

All good advice! These options from the counsel of God's people are like a stocking cap for the cold blasts

of life and the gloves that allow us to do a let-down without getting burned. *Hoot!* 🦉

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

Book Review

Wildfire and Romance

by Jerry S. Dixon (McCall '71)

Facing the Fire by Gail Barrett

Cade and Jordan are running from a fire in the wild lands of Montana. Cade is a jumper, who has just saved the life of a fellow jumper by pushing him out from under a falling tree, on a fire that is soon to explode and jump rivers and mountains. He injures his shoulder but, in true jumper fashion, carries on. The fire is near a cabin that he once shared with his former wife, Jordan. They meet up and the book describes their harrowing escape from the raging inferno.

At one point, with the fire closing in, he turns to her and says, "Smokejumping's not just a job, it is everything to me. It's who I am."

Jordan had left Cade because she couldn't deal with his being gone all summer jumping fires. Now his fire expertise saves her life, and she understands he doesn't jump for the adrenaline rush. He does it to feel free - a feeling as vital to him as breathing.

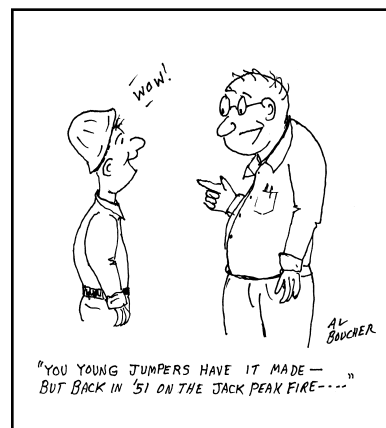
Facing the Fire is an enjoyable read, and it is sexy. It is the only romance novel I have ever read. My walls are covered with bookshelves. The books are all nonfiction, and I

was surprised how much I enjoyed a novel. Gail succeeded in "getting inside the head" of a jumper.

"Leaping from an airplane into the slipstream, hurtling ninety miles an hour toward the fiery earth - who are these amazing people who risk their lives to fight fires?

Smokejumpers, of course, the elite men and women of the wildfire-fighting world." Gail must have done her research on jumpers. There is magic and mystery, courage and passion, and I have seen that in the "bros."

You might enjoy this book. 🦉





NSA Trail Crew



Beartooth Project 2001

by Wendy Kamm (Missoula '82)

IN 2001, THE NSA TRAIL Project went outside the Bob Marshall Wilderness for the first time to the Stillwater River area of the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness. The Stillwater River is a prime fishing stream and runs through a narrow rock slot of a gorge, with waterfalls and rapids along its length, and opening now and then into a few wide spots of meadows and forests.

There were six of us in the crew: **Bill Kolar** (MSO-59), **Wendy Kamm** (MSO-82), **Terry Danforth** (MSO-59), **Mike Overby** (MSO-67), **Joe Kroeber** (MSO-62) and **Bill Thomas** (MSO-75). We arrived at Woodbine Campground in a heavy rain. Most were veterans of one or more previous projects and were surprised to find that this time there were not enough mules to pack all our personal kit. A little smokejumper magic turned duffel bags into backpacks. The rain stopped, and our ground-pounder contact briefed the route to the base campsite, 12 miles up the gorge.

We began to hike, laden with gear like a fire jump packout. After about two miles, the skies opened again and the rain came down, this time to stay with us for the rest of the walk. The route was supposed to be up the trail to the bridge over Wounded Man Creek, walk another 45 minutes and take a trail that branched to the right to the top of "Big Park." And there would be the campsite. Or, maybe not.

We walked the prescribed 45 minutes, then 50, and finally an hour with no trail branching off to the right. Looking up the gorge, we could see that there was nothing that could faintly resemble a campsite for the next three miles. Six seasoned and woods-wise smokejumpers turned in embarrassment and started sloshing back down the trail.

We met our ground-pounder contact as he came up-trail looking for us. It turned out that the branching trail was not on the right, but on the left, just barely existed, and was 15 minutes past

Wounded Man Creek instead of 45. Our contact sheepishly admitted that he hadn't actually been to the campsite, not ever, and that he might have described the route inaccurately.

The actual project was to work the Wounded Man Creek trail to the top where it joined the Jordan Lake trail, a distance of 12 miles (that lucky number again).

The trail ran up through a burn left by one of the 1988 Yellowstone fires. It was rocky and loaded with blowdown and thickets of lodgepole regeneration, so two crosscuts and an Oregon saw worked full time. The weather was cool and the rain went away, leaving only an afternoon shower or two. On the third day, we pushed extra hard and reached the top, leaving good trail behind. A horse-packing outfitter had been waiting behind with his tourist fishermen, and this outfit came on up the trail to the lake.

The next (and last) day was goof-off time. We fished and read and slept. Some of us, not having had enough, even went hiking. Joe Kroeber had masterminded cooking operations (with everyone lending a hand in preparation and cleanup), and the crew declared the steaks and roasts and salads absolutely excellent. The evening campfires spawned silk stories and jokes and, almost certainly, some lies about the days when the trees were taller and the mountains steeper. Rain, hard work and all, the crew pronounced itself pleased and satisfied with our week, and the Forest Service pronounced itself delighted with the high quality of the trail that the Beartooth Project trail crew left behind. 🍄



Beartooth Crew L-R: Dennis Friestad, Terry Danforth, Joe Kroeber, John Payne. (Courtesy W. Kamm)

Where Are These Guys?

Please send any information (addresses/email) to: John McDaniel/ NSA Membership Chairman, P.O. Box 105, Falun KS 67442 or email: jumpercj57@hotmail.com

Name	Base
Richard Allewett	(CJ-51)
Robert Anderson	(MYC-51)
Jim Ballard	(MSO-51)
Stanley Beesley	(MSO-51)
Randall Best	(MSO-51)
Allen Carl Brown	(MYC-51)
Wayne Buchert	(NCSB-51)
Wallace Campbell	(MSO-51)
Ken Chapman	(NCSB-51)
Torky Chorbajian	(MSO-51)
James Coleman	(IDC-51)
Charles Dickie	(NCSB-51)
Anthony Dipentima	(MSO-51)

Steve Downer	(CJ-51)	Robert MacKay	(MSO-51)
William Downs	(MSO-51)	Ray Marshall	(MYC-51)
William Eberhart	(MYC-51)	Raymond McCarthy	(MSO-51)
Gene Ellis	(MYC-51)	Thomas Mee	(MSO-51)
Cecil Feeney	(MSO-51)	Vance Morse	(MSO-51)
Donald Flohr	(MSO-51)	Bob Newberry	(CJ-51)
James Forbes	(MSO-51)	William Peterson	(MSO-51)
David Goblrish	(CJ-51)	Peter Pomeroy	(MSO-51)
Dick Gregory	(CJ-51)	Earl Raymond	(MSO-51)
Joe Grillo	(MSO-51)	James Roche	(MYC-51)
Don Hansen	(CJ-51)	Glen Sheppard	(CJ-51)
Richard Harris	(NCSB-51)	Everett Smith	(MSO-51)
George Hendrickson	(NCSB-51)	Ronald Stickney	(MSO-51)
Richard Hepworth	(MSO-51)	James Thain	(MSO-51)
Arthur Hubbard	(MYC-51)	Kenneth Thompson	(MYC-51)
Richard Jennings	(MSO-51)	Wilbur Trompler	(MSO-51)
David Kaufman	(MSO-51)	Howard Verbeck	(MSO-51)
Robert Kerr	(MSO-51)	Richard Whitney	(MSO-51)
James Kirkpatrick	(MSO-51)	Jerry Williams	(MSO-51)
Lamar Lecompte	(CJ-51)	George Wilson	(CJ-51)
Eddie Ledbetter	(CJ-51)	Bill Wright	(CJ-51)
Brad Lucas	(NCSB-51)	Stanford Young	(MSO-51)

Worst Jump List Pimp In Jumper History?

by Rod Dow (McCall '68)

Over the past 30 years I've spent countless hours looking at that mystical assembly of nametags that we all know as the "Jump List." That order is essential to the very nature of smokejumping and has an endless number of ways to hand out good deals and bad deals. There was one series of jump list occurrences in the history of McCall that bears remembering. In my opinion it is the worst jump list "pimp" I ever saw.

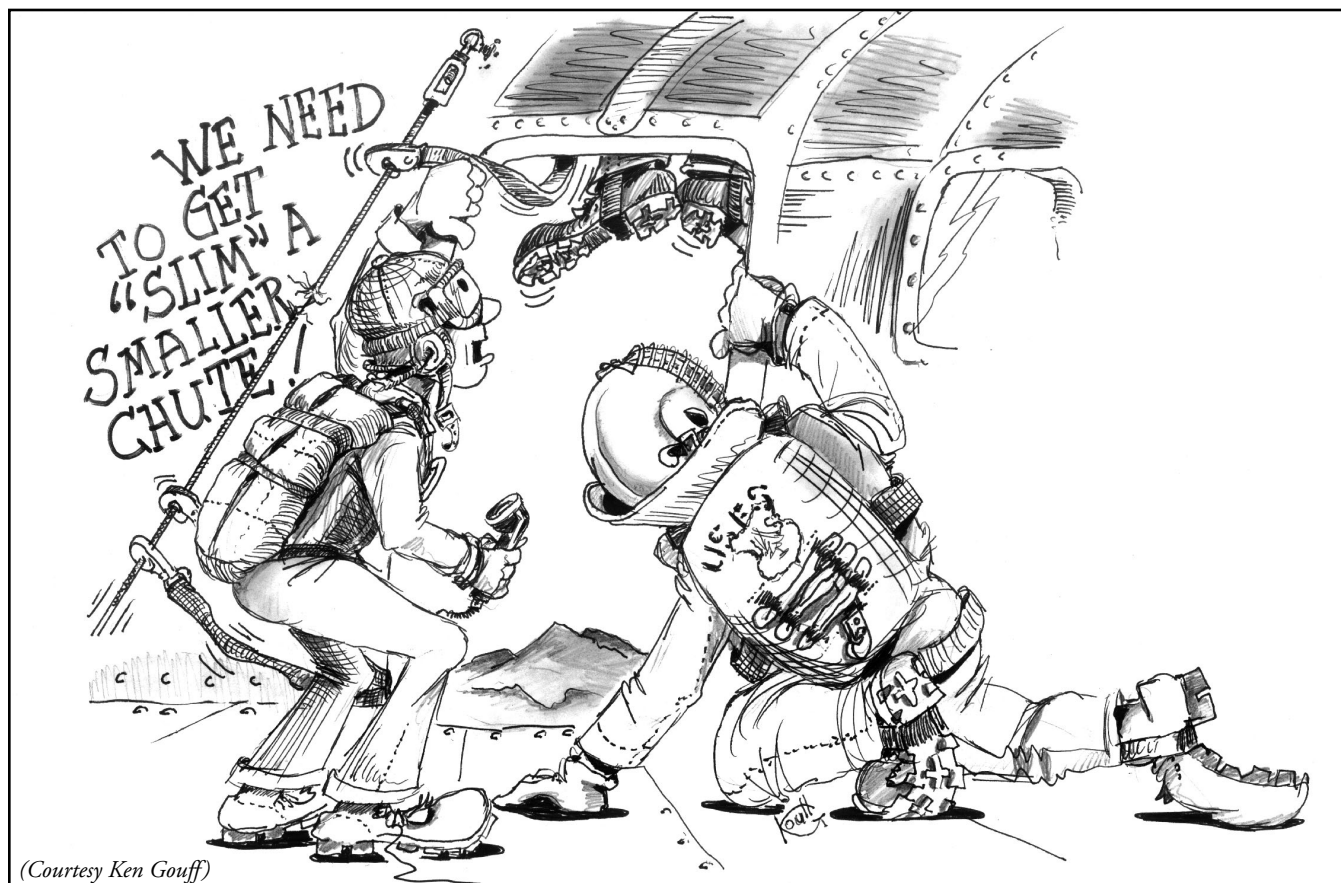
In June 1972 we were preparing for the fire season when a call came in for as many jumpers as we could spare to go to Alaska, where the season was already in full swing. There were 36 jumpers on the list, and the Payette uncharacteristically said all of us could go. However, the call came in on the weekend and four of the boys could not be found: **Larry Swan** (MYC-68), **Don Ranstrom** (MYC-66), **Dave Butler** (MYC-70) and one more that slips my memory. Thirty-three of us boarded a commercial jet in Boise and flew to Alaska, most of us for the first time. As some of you may remember, Fairbanks in 1972 was a pretty wild and interesting place. In addition to lots of overtime (remember 24-hour standby?),

good fires, and seeing new country, we had a ton of fun downtown.

At the end of a great two-week stint, we returned to McCall and, of course, bragged endlessly about our travels to the unfortunate four who missed the trip. Those four were by now perched on top of the list with guys who had shown up to work and had finished refresher training in the interim. The list remained stagnant for a couple of weeks with no overtime available until a fire call to a grass fire on the Snake River. The top 16 jumped the fire at about 8:30 in the morning but were immediately demobed back to McCall before quitting time.

Those 16 (including the four who had missed the Alaska trip) were sitting at the bottom of the list the next day when Alaska called for 20 more jumpers. The same 20 guys ended up making both trips and, when we returned, the four who had missed both trips still had only one jump and one hour of overtime! Big Ernie has a strange sense of humor. ☹

Reprinted with permission from the McCall 60th anniversary edition "And There We Were..."



(Courtesy Ken Gouff)

BOOK REVIEW

High Mountain Two-Manner: a Delightful, Informative Read

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Frank Fowler (MSO-52) has written a charming book that's at once a great read and an invaluable resource for those interested in the evolution of the smokejumper program. *High Mountain Two-Manner* captures in vivid prose and exquisite detail his life as a forestry student and jumper during the early 1950s, the aerial fire project's adolescence. It's a book that makes an old jumper wish he'd kept a journal so that he could relive those exciting days of his youth, as the author has done in this book.

A native of Washington, D.C., Fowler's father died when he was six, rendering his mother the sole support for the three of her eight children still living at home. The youngster became involved in scouting and, through that program, met Scoutmaster E.J. "Joe" Woolfolk, a Forest Service range scientist who had been transferred to Washington, D.C. from Montana. As a result of Woolfolk's influence, Fowler decided to study forestry at the University of Montana, then called Montana State University. He traveled west, sharing rides and hitchhiking. During that trip, Fowler began a correspondence with his mother that they continued until her death in 1964. She saved most of his letters, in which he recorded the minutia of his school and work experiences, and when he retrieved them they became the raw material for this book.

His family's straitened circumstances dictated that Fowler would have to work his way through school, so before and after classes and on weekends he held a variety of jobs, including scrubbing pots and pans, working as a dormitory proctor and as a lab assistant for the Forest Service. He tells of life in freezing school dormitories, of classes and field trips, of preparing for the annual Foresters' Ball, and of meeting and dating Corky, the coed from Butte he'd eventually marry. A summer of range work in eastern Montana between his freshman and sophomore years was sufficient qualification in those days to permit Fowler's entrance into the smokejumper program in 1952.

His was the era of girdles worn beneath canvas jump suits, of leather football helmets, of cotton harnesses with single-point release boxes, of Stokes litters mounted on airplane wheels to evacuate injured persons from the woods, of Derry-slotted white 28-foot chutes and of the new candy-stripes, some with tails, and some without. The Ford Trimotor and Curtis-Wright Travelair were the principal jump ships then; DC-2s, DC-3s and Twin Beech airplanes were just entering the jumper program.

Fowler's narrative includes not only excerpts from his letters home, but material he gleaned from the diaries he kept through his three jump seasons plus extensive research in the daily logs maintained by the base. Thus, he's able to describe in detail virtually every jump and work project to which he was

assigned, the dangers and thrills associated with parachuting and fire fighting, and the monotony of jobs like mop up and long weeks of project work during a wet fire season. Fowler also tells of practices no longer sanctioned, like one-man fire jumps, and jobs rendered obsolete by time, such as maintaining No. 9 telephone wire which, in those days, was the principal medium for communicating with outlying Forest Service stations.

Sprinkled throughout are names familiar to Missoula jumpers of the 50s: men like Fred Brauer (MSO-41), Al Hammond (MSO-46), Len Krout (MSO-46), Martin Onishuk (MSO-51), Joe Roemer (MSO-52), Hugh Fowler (MSO-47) (no relation), Fred "Fritz" Wolfrum (MSO-53) and Ted Rieger (MSO-51). The latter, a classmate and fellow jumper, remains a close friend 56 years later.

After his graduation and service in the Army, Fowler spent most of his career practicing forest management in the Forest Service. He retired in 1984 with 30 years of government service. He's attended two national smokejumper reunions, worked as a volunteer NSA trail crewman and is returning for another stint of volunteer work with his friend Ted in 2006. Fowler lives in Dillon, Montana.

High Mountain Two-Manner may be purchased in hardback or soft cover from Xlibris at www.Xlibris.com, or by calling 1-888-795-4274. ☎

NSA Life Membership

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- ...personal satisfaction of knowing that your contribution is working to preserve the history of our smokejumper heritage.

- ...lifetime membership in the NSA with no further membership fees.

- ...lifetime subscription to the Smokejumper Magazine for you and your surviving spouse.

- ...NSA Life Member cap.

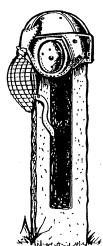
- ...NSA plaque that you will be able to display at your office or home.

- ...special recognition for Life Members in the NSA publications, at reunions and other events.

- ...tax deductibility of your contribution.

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

The NSA has made it easy to afford the Life Member contribution. On the NSA Life Member application form, you will find a contribution installment schedule that will work for your finances. On-line membership is available at www.smokejumpers.com or you may write to: Jim Cherry, NSA Life Member Coordinator, 2335 300th St., Ventura, IA 50482 ☎



Off The List

We want to know! If you learn of the serious illness or death of a member of the smokejumper community, whether or not he or she is a member, your Association wants to know about it. Please

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

Burt Train (Pilot)

Burt died February 17, 2006, in Chico, California. Aviation was his career and passion starting with flight school, and then serving in WWII with the Army Air Corps as a flight instructor, test pilot, and transport pilot. Over the last 50 years he founded and operated Redding Air Service Helicopters to the day of his death at age 94. He was an active helicopter pilot until age 81. His life as an aviator was a fascinating and remarkable one, shifting from fixed wing to helicopters in 1957. Martha, his wife and business partner, drove fuel truck and lived in a trailer in remote areas of southeastern Oregon for 11 summers.

Darrell Wittke (Missoula '89)

Darrell died February 20, 2006 in a motorcycle accident in Helena, Montana. He attended Montana State University and was currently attending nursing school. After serving in the U. S. Army, Darrell was a BLM Smokejumper for 12 years in Boise, Idaho. He worked for the Great Falls Fire Department from 2000-2003 and at the Veterans Administration Medical Center at Fort Harrison from 2003 until the present.

Mark Fenno (North Cascades '68)

Mark (Robert) Fenno passed away unexpectedly January 2, 2006, in Spokane, Washington. Mark rookieed in 1968 at NCSB and jumped there for two summers. He was a good rookie brother, a good smokejumper and a good man. He will be missed. Mark's sense of humor and zest for life touched all those around him. He recently graduated from Eastern Washington University with an MS Degree and was dedicated to working with children at Dept. of Social and Health Services.

Thanks to Dean Longanecker for this obit info.

George S. Leavitt (Missoula '44)

George died January 7, 2006, at age 83. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers during WWII. George graduated from Macalester College and received his Ph.D from U.C. Berkeley. He was an avid tennis player and runner and loved to discuss ideas and politics. George was a Professor of Social Psychology at Fresno State University for 35 years and was retired, living in Santa Cruz, California.

Karl J. Petty (Redmond '71)

Karl died Feb 26, 2006, of pancreatic cancer at age 59.

Karl graduated from high school in Baker and studied forestry at Oregon State and the University of Nevada. He served in the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1968, including three years in Vietnam. He worked for the U.S. Forest service for 35 years, including 16 as a smokejumper. He was also the assistant regional fire cache manager for the Pacific Northwest.

Robert "Mike" Goehry (Redmond '67)

Mike died January 31, 2006, in Brewster, Washington. He graduated from Twisp High School in 1964. Mike jumped two seasons and worked on construction for a number of years. He was injured in 1989 and took early retirement, living most of his life in Brewster.

Ralph R. Cook (Missoula '53)

Ralph died March 3, 2006, at his home in Sun Lakes, Arizona. He served in the Air Force from 1948 to 1952 before getting his degree in industrial engineering from Montana State University in Bozeman. Ralph started his engineering career with Boeing and then with Honeywell, retiring in 1991. He then served with the Peace Corps in Chile. Ralph was an avid whitewater canoeist and also continued to participate with a local hiking club until the final months of his life.

Thanks to Dr. Bill Groman (MSO-52) for forwarding this obit information.

John E. Garber (McCall '45)

John died April 4, 2006, at his home in Hubbard, Oregon. He attended schools in Woodburn and Molalla and worked in the woods until he was drafted, serving as a conscientious objector in the Civilian Public Service. His CPS service included smokejumping in Idaho and maintenance work in Glacier National Park. The following 40 years John worked as a farm hand, factory laborer, construction worker, residential contractor, and excavator. He also owned a small farm. John actively participated with Christian missions and organizations devoted to helping others. He organized relief trips and traveled to Columbia, Mexico, Honduras and to various states in association with Mennonite Disaster Services.

Richard S. Tracy (Missoula '53)

Dick died Friday, March 24, 2006, at Mercy Medical Center in Redding. He moved to Redding in 1968 and was Base Manager until 1981. He also headed up the Silver City Base from 1962 through 1967. Prior to that, Dick jumped

at Missoula from 1953 through the 1964 season and served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. (See article about Dick by Ralph Johnston in this issue).

From Carol Tracy: "First, I'd like to thank all of those people who helped make the service and last week memorable and bearable: the former smokejumpers that worked

with Dick for many years and traveled long distances to pay their respects; those fast friends that were at our beck and call and provided Dick's family with support; those that worked many hours to make the service beautiful; all the Forest Service family. Where does one start and where does one end in the thank yous?" 🌲

Dick Tracy, Meet Davy Crockett

by Ralph Johnston (Redding '63)

I first met Dick Tracy in Missoula, Montana, in June of 1959, while I was serving as a technical director for the first helicopter training film. The title of the film was *Helicopter in Fire Control*, and we had a scene depicting a Bell 47 transporting an injured fire fighter on the stokes external litter. Dick was selected to be the victim and acted so well we told him he should join the screen actors guild. I also worked with Dick at Silver City

on Region 3 fires and on helicopter training assignments.

In 1960 Dick and another jumper made a jump to the site of a T-34 aircraft accident. The rescue jump resulted in saving the life of Wendall Schroll, a forest service pilot.

Dick's interest in helicopters included an assignment on my helicopter crew on the Sundance Fire in 1967 in Region 1. During this time I had a

group of fallers building landing areas for future operational use. Each day I would assign a helitack crew person to supervise the crew. On one occasion the boss of the fallers was named Davy Crockett. I got them together for an introduction and said, "You won't believe this, but Davy Crockett, meet Dick Tracy."

I'll miss Dick. I'll always remember his big smile and friendly nature. 🌲



Dick Tracy in Redding office 1981. (Courtesy Carol Tracy)

A Long and Memorable Career

by Jim Larkin/Edited by Bill Fogarty



Jim Larkin 1951 (Courtesy J. Larkin)

I dropped my first “two-man stick” from a Johnson Flying Service (JFS) Travelair N-9038 in 1949. The fire was on Cottontail Creek, and, as I recall, the jumpers were **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) and **Del Catlin** (MYC-48). I spent the next eight years with JFS flying TA’s, Fords, glass-nosed Twin Beaches and an occasional flight with **Warren Ellison** in their DC-3.

My kid brother, **Rosco “Rusty” Larkin** (MYC-51), jumped in the early 50s, including the famous (?) “crawling attack” on a fire in lava rocks of the Seven Devils. Rusty had a broken ankle and Webb had broken ribs from a misplaced stob.

In 1957 I decided to go it alone. Pete Klinkhammer, Shepp Ranch founder, said, “Jeem, I got some Greyhound stock that’s not doing anything. I’ll cash it in and we’ll go get you an airplane.” So he did and we did. The next weeks saw Pete and me in Fairbanks readying the last Cunningham-Hall in the world for the long winter flight to Idaho. Pete was over 80-years old at the time, and it was quite an adventure for us both. I flew the big corrugated bi-plane for several years, bidding the

jumper contact for Idaho City, while **James “Smokey” Stover** (MYC-46) and **Ken Smith** (IDC-55) hovered over the birth of a new Beech E-18. It was “something else!” Twin JATO’s snuggled behind the Pratt & Whitney 985s and every gimmick and do-dad that Smoky and Ken could dream up. We used my old C-Hall as a backup, plus we had **Clare Hartness’s** old Noorduyyn Norseman, a C-45 Beech, a T-28B, a T-34, a Pilatus Porter and, later, a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) C-47 and a Twin Otter.

By 1958 I was full-time with the Forest Service. In the early 60s Karl Bryning moved to the Regional Air Officer position and things started to happen. General Von Kahn, Army Chief, approved sending three USFS pilots a year to the Army Rotor Wing School at Mineral Wells, Texas. I graduated in 1961 and had Rotor Wing Check Airman added to my “duties as assigned.”

When the Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC) was being considered, I was named Director of Western Zone Air Unit. We set up

shop near the Boise Airport control tower. I was assigned the new infrared fire-scan imaging program and the national radio cache. I was also Chief Pilot for Region 4 and in charge of crewing a newly acquired C-54, helping crew the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Convair and Electra, flying two C-46s acquired from Region 5, plus squeezing in as much smokejumper flying as possible. I can’t believe how many hats we were expected to wear.

With the formation of the BIFC, Karl Bryning became BLM National Air Chief, and we began to function as a truly interagency organization. Karl would put on this USFS cap and be in a “jump Doug” one day, at an interagency meeting the next, and back in Washington, D.C. the next. Boyd Rasmussen, who along with Karl had done so much for Region 4 air operations, became the new Secretary of Interior, and their close friendship further solidified the interagency functions of the BIFC.

I continued pretty much status quo until retiring in 1978 under the so-called “hazardous duty” category. Warren Ellison,

a long time friend from the early JFS days, offered me a seat on Joe Albertson's King Air 200, which I helped crew for the next five years. I also found some time to fly Harrah's Twin Otter, mostly into the Harrah Ranch on the Middle Fork of the Salmon, on an "as-needed" basis. My straight-tailed 172 became a Texas Tail dragger, and I continued to keep my hand in on most of the shorter strips. In the 90s I got back into the USFS jumper DC-3's carrying over into the Basler turbine conversion of N146Z; an unbelievable change to an already unbelievable airplane. Gone were the days of trying to maintain engine cushion on cargo drops. Just honker back to the stops and ride the flattened propellers, Twin Otter style, into the steepest drop pass.

What's the song? *Memories Are Made of This*? I have enough memories from 35 years of jumper flying to last three lifetimes:

Like Region six details to Region 8.

Like two heights are better than one for installing or removing Otter engine covers; Mouse on top and one of the taller guys, Trooper Tom perhaps, on the lower half.

Of the Ford rolling on its back on a hot afternoon cargo drop on Pistol Creek ridge.

Of looking back wondering if I still had Catlin, or wondering why he was crawling around on the ceiling!

Of how many "moons it takes to make a lunar landscape." Eight!

Of burning up the starter on the JFS TBM in Cascade and having to start spray runs the next morning. Then the look in Maxine's already round eyes as I outlined our starting procedure, 'now kid, it's like this. I have this big rope, I'll wrap it around the propeller dome, hook it up to our baby Volkswagen, and when I say, "Hit it! Give it all she's got!" Mirrored in her eyes was a visual image of the bug, still tied to the 16-foot propeller, about to be launched into the first space orbit. Her, "You're going to do what?" was very uncooperative. I did get it started with Gary Young's 4X4.

Or of an end of the season jumper returning to McCall.

Over Loon Lake he says, "Jim, I've never done a loop. Could we do a loop?" I'd never looped the Travelair, but what the hell. I stuffed old 038's nose down to the red line, started pulling Gs, not enough, and ran completely out of everything in the inverted position. Things started falling: barf bags, wrenches, flight bags, and last, but not least, a 150 pound fire pack brisling with shovels and pulaskis. Gravity took over, the nose fell thru, the engine began running and then began a long silence. Eventually, a somewhat squeaky voice says, "That's a loop?"

Paraphrasing Will Rogers, "I've never met a jumper I didn't like." 🐼

Jim started his career in 1937 flying a Curtiss Junior out of a Donnelly, Idaho hayfield. With war clouds looming he completed CPT flight training, moved on to the USAAF Instructor School and then to the Rankin Aeronautical Academy, where he helped graduate several cadet classes. He moved to the Air Force Air Transport Command in Long Beach, Calif., where he began collecting airplanes in worldwide ferry flights. After high-altitude training, he was assigned to flying "Hump Runs" to western China and Burma.

After the war, Jim joined his brothers in converting the Larkin home place into what is now Donnelly Airport. In 1947 they were involved in some of the first intensive timber-spray operations, leading to eight years of flying spray jobs in Grumman TBM's and Trimotors. Jim was employed by Johnson Flying Service until 1956. He operated independently until 1964 when ground was broken for the newly formed Boise Interagency Fire Center. Jim moved to this facility at the Boise Airport and retired as Director of Region 4 Air Operations in 1978. Later, in the 90s, Jim was back in the U.S. Forest Service DC-3.

Two of many notable highlights of Jim's remarkable career include the first "Super Tanker" sortie in August, 1960, flying a C-97 N9638C on a wildfire near Trinity Mountain, east of Boise, and an assignment in 1973 to operate two Army C-47s in Pakistan, controlling a massive outbreak of rice-stem borer. A Presidential award was given for this successful operation.

Rumbucket Rendezvous

by T.J. Thompson (Missoula '55)

Our annual rendezvous was held in September (2005), starting at LoLo Hot Springs, Montana, and ending on the Lochsa River near Lowell, Idaho. T.J. Thompson, Ken Hessel (MYC-58), Shep Johnson (MYC-56) and Randolph Scott (MYC-57) were in attendance. We traveled the Lewis and Clark Trail to Castle Butte Lookout, where we spent the night. The evening was filled with stories about hunting, fishing, Forest Service days, and our years with the smokejumpers.

The four of us served together 40+ years, including several years in South East Asia and other locations around the world. We recalled old buddies and experiences of that era.

Thanks to Ken and Randolph, we had great meals and maybe a beer or ten. The next rendezvous will be this fall. 🐼



L-R: T.J. Thompson, Ken Hessel, Shep Johnson, Randolph Scott.
(Courtesy T.J. Thompson)