



THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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SMOKEJUMPER

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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)

PRESIDENT

WELL, HERE WE ARE into another year—2007. Man, where does the time go?

I've been thinking about a topic for this message and I would like to recognize all of the smokejumper pilots who've been a part of the smokejumper program, either as agency employees or as contractors. Without these guys and gals, we could not do what we do.

I'd love to list all the pilots who have been a part of my life, but there are just too many and I'm afraid I'd miss one.

That said, I would like to talk about one who I believe was a fine example and model of this great bunch. His name is **Dave Schas** (MYC-48). David was a good friend of mine, a great pilot; unfortunately his life ended in an Twin Otter crash on the Ochoco National Forest.

David started out as a smokejumper back with **Paper Legs Peterson** (MYC-47), **Andy Anderson** (MSO-46), **Ken Roth** (MYC-46), **Bob Nichol** (MSO-52)—guys who had interesting careers of their own. David also had a background piloting stint in Southeast Asia, working there during the 1960s.

He loved to fly smokejumpers and was instrumental in developing

such sports as "Gate Golf," the 4x4 40-yard streamer baton relay, and putting marks on Twin Otter tires which involved gambling to see which mark would end up on the pavement after the next flight. They were all fun and helped sponsor a little competition between bases, and even put a little spending money in a jumper's pocket.

He was very good with cargo, as were (and are) a lot of the jumper captains out there. He told me several times that if I were to leave this earth before he did, he wanted my hair. Well, my hair left first, so then he wanted my legs. That hurt—but oh, well. He was cranky at times, but was always there when the siren went off, suited up, ready to roll.

I can remember many times flying as a spotter, coming over a ridge, full flaps, landing gears down, and looking forward from the back of the airplane, only seeing trees through the windshield. He and all the other pilots always pulled it out when the cargo went out the door. So, I use him as an example of a smokejumper captain whom I really respected, as I do with all of the smokejumper pilots who were, and still are, a vital part of the smokejumper heritage. I say "thank you" for the job each of you does.

We, as a board of directors, look forward to another active year with the NSA. We're looking for more Life Members. Watch out—we're coming after you. I'll see you at the Boise National Reunion or at the NCSB reunion in September.

So, until then, close your eyes for a second or two. Visualize yourself in the door because the door is yours. Feel the wind. You're hooked up, your static line is clear, and you just got slapped. Good luck and have a great jump. 🧯

Dick Tracy: The Best Boss I Ever Had

by Scott Warner (Redding '69)

Dick Tracy, our beloved Redding Smokejumper Base Manager, left us in late March, 2006, during the last part of a long, wet and snowy winter. He had been in poor health for a decade and off the jump list at 73.

Dick was the best boss I ever had - teaching so much by example to so many of us. It was always about the "jumpers" and how loyal bros will give 110 percent to good leadership, even under adversity and extreme fatigue, and sometimes suffering the fallout from poor management at the higher levels. His special leadership style most likely evolved from the Korean War, from the Missoula smokejumpers, and from being the boss at Silver City, New Mexico - known for lots of wind. Dick Tracy taught us to work with what you've got, how to bring the good ones along, get the best even out of the "sh—

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

birds," and deal with powerful personalities and big egos. He was a budget genius, although that was not a favorite task. "The Detective" (this and many other nicknames from Bob Kersh, Redding loft foreman and founding father – another great personality, teacher, and another story) never really verbalized his leadership style as would be done in today's management journals for those who probably never have and never will "actually do it!"

It seemed to me and others that Dick had this great Three Concentric Circles View of Authority, somewhat like the "wind cone" when it comes to spotting smokejumpers. The *first circle* is the given or declared limit of authority which one must fill to the edge or the "overhead" will intrude by either necessity and/or micromanagement tendencies. The *second circle* is where the good boss goes "out there" to get things done. The second circle perimeter is not defined and risks abound, yet the good boss knows where it is because operating within "is the right thing to do." The *third circle* is the territory of the higher-ups, and one should not go there because it would be insubordinate. However, once in a great, great while, the good boss does need to go there, due to dire straits or unexpected invitation! We never heard a bad word about Dick; everyone liked and respected him (except for one budget functionary!) even as he did the tough things a boss must do.

Working for Dick Tracy has helped me throughout my industrial forestry career, both in the American west and international forestry, forest products, and business work in too many countries to count. It must be the same for the other Redding smokejumpers and those from the other bases. After leaving "The Jumpers," like many, it took me awhile to understand that the "real world," even the vaunted private sector, is just not in the same league as the smokejumpers. Indeed, one does have to work with what you've got because not all can find within themselves to be more than they thought they could be and resist or do not understand what teamwork and camaraderie is all about! Much of Dick Tracy's hallmark modesty, courtesy, and leadership by example "stuck," and I was able to make things work and pass it on to foresters, loggers, forest workers, and even higher-up executives and government officials.

On the lighter side, "Typhoon" or "Hurricane" Tracy was a gifted spotter, rarely if ever throwing more than one set of wind drift streamers! I can just see, hear and feel the jump runs with him: circling and sizing up the fire and conditions, lining up the plane then throwing out the single set of streamers with "hook up" before they even hit the ground, the brief and perfect instructions almost drowned out by the engines and the slipstream, and "go get-em babe" as you went out the door!

It is always a sad time when the "good ones" like Dick Tracy move on. Just a few days after Dick left us, forestry school class-



Dick Tracy (Top Row, Far Right) with his 1969 Redding Smokejumpers Regular Crew. (Redding "Retreads" not Shown). Author Bottom Row, 5th from Right. (Courtesy S. Warner)

mate Bob Willhite, who was not a smokejumper but definitely jumper material, also passed away. In our last communications, we agreed that we will meet again, with him being those unexpected wisps of wind in our favorite places in the wild.

A few weeks before Dick Tracy passed away, I wrote him that he was the best boss I ever had, not mentioning when we meet again it will be with those "it's too windy to jump," "go get-em babe" afternoon winds. After Dick's wonderful memorial, I told his great wife, Carol, how good forestry school friend Bob Willhite, "the unexpected afternoon wisps of wind," had just left

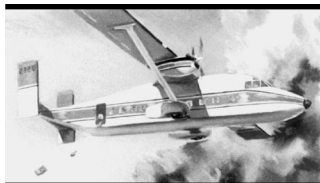
us, as had our beloved "Hurricane Tracy." We just teared up and hugged, with me saying "Hurricane Tracy," and her saying my old smokejumper and forestry school nickname, "Mouse."

So the "Detective" says "Go get 'em babe" as the smokejumpers willingly go out the door for another windy ride, and it's "Jumpers away!" We miss you Dick and thanks for everything. 🙏

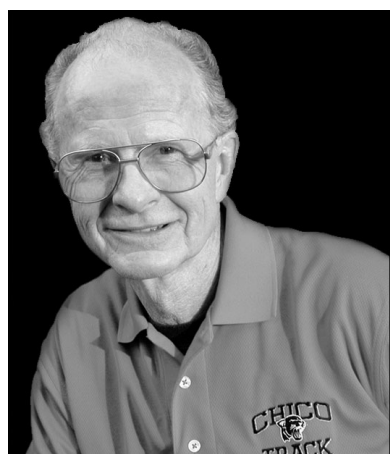
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Missoula jumper Jordan McKnight lands in Montana, August 2006. (Courtesy Mike McMillan)



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

IT STARTED ON APRIL 29, 2005, in Redding, the evening before a Board of Directors Meeting the following day. **Fred Rohrbach** (MSO-65), **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63), **John Helmer** (RDD-59) and wife Jinx, and myself were sitting around the dinner table. It was the 30-year anniversary of the fall of Saigon, and we listened intently as Fred told about being in one of the last helicopters to leave. Fred was doing business in Vietnam at the time. He currently does business in the country and makes many trips to Vietnam each year.

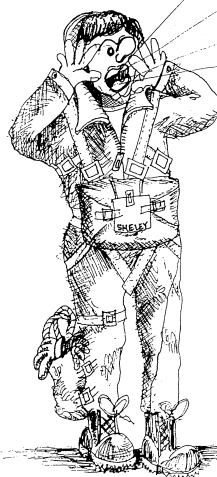
I don't know who brought it up, but all of us around the table were interested in visiting the country with someone who knew the "ropes." From there it went to an NSA sponsored Vietnam trip. Slightly less than two years later, the first NSA Vietnam trip has been completed. The group of 35 returned to the U.S. on January 17th after one of the best trips I've ever experienced. The group consisted of smokejumpers, wives and friends. It had to be the All-Stars of the group-traveling world. All of these people were interesting and great to be around.

Jumpers included **Fred Rohrbach**

(MSO-65/Polly), **Bob Dayton** (MSO-65/Sheri), **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63), **Guy Hurlbutt** (IDC-62/Linda), **Virgil Miller** (MSO-45), **Francis Mohr** (IDC-63/Tay), **Garry Peters** (CJ-63/Mimi), **John Helmer** (RDD-59/Jinx), **Dan Hensley** (MSO-57), **Jeff Kinderman** (MSO-75/Kathy Elzig), **Rod McIver** (MSO-64), **Todd Onken** (MSO-82), **Jerry Timmons** (MSO-62), **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59/K.G.), **Dean Longanecker** (NCSB-68), **Ernie Longanecker** (NCSB-70) and **Dale Longanecker** (NCSB-74).

My initial aim was to write a daily diary for the magazine, but I lost track of events and days. When I found out that one of the group, **Mary Pickett**, was a reporter for the *Billings Gazette*, I asked her if she would allow me to reprint her column in the July issue. Now, I can just put down some thoughts and remembrances of the trip.

We left Seattle on an EVA airline 747 about an hour later than our scheduled 0300 departure time. I had not heard of EVA but asked a friend of mine, who teaches in Pakistan, to rate the airlines on which he travels. He rated Singapore and EVA at the top. Found out that EVA is Evergreen Airlines, and we are definitely familiar with Evergreen as we have a smokejumper exhibit in their outstanding aviation museum in McMinnville, Oregon. Fred had booked us in Economy Deluxe for the 13-hour flight to Taiwan and the additional three hours to Saigon. Only being familiar with domestic flights, I was immediately impressed with the seating and service. Real leg room, warm hand towels to clean up before drinks, followed by dinner and then breakfast before we landed



in Taiwan. I'm spoiled forever.

The late start from Seattle put us in Taiwan at the same time as our connecting flight was scheduled to leave for Saigon. Besides our group, there were many others on this flight that were connecting to Saigon. Evergreen, ever efficient, had staff at the top of the ramp directing us all to the next flight. We'll see if they are really good if our luggage made this quick

transfer. It did! A three-hour hop seems short after the previous leg, and I expected we would get a coke and some peanuts to hold us over. No way on EVA! Here came another chicken to wine meal.

I was impressed with the large number of American Vietnamese on our flight returning to visit relatives. A gentleman sitting across the aisle from me told of escaping the country in 1981 as one of the "boat people." He is now living in San Jose and returns annually to visit family. On this trip he was taking his daughter and his new son-in-law back to meet relatives. The son-in-law (non-Asian) had his father and mother along, also.

After clearing customs (no smiley faces) and getting our baggage X-rayed on the way out (?), we were met by Fred and three 15-passenger busses that took us to the Renaissance Hotel. Fred, who knew more than the tour guide, gave us an excellent introduction to Saigon on the way. Saigon, a town of seven million people, has four million motorbikes, most of which seem to be on the streets at the same time. The heavy air pollution was one of the first things a person noticed. Looked like L.A. 40 year ago.

The traffic flow is something that stood out immediately. Don't know why they have a line down the middle of the road, as it is a waste of paint. I've never seen 300 motorbikes come into an intersection at right angles and still make it through. I told Garry Peters that this would never work in California, as there would be a fistfight every 20 yards and gunfire every other block. In all our days in Vietnam, I never saw any fists in the air or accidents. Plenty of horns, but no violence. Found out that it was better to look out the side windows rather than straight ahead. Didn't need to know about the truck that was coming at us in our lane.

Walking across the street was a mental challenge. Picture swimming at right angles through a Grunion run in the ocean without touching a fish. We were told to step out and walk slowly, no quick moves, and no eye contact with the cyclists. They will miss you. I've played too much dodgeball in P.E. and couldn't adjust to that concept. I found myself walking on the down-traffic side of a Vietnamese gentleman one evening. I was his shadow; he moved, I moved. About halfway across a wide street, I think he felt my presence. He just smiled and continued on with his shadow.

The highlight of the first days in Saigon, in my mind, was the bargaining and complete transaction of merchandise between Jerry Timmons and a young Vietnamese lady. You say what's the big deal? Well, all of this was done through the window of our tour bus moving through crowded traffic. The young lady was on the back of a motorbike and was consistently in danger of being screened off by parked vehicles. What worried me was that the young man driving kept looking at us in the bus as immovable objects approached. He always missed and would catch up with enough time for her to make three transactions before we arrived at the lunch stop. Jerry was very good for the Vietnamese economy.

Meals were included on this trip, which made it even more of a bargain. The menus were planned, just sit down and enjoy the feast. I found myself sitting next to Dan Hensley one evening and thought I'd finally found someone who knows more about covert ops than **Fred Donner** (MSO-59), but Dan said I was wrong. Fred is still King. Big days always on deck but my biological clock was still in California, and I had a heck of a time adjusting to being 15 hours ahead in time. Ambien did the job!

We covered Saigon (and shopping), the Cu Chi Tunnels (more shopping), and then flew to Danang on the 4th day in a new Vietnam Airlines 777. We stayed at the Furama Resort on China Beach for two days as we took in the ancient town of Hoi An and Marble Mountain. Found out more about bargaining from Francis Mohr and Garry Peters as they returned to the resort with two sacks filled with Tiger Beer purchased from a vendor across the street from the resort. Their 65-cent price beat the \$3.50 per bottle price at the resort.

On day six we bussed over the Hai Van Pass to the old capital city of Hue. The next day we took a boat trip down the river. The people we saw never stopped working. They were dredging up sand and gravel by hand off the river bottom, loading

their boat so it sank to within inches of the water line, and then transporting the load up-river to the next person. I thought they probably didn't get days off, hazard pay or overtime. Throughout this trip I admired the work ethic of these people. Everyone was on the go with something to sell or do.

Day eight we flew back to Saigon before flying back to Seattle on day ten. Being ahead of the date line, we arrived in Seattle before we took off from Saigon. Beside that, the return trip was with the wind and that cut three hours off the time.

There were so many sights, sounds and experiences in this trip that this column could easily turn into a travel log. I've fought fires in a multitude of wilderness areas in the Western U.S. and felt like I've walked in areas where there have been few footprints. But, I'm a novice traveler. This trip was a first-rate educational experience. You could not have asked for a better group of travel companions. It is just another example of how the NSA is responsible for pulling together those of us who, at one time in our lives, had the "greatest job ever." What can be better than getting together with the "bros" 40 years later?

To modify the "Terminator" a bit, I have a feeling that "We'll be back."

NSA Vietnam Trip 2009-get ready. 🐼



L-R: Jumper gathering Oct. 2006 in Marfa, Texas. TJ Thompson (MSO-55), John Payne (MSO-66), Dave Dooley (RDD-73), Jack Saunders (MSO-61), Bill Shaffer (MSO-62) and Ernest Reising (MSO-61). Ernest's grandson, Bo in front. (Courtesy J. Saunders)

The Remarkable Yuri Yakovlevich Yushkov

by Bruce Ford (Missoula '75)

As you get to the top of the stairwell at the jumpbase in Krasnoyarsk, in Siberia, you run smack into a huge, mural-sized painting. It covers a whole wall, about 8 x 12 feet, and depicts a forest fire. A just-landed jumper squints up at a circling AN-2 and rolls his chute up; another jumper drifts down through a smoke-filled sky. Flames crackle in the forest beyond the edge of the meadow and, in the distance, a rappeller slides from a helicopter. At the edge of the scene, a moose ambles away from all the activity. All this was painted years ago, and the artist, Yuri Yakovlevich Yushkov, was a smokejumper himself here for many years.



Yuri Yakovlevich Yushkov
(Courtesy Bruce Ford)

Yuri first strapped on a parachute for the Soviet army at age eighteen in 1943 as war raged against the invading Nazis. His first training jumps were from a balloon tethered at a height of 400 meters. The balloon's gondola carried 4-5 jumpers and a spotter; as it was let out on the tether, the first man in the stick sat in the "door" and the others crowded behind him. As each man in the stick jumped, the gondola would rock progressively harder, until the last man staggered to the door of the oscillating basket.

After jump training he and his fellow raw recruits were thrown into a breach in the First Ukrainian Front, beyond the Dneiper River. At night, under cover of darkness, his brigade of about 6000 was dropped from a group of planes commanded by the legendary woman pilot Valentina Grizodubova. Yuri jumped with a mortar in place of a reserve from a LI-2, the Russian version of the DC-3. Their task was to divert enemy fire and strength while the breach was closed, and the mission was successful. Yuri remarks, "Only a handful of us survived."

The surviving members of his brigade were then sent to the quieter Karelian Front near Finland, where they "lounged around making wooden boats." He remembers seeing an observation balloon shot down, and the occupant safely parachuting from the falling craft.

After Yuri left the army in 1949, he worked as a parachute instructor for an aerial sport club until 1952, when he hired on with the newly reconstituted smokejumpers, working out of Novosibirsk in central Siberia. The smokejumpers were still using the two-seat Po-2 and three-seat Po-2A biplanes, which required the jumper to climb out on the lower wing to exit. Standard jump altitude was 400 meters, but he recalls one jump where he barely had time to maneuver between opening and landing. Turns out a misunderstanding between the pilot and spotter resulted in his being dropped at about 200 meters.

Mobilization of locals for firefighting was still the main task of jumpers at that time, so Yuri would usually jump into a vil-

lage or lumber camp. He composed a little verse apropos of such "hero jumps:"

So I landed pretty as you please
Little kids come running up to me.
Around my chute they swarm like bees
As I vainly try to drag it free.

Jumpers had blanket permission to commandeer and utilize transportation and carried a copy of an order to that effect, signed by Stalin. Brandishing this order invariably elicited cooperation, according to Yuri. There is a story of the jumper who requisitioned a milk truck to aid in firefighting. In the course of things the milk spoiled, and an argument ensued as to who should pay for the loss. The Forest ended by agreeing to cough up damages. Demobing oneself from a fire in those days required resourcefulness and imagination, but if you could make your way to a rail line, you were home free.

Yuri's first jump on the PD-47 chute resulted in the only reserve deployment of his career. His accustomed chute, the PD-6, had a short ripcord cable. He would pull it far enough to deploy, then restow the handle in its pocket for safekeeping. When he pulled the longer PD-47 ripcord in the same way, nothing happened. After a few seconds he concluded that a reserve ride would be the wise option.

In 1956, Yuri transferred to the newly opened Krasnoyarsk sub-base, where An-2 airplanes allowed larger groups of jumpers to be dropped. Static line jumping was soon adopted as well. He admits to being a bit nervous the first time he entrusted his opening to a static line rather than the accustomed hand deployment.

Yuri says he often argued with pilot-observers who would pass up new, small, "good deal" fires and wait to throw the jumpers on a "gobbler." His uncharitable suspicion was that some pilot-observers were motivated by their different pay basis: they were paid by flight hours, whereas the jumpers got a bonus for quickly controlling a fire.

As long as he can remember, Yuri has painted and written poetry. His straightforward verse is full of humor and light. In them, the moon is a sickle which his peasant great-grandmother flung to heaven in a fit of despair at overwork and after failing to reap the last row. And the sickle hangs there yet in the sky, gladdening us with its ethereal light.

Remarkably, in a long career of war and firefighting, Yuri was never injured; his friends and relatives attribute his charmed life to a guardian angel.

Yuri finished his career in 1965 with a total of 556 jumps. 🍷

I came by Yuri's apartment for an interview lugging a small (250 ml) bottle of vodka, thinking to take it easy on myself and an 81-year-old man. He looked disparagingly at my little bottle and immediately sent his grandson out for a full-size one.

“Paper Legs” Peterson and the Taj Mahal

by Thomas “TJ” Thompson (Missoula '55)

This is a little-known part of Pete's life and activities that I would like to share with the readers of "Smokejumper" magazine. It is my small remembrance of a very good friend.

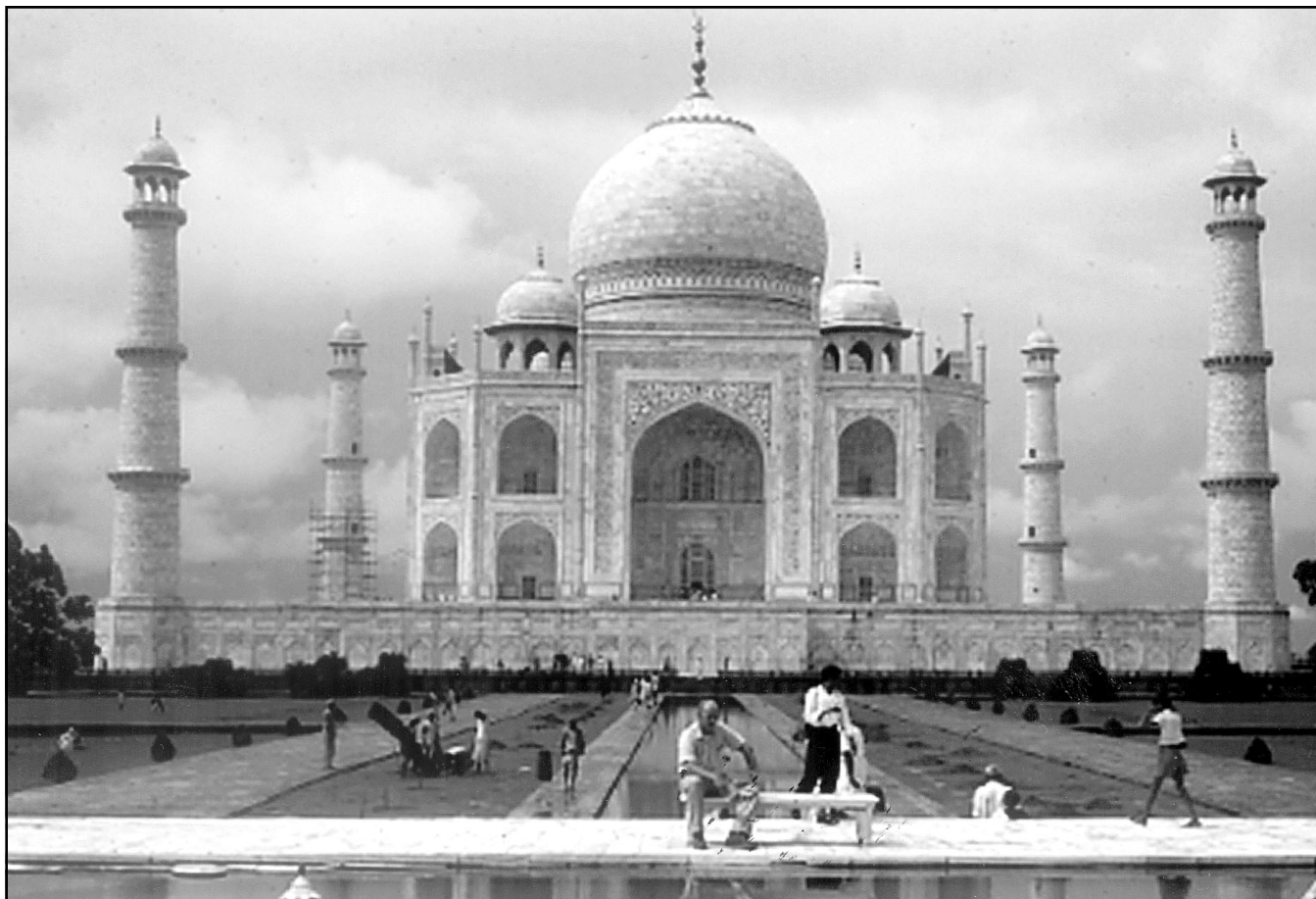
Richard A. Peterson (MYC-47), a.k.a. Pete, Paper Legs or the Great Horned Owl, was involved in many things during his life: a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne, a smokejumper, a miner, a rancher and a CIA operative. Pete excelled in all of the above. Much has been written about Pete, as well as many stories told about this outstanding individual. The clandestine side of Pete's life remains very much a secret and much will remain that way. During the last several years a few of the operations that Pete served on have, to a point, been declassified.

We met on my first fire jump in August of 1955. The fire was the infamous Lost Packer Fire deep in the Salmon National Forest, north of West Horse Lookout, where a record 104 smokejumpers (72 MSO and 32 MYC) jumped. The 16 jumpers that I jumped with camped next to the

McCall jumpers. It sounded like the McCall crew was on a party rather than on a fire. They were laughing, raising hell and generally having a great time. They would work hard all day then make bets and tell stories until and after dark.

Once I saw a McCall jumper carrying another jumper on his back up the fire line to camp. I asked why the hell he doing that. The answer was a simple, “He lost the bet.”

Back at camp many of the Missoula jumpers joined the McCall jumpers. They were old friends and held a campfire reunion. They had jumped together for several years and served on the New Mexico crews together. The character of these veteran smokejumpers was slowly taking shape in my mind. As I watched these jumpers, I asked myself, “Who the hell are these fun-loving, hard working guys?” I would soon find out they were a treasure trove of characters. Little did I know that several of us would be lifelong friends and serve not only in the smokejumpers, but in the paratroopers and other places around the world for the next 40 plus years. Jumpers like Pete and other characters like **Max Allen**



“Paper Legs” October 1963 (Courtesy T.J. Thompson)

(MSO-48), **Roland Anderson** (MSO-51), **Lyle Brown** (MS-54), **Harry Roberts** (MSO-53), **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53), and others. Life would change from these fun-living carefree times to more serious and dangerous endeavors. In the late 50s and early 60s several smokejumpers were recruited by the CIA and served in many parts of the world.

The point of this yarn is that in the early 60s Pete and I served together in India. I arrived in India in early 1963 and was joined by Pete several months later. What a great day when Pete arrived! India was tough and, I needed help. Our mission was to train Tibetan parachute riggers and assist with the jump-school training. After Pete arrived we ran both operations, with the help of our Indian counterparts.

The jump school and drop zone were seven miles west of Agra, the home of the Taj Mahal. When Pete or I jumped we could look out the door and see the Taj. While hanging from your chute you could still see the Taj for another 500 feet. What a sight from a parachute!

Agra was the home of the Taj and was a tourist mecca. We had opportunities to meet several famous people. We talked with Lowell Thomas, the radio news commentator of the 30s, 40s, and 50s. We met John Masters who wrote *The Night Riders of the Bangalore* and other books about India. It always amazed me that when we sat down with these famous people to have a beer, they zeroed in on Pete. They loved Pete's natural ways. They talked about the fishing in Idaho, hunting geese, deer, elk, hard rock mining, politics and, of course, smokejumping. Most people didn't know, but Pete was very well read and versed on the world situation. We dealt with high level Indian government and U.S. Embassy staffers on a weekly basis. Pete was a good politician and a great negotiator.

One of our Indian friends was Capt. Bhawani Singh of the famous Indian Para-Brigade. Capt. Singh was the prince of the State of Jaipur and would soon become the Maharajah of Jaipur. On Sundays Capt. Singh would send his driver over to pick Pete and me up for breakfast at the Indian Para-Brigade mess hall. This was a great honor. The meals were outstanding. After the meal many officers of the brigade would join us, and we would talk for hours. What a tremendous, educational time! The only thing that Pete did not like was the driver jumping out and opening the door for us. Pete would always say, "Hell T.J., I can open the door myself." It always embarrassed him to have someone open the door for him.

One of our greatest thrills was to see Prime Minister Nehru. The Prime Minister was very striking and impressive in his white Nehru shirt with a yellow rose on his lapel. He looked right at Pete and me, hesitated and smiled. I thought he might stop and talk to us, but security prevented that. To me, seeing Prime Minister Nehru was like some teenager seeing Elvis. I'll bet your sweet a—if the Prime Minister would have stopped to talk, that in a few minutes he and Pete would have been sitting in a bar talking about fishing and hunting in Idaho over a cold beer while the security personnel pulled out their hair.

We had many great days in India, served in many parts of the country, including the Himalayas, and met many fine

people. We jumped with great warriors from the Indian paratroopers and the Tibetan 12th Gurkha Rifles. The Tibetans were true mountain men: low maintenance, all legs and lungs, and always happy under the worst of conditions. I will always remember and love these courageous warriors and respect their way of life. Every day was a chapter in courage. Pete and I talked about recruiting them for the smokejumpers.

Pete and I served together for many years in many countries; however the highlight of our service was always the Tibetans and our time in India. Years later, when we would get together, the conversation always returned to the Tibetans. That time was very special and unique to us.

The last time I saw Pete was in the Copper Queen Bar in Helmsville, MT.

We were attending the second annual Rum Bucket Rendezvous hosted by **Randolph "Toby" Scott** (MYC-57). In attendance were: **Shep Johnson** (MYC-56), **Ken Hessel** (MYC-58), **Kenny Roth** (MYC-46), **Ray Beasley** (MYC-52), **Charlie Brown** (IDC-56) and **John Magel** (MYC-58).

Pete had several names, one being the "Great Horned Owl." A few weeks after Pete died I was in West Texas calling coyotes. I had finished a successful call that bagged two coyotes and was back at my jeep. Something flew over my head with a big "whoosh." Startled, I looked up to see a great horned owl on downwind and turning final for a landing in a mesquite tree. The owl landed and was looking right at me about 150 feet away. He flopped his wings a couple of times and then closed and opened his left eye, like he was winking at me. I know what you are thinking, but by God, fellows, this is the truth. Was this coincidence?

Pete did many things, he was many things. Many people did not know he was also a statesman and an ambassador. 🦉

Recommended reading: Conboy and Morrison, "The CIA's Secret War in Tibet," (University Press of Kansas, 2002)

Where Are These Guys?

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

Michael K. Best	(MSO-54)
Wayne Crawford	(NCSB-54)
Jack I. Cromer	(MSO-54)
Robert A. Crook	(MSO-54)
George G. Dunford	(MSO-54)
Roger M. Foley	(MSO-54)
Claud A. Greiner	(MSO-54)
Richard W. Groff	(MSO-54)
James W. Judge	(MSO-54)
Byron Kessler	(NCSB-54)
James D. Lance	(MSO-54)
George E. Laney	(MSO-54)
Oliver Lee	(MSO-54)
Forest F. Liebe	(MSO-54)
Vincent Limoges	(NCSB-54)

Bill Selby: Decades on the Fireline

by Jim Cornelius, News Editor, The Nugget Newspaper, August 1, 2006, (Sisters, Ore.)

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If wildland firefighting is a young man's game, nobody told **Bill Selby** (NCSB-61).

The 71-year-old firefighter fought his first blaze in Washington in 1958.

Last week, he was an operations section chief on the northern rim of the Black Crater Fire, leading the burnout operation that let fire crews get a handle on the raging blaze.

What is a 71-year-old retired guy doing hiking over tough terrain, sucking up smoke and working all night long?

"I like it," he said. "Keeps me in shape. The pay isn't good, but the work's good. The camaraderie is what I miss when I'm not on a fire."

Selby describes the Northwest Interagency Incident Management Team as a "fire family"—a family that he extends to include the firefighting agencies they work with all around the region.

To hear Selby tell it, firefighting was a primitive affair when he started.

"The quality of the people is so much superior to what it was when I started in the 1950s, you wouldn't believe it," he said.

He recalled a fire where a crew boss and a supervisor got into a fistfight. On another fire, the water tender was a water-filled pickup truck with a plastic-lined bed, a plywood lid and a tiny pump.

And the training ... well, there wasn't much.

"They used to give you a shovel and a Pulaski and send you out into the woods," he said. "Not anymore, and it's a great thing."

Training is much more demanding and weeds out the unfit—those who can't cut it physically, but even more importantly, those who don't have the right temperament and attitude.

As far as that goes, Selby is no dinosaur, even if he is an old-timer. He welcomes the relatively new presence on the fireline of women firefighters and supervisors.

"I have found that women on the fireline are just as good or better than men," he said. "I think they're more dedicated. They have to shine, you know."

Selby said that fire crews today focus on safety, and he proudly noted that the only accident on the Black Crater Fire as of July 30 was a fender-bender in the fire camp parking lot.

Equipment, too, is better nowadays—from engines to aircraft.

What has gotten worse is fire behavior. Selby says that decades of fire suppression, combined with lack of treatment in forests where the big timber was logged off, have created heavy fuel loads.

"It's pretty difficult to stop a fire," he said. "Also, the climate is changing. We're getting hotter and dryer; that's pretty evident."

Whether it's due to human-caused global warming or cyclical climate change, Selby says the result is tougher fires.

Selby retired from a 40-year career with the U.S. Forest Service in 1998—and immediately started working as a firefighter.

"I retired on July 3 and went on a fire July 4," he said.

He started his career cruising timber for harvest in the Okanogan National Forest on the Canadian border in Washington. He served in John Day and Lakeview and was once promoted to Portland to do human resource training.

He characterized that role as "teaching rangers to be people."

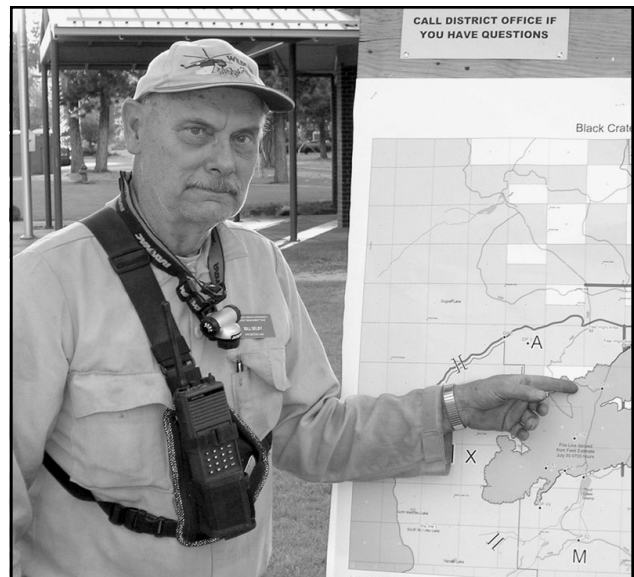
But most of all he loves fighting fire, leading top-notch crews in efforts like the Friday night burnout that seems to have turned the corner on the Black Crater Fire.

He says he doesn't do much in the off-season besides gardening and traveling with his wife.

"I don't do a damned thing," he said. "I lay around all winter and I get out in the spring and pass my 'arduous steps test' like a breeze. Some of these young guys are panting and sweating. I guess I'm hardened, you could say."

Selby once served as a smokejumper out of the North Cascades Smokejumper Base in Winthrop, Wash.

Now, his son, Bill Jr., runs the Smokejumper crew out of the Redmond Air Base. 🌲



Bill Selby (Courtesy Jim Cornelius)



Missoula Smokejumper Jeff Kinderman at the door of DC-3 jumpship over Montana. (Courtesy Mike McMillan)

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

WHEN THE ESPERANZA burnover occurred last fall, I was at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Georgia for two weeks of training. Course participants included people from law enforcement, fire and the regulatory arena. Most of the participants had about 15 years experience and are at the mid-point in their respective careers. Many were first line supervisors in their respective agencies. During one of the field exercises, the instructors pitched a few curve balls at us and put everyone under a little stress. Within 90 seconds communications stopped (everyone was carrying 5 multi-channel handheld radios), the Incident Command System collapsed, one person panicked, people were screaming at the top of their lungs, and when someone sounded the evacuation signal, it was ignored by almost everyone. Does any of this sound familiar? After I had time to absorb everything that occurred, I realized that I had just witnessed what occurs during a burnover on a micro-scale. All of us learned a lot from our mistakes during that exercise, and all are better for it. The entire two weeks was a tremendous learning experience for everyone, and

I am very privileged to have been invited to FLETC.

Speaking of NIMS, all jurisdictions (I don't know what defines a jurisdiction) are required to have an all hazard Type III Overhead Teams in place and operational by 2008 to be NIMS compliant. In my area there are already problems with trying to find enough people to staff the positions. Training issues and jurisdictional disputes are beginning to simmer. Volunteer Fire Departments are already having recruitment problems, not to mention difficulty maintaining national standards for training and certification.

Former Vice President Al Gore is training volunteers to take his global warming message to the masses. According to his website, "The Climate Project is a movement to educate and challenge citizens and governments into action against the growing crisis of global warming. As a non-profit group, we work to bring education, community information, research and citizen action programs to communities across the country. Our first initiative, sponsored by Participant Productions, is the training of 1,000 lecturers who will present the information delivered in 'An Inconvenient Truth' to audiences across America." The first class of fifty lecturers was a rather eclectic group, which included former Billings, Montana, Mayor Chuck Tooley, country singer Kathy Mattea, a retired Navy fighter pilot, Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradley, the president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, Miss Rhode Island Allison Rogers, and Michele Combs, the Vice President of communications for the Christian Coalition of America. Volunteers must commit to give the presentation ten times in the next year. Gore is hoping to train 1,000 Climate Project volunteers who will help

spread the message about global warming that Gore has been promoting in his book and documentary film, "An Inconvenient Truth." The Climate Project web site is www.theclimateproject.org.

As I have stated in previous columns, I haven't formed an opinion on global warming, but the subject has piqued my interest—especially how it might relate to the increase in wildland fire activity. I hope to see the presentation as well as finally seeing "An Inconvenient Truth" sometime this year. Most of us who grew up in the West will certainly recall that there was more snow and it was much colder in the 50s, 60s and 70s and earlier. Between 1220 and 1952 droughts in Nebraska averaged 12.8 years with a 38-year drought lasting from 1276-1313, a 26-year drought from 1539-1564 and a 20-year drought between 1688 to 1707. The average number of years between droughts in Nebraska during the same time period was 24.5 years. The more I read about global warming the less I know. What I do know is we need to keep science and politics separate. ☔

Special Announcement to All Members

The annual members meeting will be held June 8, 2007, in Boise, Idaho. This will be in conjunction with the NSA board meeting and the national reunion. All members of the NSA are invited to attend. Details of location and time will be listed on the "www.smokejumpers.com" website.

Soccer Moms Don't Mix With Cowboys

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

Today, the Greater Yellowstone area is governed by women. Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks are headed up by female Superintendents. The Shoshone, Custer, Bridger, Teton and Gallatin National Forests have female Forest Supervisors. If you are a forest or park ranger stationed in Wyoming on a National Park, Forest, or Monument, your boss will be a woman except on the Bighorn. Now that's a fast 180 in less than a decade.

The following poem is true except for the figurative expression – *Winchesters Appeared*. It is the story about what happened when the senior executives took a Zero Tolerance California Soccer Mom and gave her a forest smack dab in the middle of Wyoming. To me it reflects, in part, the massive cultural change thrust upon the western range today. It is also a tribute to those willing to fight for freedom, common sense and their father's way. It is my most requested poem...by men and women alike.

Soccer Moms Don't Mix With Cowboys

T'was a cold and dreary winter day
When the Soccer Mom came to town.
She rode on in with her entourage
The law she would lay down.

*"I could not stand the thought of some poor cowboy
mauled by bear.*

So I am here to regulate; it's for your best... Ya hear?"

*"You'll hang your food up in a tree
and camp as I decree.*

*The woods they will be safe you see
my rangers must agree."*

Now cowboys love their freedom – just like the open range;
"Don't fence me in; the Cowboy Creed; and don't you tread on me."

It's no surprise they didn't take
To the Soccer Mom's decree.

Her nose was sure bent out of shape
When Winchesters appeared.
The boys they ran her out of town
The Commissioners all cheered.

Soon Congressmen and Senators
joined to block her Bear Decree,
A petition up in Washington
The Vice President to see.

Now, our valleys had its share of warfare and of strife
The Bates fight (1), Harvey Morgan (2), Fort Stambaugh (3) and the drought.
But not till recent history was heard the battle cry,
"Mam, What part of no don't you understand?" (4)
As the Soccer Mom left town.



Karl Brauneis (NSA file)

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- (1) Captain Bates and Chief Washakie's Shoshone warriors engage hostile Arapaho north east of Lander, Wyoming.
- (2) Harvey Morgan and his group of firefighters are killed by hostile Sioux south of Lander, Wyoming.
- (3) Fort Stambaugh troopers guarded the South Pass City mining field and trade routes south of Lander, Wyoming.
- (4) Quote from Fremont County Commissioner, Crosby Allen.

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

Ballad of the Blackwater

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

I wrote this song in the tradition of bunkhouse – campfire music. It tells a story unique to our brotherhood in easy chord changes that can be played under a starlight night. The ballad is told through the eyes of District Ranger and Blackwater Fire Boss Charlie Fifield. Charlie's son, Carl, is a friend of ours who lives here in Lander. Carl still remembers his dad rousting him and his high school friends from the movie theater for fire duty during the 40s. I was honored to have Carl and his wife, Teri, give me their stamp of approval for this song. Carl also mentioned that his father used to play guitar and sing in the evening on trail rides and camp outs. It is my hope that you can share this song with others in that great tradition of western cowboy music.

Next year we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Blackwater Fire. Let us always use a lessons learned approach in our quest to “fight fire aggressively but provide for safety first.” In that spirit of understanding, we can truly honor our fallen comrades.

Ballad of the Blackwater



Karl Brauneis (NSA file)

(G) Riding up the North Fork (1); I put the (D) spurs to my paint
(G) Swapped out at old Wapiti (2) for that (D) green model A
(G) Smoke she was a billowing up upon the (D) Great Divide
(G) Sullivan had his crew in line; This would (D) be one hell of a fight (G)

1st Chorus

(G) Blackwater 15 (3) you (D) paid the price
(Em) But as long as forest ranger's ride (4)
(C) Will keep your flame burning bright

(G) Up the Absaroka and down the (D) Wind River Range
(Em) Will tell your story to the men who step up (C) and take your place
(G) Horse and Mule; (D) Pulaski (5) too
(Em) Not much really changes through (C) those Hallowed “Walls of Time” (6) (G)

Verse

(G) I called for reinforcements they came (D) on through the night
(G) The fire was crowning pressing hard more (D) men would soon arrive
(G) Clayton he relieved me I'd worked (D) 40 hours straight
(G) But as I got down to the camp the wind (D) tore across the face (G)

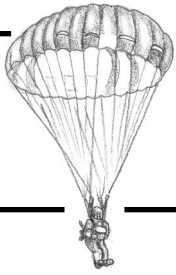
(G) Fire she was blowing up men (D) trapped along the line
(G) The CCC (7) boys and rangers simply (C) Ran out of time

(G) Paul Tyrrell he kept those (D) Triple C boys all calmed down
(G) He laid on top of the younger ones as the (C) fire hit the crown
(G) So badly burned he died that week
(D) A legend amongst men who ride (G) the trails of the Great Divide
With pistol, (D) ax and Ten (8) (G)

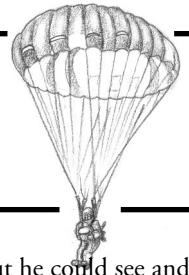
2nd Chorus

(G) Blackwater 15 we will (D) never compromise
(Em) The lessons that you taught us from
That (C) hot August fight
(G) Tyrrell, Clayton; (D) Hale and Saban
(Am) We carry each one with us when we head up (C) through the smoke
(G) Blackwater 15 you know you (D) paid the price
(Em) But as long as forest ranger's ride....
Will keep your (C) flame burning (G) bright

- (1) District Ranger Charlie Fifield was Fire Boss on the Blackwater *Copyright @ Karl Brauneis 2006*
(2) Wapiti Ranger Station on the North Fork of the Shoshone River west of Cody, Wyoming
(3) The Blackwater fire blew up on August 21, 1937 resulting in the deaths of 15 firefighters
(4) “As long as rangers shall ride” from the poem; Alfred G. Clayton by L.C. Shoemaker and Roosevelt
(5) Ranger Edward Pulaski invented this firefighting tool (combination hoe/ax) that bears his name.
(6) Bill Monroe's “Walls of Time”
(7) The Civilian Conservation Corps (1933 – 1942) became a ready-made firefighting corps
(8) The Ten Standard Fire Fighting Orders were developed using the Blackwater Fire as one of several fatality fires studied.



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to David E. Clippinger (MSO-51), Lowell King (MSO-57), Nels Jensen (MSO-62), Ben "Snuffy" Smith (MSO-64), Robert Kruckeberg (NCSB-51), Lowell Hanson (MSO-58) and Ross Scott (MSO-51) who just became our latest Life Members.

Robin Twogood (MSO-56): "Don Durland (MSO-47) should be added to the list of jumpers from Darby High School. I think this brings our total to twenty."

In August of 2002, NSA Board Member **Ted Burgon (IDC-52)** was one of two American teachers killed in an ambush in Indonesia. Here is an update:

"Indonesian prosecutors demanded on Friday jail terms for seven men for the 2002 murder of two Americans and an Indonesian in Papua province near a mine run by a unit of U.S.-based Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc.

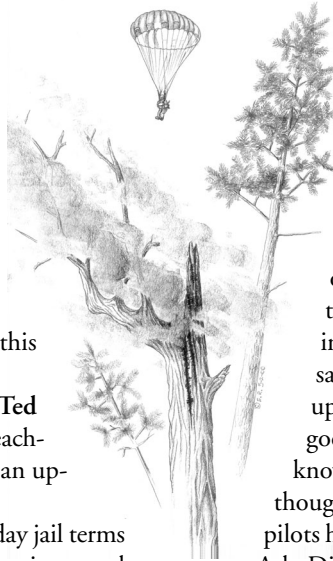
"Ties between Indonesia and the United States were strained by the incident and only improved after they agreed to collaborate in solving the case, which had initially sparked suspicions the Indonesian military was involved."

Additional comments from **Ted's son Mark:** "The trial began on the fourth of July and during the first phase it was once a week, on Tuesdays. For the first month, the defendants or their attorneys would take turns not showing up. Actually, even now they tend to show up and leave as soon as things get going. My wife and I had our passports and plans to try and go for about three weeks, but as I learned more about the process I was less inclined to gamble on what we may encounter."

Update (Nov. 8, 2006): Antonius Wamang, the man who orchestrated the killings of two American teachers at a U.S.-owned gold mine, was sentenced to life in prison. An FBI investigation found no evidence linking soldiers or police to the killings. Wamang has acknowledged being a Papuan separatist and said he shot at the convoy because he thought it was carrying soldiers.

Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61), retired Nez Perce N.F. Supervisor, recently received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the Univ. of Montana in Missoula. Tom received the "Outstanding Leadership in Resource Management Over a Career Period" for his numerous lifetime achievements.

The October 16, 2006, edition of the *Missoulian* reported an article entitled, "Timeless tribute: Plane that took smokejumpers into Mann Gulch now on display." Pushed by memories and held up by his walking cane, Earl Cooley climbed into the belly of a DC-3 on Sunday and looked around the dark, cavernous cargo area. At 95, Cooley isn't



as spry as he used to be, but he could see and feel details of the aircraft clearly. Except for the absence of any "seating" - no-frill benches in its heyday - Cooley said the plane is exactly the same as it was when he and 15 smokejumpers rode it bound for Helena on a fateful day - Aug. 5, 1949. From the same vantage that he spotted the smokejumpers landing over Mann Gulch 57 years ago, Cooley looked out the cargo door and took in the crowd swirling about in Missoula's Museum of Mountain Flying. He didn't say much from his perch, but shortly before his trek up the stairs and into the plane, Cooley said: "It's good to remember these things so our younger people know what we did." No one gave the airplane much thought until a few years ago when one of its former pilots happened to be flying in and out of West Memphis, Ark. Dick Komberec, a founder of the Museum of Mountain Flying, kept eyeing a trio of DC-3s that belonged to McNeely Charter Service. Curiosity led him to further investigate the distinctive old war planes, and he was stunned to learn that one of the planes had stamped on its wings and tail the familiar identification number: NC-24320. Komberec had found the plane that circled the firefighters over Mann Gulch, the same plane he later flew, and which he, like other Montanans, considers a forgotten witness to that tragic day in 1949 - a lost artifact of Montana's history. On Sunday, after years of restoration, the aircraft was formally presented to the public in a dedication ceremony at the Museum of Mountain Flying, located next to the Missoula International Airport.

Gary "Tex" Welch (CJ-60): "I have Acute Myelogenous Leukemia and have been in the hospital for six days (Nov. 2006). This came on really fast." *Tex is being treated in the Audie Murphy Hospital in San Antonio. Let's hope for the best. (Ed.)*

Dec. 29th update: "The V.A. cut me loose for five days. I think I will be doing another session of chemo starting Jan. 2nd. It is supposed to be the last. All my old body can take. Hopefully it will kill all the bad cells and I will be home free. I lost 31 pounds, all of my arms, legs and face. Put back about nine pounds, all of which I think is on my belly. I'm getting a little stronger each day."

Jan. 6th: "Went back to the hospital for my second round of chemo on 1/2/07."

Jan. 18th (from brother, Larry): "They let Gary out of the hospital between chemo treatments. The Dr.s still plan on giving him 3 or 4 more treatments."

Jan 22nd: I just talked to "Tex" on the phone and he sounded good and upbeat. Told him I was following his progress in this column and he wanted to make sure that I



Missoula Smokejumper John Davis exits DC-3 to Montana wildfire, July 2006. (Courtesy Mike McMillan)

wasn't writing his obit as he plans to be at the reunion in Boise in June. (Ed.)

Chris Sorensen (Associate/SJ magazine Columnist): "Got back late Friday night (Nov. 2006) from two weeks at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia. Completed the EPA's "Advanced Environmental Crimes Training Program" along with 27 other people. It was a million dollar experience! The government spared no expense in putting this course on. Participants ranged from a Sergeant on the LA Harbor Patrol to Detectives from Miami Dade and half a dozen regulators like myself. Attendance was by invitation only—each student had to be sponsored by an EPA Criminal Investigator. I will be going back either in May or October to act as a facilitator for a future class."

David Bruhn (Associate), one of my best-ever runners, friend and Cdr. USN (Ret.), has just published his second book: *Wooden Ships and Iron Men: The U.S. Navy's Ocean Minesweepers, 1953-1994*. Information about the book can be found on line at www.heritagebooks.com or from Heritage Books, Inc., 65 E. Main St., Westminister, MD 21157-5026.

Max Glaves MYC-47: "In 1947 I joined the Kappa Sigma Fraternity at the University of Idaho where I quarterbacked and played football for four years. We had 50 members in the fraternity and ten of us were smokejumpers: Chuck Blanton, Dick Wilcomb, Jack Elliott, Jim Crockett, Don Finney, Denny Bryan, Terry McMullen, Billy Mullins and Mont Brooks. All are still alive except for Denny Bryan."

Mary Anne Gennette: "You have been so good to remember **Tom Gennette** (MYC-50). I enjoy the reminders of his earlier life. Tom died on July 2, 2001, with his family around him. He met the challenge of lung cancer with the bravery of jumping from an airplane, best foot forward. I wish you well with your organization. You are a great group of people with talents of special camaraderie and bravery."

Lewiston (Idaho) Morning Tribune: Dozens gathered at NIFC in Boise on November 16 to honor five men and women killed while battling wildfires. The monument, constructed in 2000, was built to honor those who fight wildland fires. Over the last decade, an average of 18 wildland firefighters are killed annually.

Nick Sundt (RAC-80): "Twenty five years ago (1981), **Charlie Bragdon** (RAC-84) and I sat down at the RAC mess hall and interviewed **Skinny Beals** (MYC-45). We were joined by freelance photographer Bruce Van Voorhis. Upon hearing that Skinny had passed away on 10 October, I dug up the interview. I converted the five 30-minute cassette tapes to a single digital audio file and posted it online (yes, it is a 2.5 hour chat). You can access it at: <http://www.sundt.org/fire/index.htm>

Having first jumped in 1945, Skinny had plenty to talk about. I've enjoyed listening to him again and hope that some of you also will appreciate the interview. Please let me know if you have any technical problems. I also have the interview on a CD. If you would like a copy, just send me an email with your address. *Nick can be contacted at: nick@sundt.org or 1345 Massachusetts Ave SE, Washington, DC 20003.*

Longtime Idaho pilot, Frank Hill, passed away Nov. 7, 2006. He was one of the original spray pilots in the Pacific Northwest and also a jumper and retardant pilot. He is the father of **Mike C. Hill** (MYC-69) of Lewiston.

Jim Rabideau (NCSB-49): "The late **Carl H. Schmidt** (NCSB-48) was a friend at college and was at NCSB when I rookied in 1949. Carl nearly always had a smile but was normally quiet. **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40) always had a sizeable part of the unit from Twisp and Winthrop. Of my rookie class of 10, half were local. If Francis knew you personally, he would certainly consider hiring you. The late **William "Kay" Johnson** (NCSB-54) rookied my last year. Kay was a local boy just out of Winthrop High School. I was impressed by his toughness and dedication to becoming a smokejumper. He had a withered leg from polio, but that didn't stop him, and he made a career of smokejumping. Somehow Lufkin had a knack for picking the right local boys."

Forwarded from **Ken Hessel** (MYC-58) and of interest to the Air America people:

October 23, 2006 Vietnam MIA 'McGoon' Coming Home For Burial

By Richard Pyle, Associated Press

NEW YORK—Half a century after he died in the flaming crash of a CIA-owned cargo plane and became one of the first two Americans to die in combat in Vietnam, a legendary soldier of fortune known as “Earthquake McGoon” finally is coming home. The skeletal remains of James McGovern Jr., discovered in an unmarked grave in northern Laos in 2002, were identified last month by laboratory experts at the U.S. military’s Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command.

Six feet and 260 pounds—huge for a fighter pilot—McGovern carved out a flying career during and after World War II that made him a legend in Asia. An American saloon owner in China dubbed him “Earthquake McGoon,” after a hulking hillbilly character in the comic strip “Li’l Abner.”

He died on May 6, 1954, when his C-119 Flying Boxcar cargo plane was hit by ground fire while parachuting a howitzer to the besieged French garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

“Looks like this is it, son,” McGovern radioed another pilot as his crippled plane staggered 75 miles into Laos, where it cartwheeled into a hillside.

Killed along with “McGoon,” 31, were his co-pilot, Wallace Buford, 28, and a French crew chief. Two cargo handlers, a Frenchman and a Thai, were thrown clear and survived.

Ho Chi Minh’s communist forces captured Dien Bien Phu the next day. Although civilians, McGovern and Buford, an ex-World War II bomber pilot, were the first Americans to die in combat in the Asian country where war would kill nearly 60,000 Americans and more than 1 million Vietnamese.

In 1944, McGovern went to China as a fighter pilot in the 14th Air Force’s “Tiger Shark” squadron, descended from the famous Flying Tigers. According to Felix Smith, a retired pilot of the CIA-owned Civil Air Transport and a McGovern friend, he was credited with shooting down four Japanese Zero fighter planes and destroying five on the ground.

At war’s end in 1945, McGovern signed on with Civil Air Transport, or CAT, which was under contract to Chiang Kai-shek’s Chinese Nationalist regime, then fighting a civil war against Mao Tse-tung’s communists.

Captured by communist troops after a forced landing, “McGoon” was freed six months later. Colleagues joked that his captors got tired of feeding him. In 1997, an American MIA team investigating an unrelated case found a C-119 propeller at Ban Sot, and a JPAC photo analyst spotted possible graves in aerial photos. Excavation in 2002 uncovered remains that turned out to be McGovern’s.

Barbara Morgan, wife of **Clay Morgan** (MYC-74), has begun training for her flight on Shuttle Endeavour. On this mission, she will conduct education programs and operate

robotic arms on the shuttle and the International Space Station. Barbara was backup for Christa McAuliffe on the ill-fated Challenger mission in 1985.

Hal Werner (NCSB-48): “I will be coaching field events (Track & Field) at St. Martin’s Univ. in Lacey, Washington. I’m inspired by Winston Churchill who began his last service as Prime Minister at age 77.”

Troop Emonds (CJ-66) and **Jerry Howe** (CJ-65) took a flying trip to the Philippines and Malaysia in November to pull off a rescue of Troop’s niece, who was lured into the slave trade business. Two ex-jumpers in their sixties going up against Chinese mobsters. There’s a story here: “Troop, Jerry and the Pirates” coming soon on “Dateline” and Smokejumper magazine, maybe the July issue if I get it all together.

Ben “Snuffy” Smith (MSO-64): “I am currently a NSA member and am changing my membership status to Life Member in memory of my father **Glenn Smith** (NCSB-40) and my brother **Mike R. Smith** (MSO-69) who was also a jumper and died (6/21/95) as a lead plane pilot for the USFS.”

A report by Emergency Consulting Services Inc. says the Missoula City F.D. needs better response times and improvements in fighting major fires. In 90 percent of cases, the average response time was eight minutes, which is double the national standard. Missoula is not the only city facing problems with increased response times due to rapid growth. In many small Western cities, including Missoula, Bozeman and Helena, there is explosive growth and cities are hard pressed to provide services.

Carl Gidlund (MSO-58): “The performance of the Western Heritage Company (NSA merchandise vendor) is simply unacceptable. On 22 NOVEMBER, 2006, my wife ordered an NSA sweatshirt for me as a Christmas present. THE ITEM IS NOT HERE YET! (Jan. 18, 2007). As Christmas approached, she placed several calls to the firm, but to no avail.

“I would like either our money back or the sweatshirt. And, I strongly suggest, the NSA should find another vendor.”

Steve Hall (MSO-70): “In case you have not heard yet, **Dave Boyd** (MSO-69) is gravely ill with cancer. He lives in Dixon, MT, along with his wife. St. Pat’s hospital in Missoula has set up a web page for people to follow the progress of Dave and send him messages. The web address is: <http://www.caringbridge.org>

John “Jean” Drolet (RAC-71): (Currently living in Coquille, Oregon) “I retired out of the Oregon Water Resources Department as District Watermaster in 2000 with 26 years time served.”

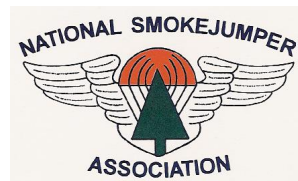
Tedford Lewis (MSO-43) passed along an article from N.Y. Times where a judge dismissed an indictment against a parachute jumper who was stopped as he attempted a jump off the Empire State Building last April. Seems like the judge figured the jumper was qualified to make the leap.

Pat Scheid (MSO-58) passed on information that the March 2007 edition of the *Smithsonian Air & Space* magazine has an article by Mike Harbour on page 11 titled “In Memory of Smokejumpers-Mann Gulch DC-3.” 📖



2007 National Smokejumper Reunion

June 8-10, 2007
Boise State University
Boise, Idaho



ALL current and former smokejumpers, pilots, associates, related wildland firefighters and contractors are invited to the reunion. This will be a celebration of friends, co-workers and participants associated with the great and worthwhile endeavors of flying, parachuting and wildland firefighting.

Don't miss this opportunity to see old friends and make some new ones.

Friday June 8

- 0900 - 2000 Registration – Meet and Greet at Reunion Command Post
Boise State University, Student Union Building (SUB)
Gipson and Johnson rooms **Registration Headquarters**
- 1700 - 2230 Barbecue and beer garden on patio and soccer field
Boise State University Student Union Building (SUB) Patio

Saturday, June 9

- 0730 – 1700 Registration Headquarters open all day Boise State University SUB

Optional Activities and Tours (Sat. June 9)

- 8000 Fun Run
0730 Golf Tournament
0930 Idaho City Tour
TBA Smokejumper Base and National Interagency Fire Center Tour
0900 World Center for Birds of Prey Tour
No Schedule: Museums, Tour Train, Rafting, Galleries, Biking

- 1700 - 2300 Banquet at Boise Centre on the Grove, Downtown Boise, Idaho

Sunday, June 10

- 0900 – 1100 Memorial Brunch
Boise State University SUB, Jordan Ballroom
- 1200 Reunion Command Post closes

A downloadable registration form will be posted at www.smokejumpers.com , go to 2007 Reunion page.

Questions and more information

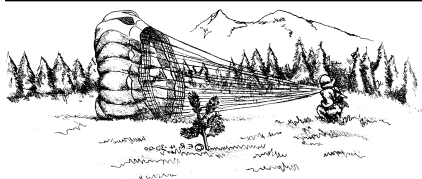
Smokejumpers2007@yahoo.com

OR

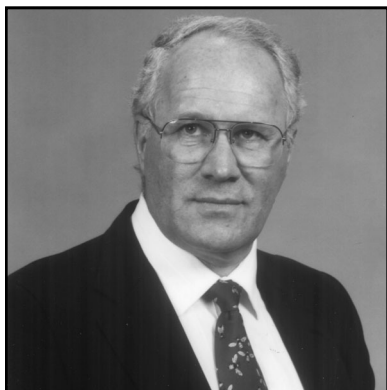
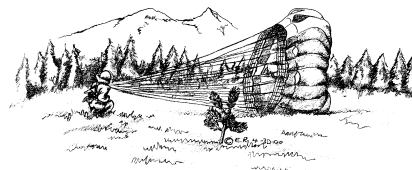
Smokejumper Reunion 2007
Box 15187
Boise, Idaho 83715

**THE REGISTRATION FORM SHOULD BE MAILED TO
SMOKEJUMPER REUNION 2007**

**P.O. BOX 15187
BOISE ID 83715**



Checking the Canopy



Jim Cherry
(Missoula '64)

“Smokejumper Heaven”

“Smokejumper Heaven” is described in various ways, but the general theme goes something like this:

A two-man fire with the call coming late Friday afternoon.

The jump spot is a meadow with no rocks.

You land right beside the packer trail.

The walkout is all downhill, and you get back to base late Monday afternoon.

In my two years of jumping, I had a two-manner once... but it didn't fall into the “Smokejumper Heaven” category.

The date was July 21, 1957... a Sunday. The call went out late in the afternoon. The DC-3 was filled, but **Joe Roemer** (MSO-52) and I were the only two to jump before it got too dark on the Payette N.F. **Hugh Fowler** (MSO-47) was spotter and told us to hang up... the ground was too rocky to risk otherwise. My tree was not necessarily of my choosing... a huge Ponderosa... and I wasn't going to hook the top. I slammed into the side at the lowest limb... one that was eight inches in diameter and right at belly level about 70 feet above the ground. I grabbed it as hard as I could... and waited... I slowly eased my grip, and

the chute seemed to be holding okay in the limbs above me. I followed the letdown procedures to perfection... no sudden jarring... even when I popped the old single-point release. When I reached the ground, I had about 20 feet of letdown rope left. The climbing spurs came whistling in... hit the ground... bounced... and were never to be seen again.

Joe and I added fuel to the fire to keep it going through the night for warmth. As the sun set and darkness gathered, the coyotes began their singing, and the primal quality of the human animal showed itself as I could feel the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

The next day, after mopping up our little fire, I went back to my chute that was hanging up so high. I dreaded the thought of having to fall a tree that size. Taking the letdown rope I walked up the hill, gaining about 10 more feet of line (steep country), gave a little tug just to see what would happen with the chute... and the whole thing came crashing to the ground. I shivered with the thought of yesterday and ‘what could have been.’

A chopper had come over and dropped a note with instructions to head uphill and make a landing pad at a level place above our location. We packed our gear and headed up... mostly a toes, knees and hands scramble. At one point, Joe came face to face with a timber rattler. It was sent to ‘snake heaven’ by means of a shovel blade.

At the place we thought the chopper pilot had intended, we felled about six Ponderosa of fair size with our crosscut, moved earth to create a flat pad and stood back to admire our work on this little ridge with open approach and departure lanes. The pilot returned, circled a couple of times and dropped another note. “Go all the way to the top. I’ll get you later today.” Who’s to argue? Loading up the packs

we headed up again... scrambling all the way. We did get out later that day... but it was certainly no “Smokejumper Heaven.”

I have no regrets that I never had one of those two-manners that one dreams about. I believe that the challenges that Joe and I faced gave me something more than the easy, extra pay... though that would have been nice, too.

I’ve learned through the years that the greatest personal growth comes, not so much through the ‘mountain top highs’ that one can take joy in, but rather through the ‘valley lows’ that one may have to struggle through. The Apostle Paul said it well... “...we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Rom 5:3-5 NRSV) and also “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” (2 Cor 4:8-10 NRSV) 🙏

Where Are These Guys?

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

Alva (Ozzie) Osborn (MSO-54)
John R. Phelps (MSO-54)
Frank Pino (NCSB-54)
Jarvis H. Rogers (MSO-54)
Jim E. Roggow (NCSB-54)
Sidney D. Root (MYC-54)
John J. Shoal (MSO-54)
John L. Steckman (MYC-54)
David S. Wilson (MSO-54)
Larry Wing (MSO-54)
Clyde R. Young (IDC-54)



NSA Trail Crew



Meanwhile, Back At The Ranch

by Roland Pera (Missoula '56)

ON JULY 12, 2006, I once again journeyed to Montana to volunteer for the Smokejumper Trail Maintenance Program. Time was not an issue, so I decided to drive. The first day I drove only to Seward, Nebraska, spending the night with my sister, Marcy, and Arlen, where the food was good and the price right. The next day I was determined to make it to Cody, Wyoming, a 780 mile drive leaving me with nothing but empathy for the truck drivers who do that sort of thing day in and day out. Cody is home to the Buffalo Bill Museum and is a surprisingly attractive, modern town. For years I had heard about the Beartooth Highway (also known as the Cooke City Highway), which connects Red Lodge, Montana, with the northeast entrance to Yellowstone Park. Leaving Cody on a crystal clear morning, I took the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway and in about 30 miles came to the Beartooth Highway and headed for Red Lodge; truly a spectacular drive. A narrow, twisting and turning road takes you to the top of the 11,000 foot pass. Idyllic lakes, snow-capped peaks, and alpine-flowered meadows all add to the beauty of the drive. From Red Lodge, a six-hour drive brought me to Missoula.

This year there were about 120 (mostly retired) jumpers taking part in the volunteer projects. Projects include trail work, cabin restoration, corral work, etc., and take place over two weeks; most jumpers preferring to work on a project that concludes after one week. The project I was on added a new wrinkle to the growing list of work assignments, namely that of lookout restoration. We had a crew of seven jumpers: **Jim Clatworthy** (MSO-56), **Don**

Courtney (MSO-56), **Bill Murphy** (MSO-56), **Larry Nelson** (MSO-56), **Ron Stoleson** (MSO-56), **Bob Whaley** (MSO-56) and myself. We had all trained in 1956 and were commemorating the 50th anniversary of becoming smokejumpers. **Jon McBride** (MSO-54) was also present to lend a hand.

Double Arrow Lookout is located above two scenic lakes, namely Seeley Lake and Lake Placid. The elevation is only about 5,000 feet; however, the views are very nice. The lookout was in terrible condition, and it was our job to install floor joists for reinforcement and to completely rebuild the catwalk around the cabin. Most of the work was done at 30 feet above the ground and got a little hairy at times. Luckily for us, one of our crew members, Larry Nelson, was not only an experienced carpenter, but also a tireless worker. Larry can move around a scaffold with the ease of a 25 year old. Don Courtney's meals are legendary. In addition to preparing the daily cuisine, he also ascended the scaffold and did his share of hammering. Our lodging consisted of tents and sleeping bags. The local Forest Service personnel were very accommodating, bringing us ice every day. After a hot day on the tower, a few ice cold beers tasted mighty good. One of the unique sights of the week was watching the smoke from a fire burning about 30 miles from Missoula. Western Montana was tinder dry, and, by the time I left, there were many more fires and much more smoke to be seen. Although we worked hard and got a lot done, there was also plenty of time to visit and tell jump stories. Most of the jump stories were repeats, but no one seemed to mind.

We decided that 50 years ago words such as prostate, high blood pressure, cholesterol, cataracts, PSA score, arthritis, and grandchildren were probably not part of the conversation mix.

After six nights in the blue tent, it was a real treat to spend Saturday night in the lovely home of **Roger Savage** (MSO-57) and his wife, Bonnie. They have a socially maladjusted cat that loved to hiss at me. I felt a little better when told the feline hisses at everyone. On Sunday, July 23, I headed for the Big Hole Valley for a different kind of experience and another week of volunteer labor. When I was a jumper, I came off a fire to Wisdom, Montana. At that time I was completely taken aback by the beauty of the valley. The town reminded me of a set for a western movie. A few years ago I revisited Wisdom and the Big Hole and found the area still beautiful and unspoiled. Wisdom was still quaint as can be. I had done plenty of farm work in my younger days and was curious as to what life might be like on a Montana ranch, so last spring I searched the Internet for ranches in the Wisdom area where I might volunteer. The Bar Z Ranch popped up, and I called explaining my rather unusual request. Fred, the owner, much to my astonishment, told me he thought things could be worked out.

On a hot Sunday afternoon I pulled in to the Bar Z Ranch. I had brought pizza for dinner and gifts for the four children, all girls under the age of five. I chatted with Fred's wife, Mary, for awhile, and she informed me Fred was baling hay a few miles away. She pointed me to a truck and, before I knew it, I was loading bales



Roland Pera (NSA file)

on a wagon and then unloading them to a haystack. I'm almost positive I've not hauled bales since I was a teenager. There were five or six people picking up the bales, and not wanting to appear as the city wimp, I probably worked a lot harder than was wise. After dinner Fred took me to the corral where I watched him ride a couple horses he was breaking. He explained he had about 50 horses and that breaking and selling horses provided some badly needed extra income.

On Monday, Fred had to make a trip to Helena, so he gave me some things to do by myself. The first was to take a two-mile hike up a trail, watch for a meadow on the left, and count his cattle that were there grazing on a U.S. Forest Service permit. I walked in, located the huge meadow, but saw no cows. Soon I was out of the meadow and knew I had gone too far. I reversed direction and, after wading a creek, came directly upon the herd. I probably spent an hour trying several different methods to get a reasonably accurate count. What Fred had failed to tell me was to count only the cows, not the calves. The number I kept coming up with was between 160 and 170, and since I couldn't see all

the calves, I knew that it must be low. His total herd was about 430, so this group represented less than half. That afternoon I hauled some salt blocks to a different pasture, and on this mission I was fortunate enough to spot a large herd of antelope. Another job that day was nailing some boards to a shed so that the snow would not get inside during the winter. That night I milked the family cow reasonably successfully, another activity I have not done in 50 some years.

The next morning, Fred decided that we needed to move the herd that I had tried to count to a new area. He saddled two horses and put them in a horse trailer for a 10-mile drive to the end of the trail. In the back of the truck were his five cattle-driving dogs named More, Ree, Annie, Lou and Yo. Fred was kind enough to ride my horse, Nick, for a few minutes to make sure he wasn't going to try any naughty tricks, which he didn't. After a 25-minute ride we arrived at the herd and began the drive. I sincerely believe that Mr. Rancher could have done it without me, but I was thrilled to be part of it. Seeing him and the dogs at work was amazing. The cattle weren't thrilled about the whole exercise, but in time

the dogs rounded up the rebels, and when all was said and done, the cattle went through the gate and into a new grazing area. That morning was the highlight of the week. Leaving the area Fred pointed out a herd of elk. I remarked about how neat it was to see the animals, and he quickly told me that he didn't think they were very neat. He said the elk probably cost him \$20,000 a year, explaining that whatever they eat reduces the number of cattle that he can graze. That afternoon we began a two-day project of repairing a corral in one of the pastures. This is where I certainly earned my keep as there was no way he could have done this alone. At one point we needed more logs which involved a trip into his forested area to cut about ten lodgepole pines. An amusing incident took place one afternoon when we headed for the truck and the dogs jumped in. They kind of jumped the gun and got into the back of the wrong pick-up. Fred yelled, "Wrong truck," and almost immediately they started getting out of that pick-up and headed for the correct one beside it.

I can't emphasize enough the beauty and vastness of this part of the country. Unspoiled is a word that keeps popping up in my head. Fred's 3500 acre ranch is 20 miles from Wisdom (pop. 95). He is a graduate of Montana State University, having majored in agriculture. His knowledge and skills to be a successful rancher are truly amazing, but is ranching really profitable? The answer seems to be, not really. The Big Hole is a 6100 high valley and is one of the coldest spots in Montana with lots of snow and 40 below temperatures in the winter. The ranch house gets the job done but would be no one's idea of a dream home. I slept in a bunkhouse, which suited me fine.

Fred says he needs to get bigger, but outsiders are buying the ranches and driving up the prices to the point where it is not economical to buy more land. The land originally belonged to his grandfather and now is owned by a family corporation

which includes his parents, his brother and a sister. The surrounding land is presently being sold for around \$1,700 to \$2,000 an acre. The math is easy; at \$2,000 the land is worth \$7,000,000. His ranch expenses, without paying himself any labor, are around \$190,000. I think he would be tickled to earn 1% or \$70,000 on the \$7,000,000 worth of land. Obviously there is little money for vacations, new clothes, furniture, new vehicles, etc. Among other things, ranchers have to live with low cattle prices, disease, fierce winters and wolves (a touchy subject since their re-introduction). Their oldest

girl starts school in the fall. There is no bus, so they will have to drive 80 miles a day to take and pick her up. The nearest high school is 50 miles away. A dentist appointment requires a trip to Anaconda, 50 miles away.

On Thursday morning we drove some cattle again, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Once again, Nick, my horse, cooperated very nicely. This session concluded with driving two bulls to a different area. These two guys did not cooperate in the least. The afternoon was spent completing the corral and checking some irrigation ditches. Friday was spent chopping some weeds and in

the afternoon revisiting the nailing of boards on the shed project.

Saturday morning, bright and early, I left the ranch and headed east. I considered my week at the Bar Z an experience I will never forget. A stopover in South Dakota to visit Dave Geisler, a college friend, and after two days and 1350 miles the well-tanned cowboy arrived home. Allison had made a "Welcome Home, Grandpa" sign. It was good to be home! 🐾

Author's note: To respect their privacy, the names of the owners and the ranch are fictitious.

Florida Food Drop

by Mark Goeller

A while back, a gentleman named **Glen Marlowe** (MSO-57) stopped by my office asking about a tree problem. I noticed he was wearing a West Yellowstone Smokejumpers hat. He said he had jumped there in 1957 and 1958 and told me a little about his background and firefighting history. One story he told concerned a winter he was working in Florida.

While he was there, a fire broke out in a remote area of the Everglades. A number of guys were working the fire and were having problems with the airboat used to deliver their supplies. If something wasn't done, they would soon be going without food. A National Park Service pilot, flying a Lake Amphibian, had an idea how to get food to the crew and, since Glen was a smokejumper, asked him for help.

The pilot's idea was to suspend a package of food from a rope hanging from the back door of the plane, then fly a tight circle allowing the dangling "care package" to remain in one spot near the ground where the firefighters could just release the package from the rope. Glen said that he didn't think it would work, but curiosity got the best of him.

A practice at that time was to take several empty pop cans, slightly crush the sides, and put them in the bottom of the load to act as shock absorbers. Glen fixed up the food package, loaded it into the aircraft, and tied it to the rope.

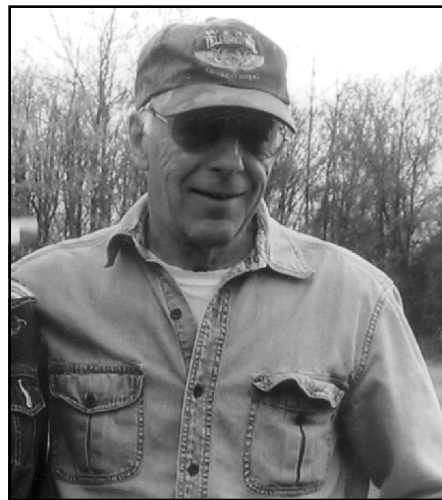
There were a couple of flaws in the plan. The pilot hadn't counted on what centrifugal force would do to a load suspended 200 feet below the airplane. Also, the day was hot and the air very turbulent. Glen lowered the package, taking extra care to make certain the rope was not wrapped around his leg. (Safety First!) The tight circle the pilot had

anticipated wasn't very tight. The guys on the ground were having quite a time trying to catch the wildly spinning package and a severe injury was possible should someone be hit. Glen

calculated the package to be about six feet off the ground and released the load. His vertical reference was off somewhat; the load actually being 20 or 30 feet above ground level due to the bouncing of the aircraft. Glen said the load might have been OK if it had come straight down, however, it hit the ground at probably 80 knots and disintegrated into a riot of buns, hamburger patties, condiments and crushed pop cans.

The last thing Glen saw as the plane flew off into the sunset was the firefighters making obscene gestures. 🐾

Mark Goeller is the Assistant Director of Forestry for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.



Glen Marlowe (Courtesy G. Marlowe)



Peterson with 12 year-old middle school student at Beijing 1997. (Courtesy S. Peterson)

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? The pensioner plunges

Adapted from the Aug. 22-24, 1997, edition of Beijing Weekend, an English-language newspaper in China.

When the average man reaches the ripe old age of 71 he might expect a small party, perhaps a big cake or a slurpy bowl of longevity noodles.

But **Sheridan Peterson (MSO-53)** is not what you might call your average man. For Peterson's idea of a 71st birthday celebration was to throw himself out of a high-flying aeroplane.

He attempted his birthday freefall parachute jump at the Beijing Aero Sports School in Baishan, Changping County, recently.

The result?

A few bruises, as the fourth-generation Californian became the oldest person to ever make a parachute jump in China, according to Zhang Angang, the school's head aero sports coach.

"I felt fine until the chute opened," Peterson said. "I was stunned to see that the canopy had only a 28-foot circumference. I had been told that it was a 34-foot canopy.

"I felt certain that I would surely break my ankles; I mean, I weigh over 200 pounds," he explained.

"Although it was the worst landing I've ever made—and I've made some bad ones—I only bruised my feet."

Peterson has made a total of 262 freefalls, though this was

his first in some 30 years. The last was in Vietnam in 1967.

Peterson first visited China in autumn 1946 as a 19-year-old U.S. Marine. For two days he was stationed at Qingdao, the port city of China's eastern province of Shandong, better-known as Tsingtao for the beer brewed there. He was in Shanghai for three days; what he saw during that five-day span left a lasting impression.

Peterson returned in 1978 as a tourist, right after the "cultural revolution" of 1966-76. He saw people clad in drab blue and gray uniforms though they appeared to be well-fed, a big change from 1946.

He spent time in China as an aviation instructor in Tianjin, an economics teacher in Beijing, and as a training director for multinational corporations in Asia and the Middle East.

Peterson, who grew up on a farm near Santa Rosa, Calif., spent 2 1/2 years writing a book protesting U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

He made his first parachute jump with the Forest Service in Missoula, Mont., in 1953. It began a streak of 30 jumps into the wilderness areas of the Pacific Northwest.

Peterson's 71st birthday plunge wasn't his first record-setting jump. While teaching at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines in 1965, Peterson joined four others in the Clark Skydiving Club to set the Southeast Asia standard for the highest night delayed freefall. 🪂

A Wolf Story and Other Memories

By Jim Kloefer (Redding '57)

Recently I returned from a week's fishing trip in Alaska when I received calls from **Lee Gosset** (RDD-57) and **Charley Moseley** (CJ-62). I tip my helmet to those bros who are working hard trying to locate us lost smokejumpers. I had evaded them for 46 years, but they finally traced me through the University of Idaho.

When I was in high school in Kuna, ID, I saw the movie *Red Skies of Montana*. I knew then that I would someday be a smokejumper. After a year of college at BYU, I joined the Army and was sent to Fort Meyer, VA, spending a year in the Honor Guard doing duty as an "Old Guard" in parades for tourists, ceremonial detail for dignitaries at the airport, the White House and the burial detail at Arlington Cemetery, while being groomed for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Having enough of the spit and polish routine, I was transferred to the Adjutant General's Corp at Schofield Barracks on Oahu, where I later applied to the smokejumpers.

I processed my own early release from the Army in June, 1957, and was told to report to Cave Junction. I recall **Orville Looper** (CJ-5) mentioning the reason they hired me was to provide a legitimate reason for an early discharge. Training at Cave Junction was a great experience. I remember running the Gobi airport six mile run during our spare time. I hurt my knee on a practice jump, but never told anyone. Either I had landed wrong or Looper hit me on the calf so hard when he spotted me that it injured the joint. After training, some of us went to Redding to open the new base under the leadership of **Fred Barnowsky** (MSO-42). I jumped out of Redding four summers and then went to Redmond for one summer in 1964. Overhead that I remember were **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46), **Rod Newton** (CJ-51), **Phil Clarke** (CJ-51), and - my personal hero - **Charles "Jack" Harter** (CJ-51). I remember seeing him climb the 20 foot rope using only his arms. Knowing I could climb eight feet on a good day, he became my "Jumper God."

We bunked in an old Forest Service warehouse in downtown Redding on Cypress Avenue. Every morning we would exercise for an hour and then leave on an open truck for the Redding Airport. Most of us played softball until it became too hot, and then we read or napped wherever we could find shade. Often times we mixed borate if we weren't jumping fires. About 8:00 p.m. we would head back to the warehouse. After dinner, more exercises, maybe some jumps on the trampoline, and about 10:00 p.m. head out to the dance/beer hall. We'd get home about 2:00 a.m. and do it all over again. Somewhere in between we worked in the loft repairing and packing chutes with snoose-chewing Bob Kersch. Some Redding jumpers may remember me being the barber for the few that were too cheap to have a regular haircut. I charged 50 cents: Mohawks a specialty.

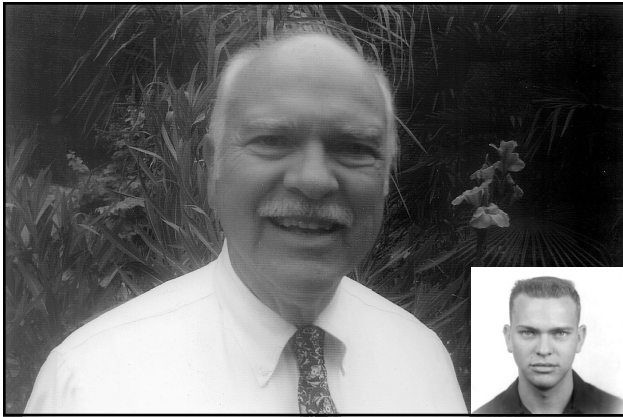
Warren Webb (CJ-54) was another great leader. He and

Orv Looper spotted me on most of my fire jumps. **Mick Swift** (CJ-56) was another guy I admired. He would later be instrumental in hiring me for the Redmond crew in 1964. After taking a three year hiatus, I tried to hire back with the Redding crew in 1964. They told me to try Redmond. Seemed like they (probably Barnowsky) remembered when I, for some reason, got the other jumpers to stage a sit-down strike during morning exercises. When I signaled, everyone sat down and didn't move. I let it continue for a minute or so and gave it back to Warren Webb, who had gone ballistic when he lost control. I thought the big shots had forgotten about the incident until Mick cautiously recommended me at Redmond and reminded me what had happened.

I made about 40 fire jumps during the four summers in Redding. Most of the jumps were in the Shasta, Trinity Alps, Klamath, Modoc, and Six Rivers National Forests and many around Lake Shasta. One fire jump on the Klamath N.F. ended at a logging camp near Happy Camp, CA. The camp was completely trashed with smashed diesel oil drums strewn everywhere. The locals swore that Big Foot had gotten pissed. I didn't see any foot prints and assumed some tree-hugging environmentalists did the damage. I still contend I saw the big guy running through a fire one night, but who knows? A few jumps around Lake Shasta were arson fires, using a bottle filled with water. When the sun reached a certain angle, the bottle would magnify and the heat would be projected onto dry leaves. Some clever arsonist probably pounded a few of those fires for a job. We jumped a finger of one of those fires that grew to 25,000 acres. At night, it sounded like 100 freight trains and set the hairs on my neck up straight. I got wild-eyed watching a small log actually being lifted off the ground due to the strong updraft created by the fire going up a draw.

I remember **Lee Gosset** (RDD-57) and **Bill Bowles** (RDD-57) jumping on the lava beds near Mt. Lassen and coming back with their Whites all chewed up. I had always envied their awesome boots. We jumped out of a DC-3, a Twin Beech and occasionally a Lockheed Lodestar. Many times we would follow a lightning storm and jump two men on eight fires from the DC-3.

I remember one jump in the Stanislaus N.F. near Yosemite National Park. The acre fire was on the edge of the 3,000 foot Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne River. Warren Webb was spotting and, in an effort not to get us into the canyon, probably dumped us unavoidably too close to a field of huge boulders. It was a late afternoon jump at about 9,000 feet elevation. The wind picked up, and I oscillated hitting a big rock on the down swing. I landed pretty well but got the wind knocked out and bruised both heel bones. We flew out the next morning on a copter that took off from the edge of the canyon. That sudden 200 foot down swoop to catch flying speed scared me



Jim Kloepfer (Courtesy J. Kloepfer)

worse than any jump. Reading past issues of *Smokejumper* tells me that my jumping experiences were rather tame compared to some.

I recall another jump that was rather unique. We were called out to man a snag fire in the high country of the Stanislaus N.F. It was mostly granite with scattered brush and trees. Redding had never jumped that area before, so we were trying to impress the district officials, hoping they would start using us on a regular basis. In fact, one of the Stanislaus district supervisors went along in the Twin Beech to watch the operation. Looking down at the fire, I could tell that the snag

fire was probably not going anywhere. I got the impression from the jump boss that this was really only a demonstration jump. I was jumping with Forrest "Buster" Moore (RDD-57). In the plane, I leaned over to him and pointed out a big log lying in the middle of the jump spot. I said, "Let's really impress the district supervisor and both of us land on that log." I went out first and by mere accident landed with one foot on the log. Buster exited on the next pass and, somehow, he was able to do the same with both legs hitting the same log 30 feet from me. We waited for the cargo drop, which included a "misery whip", and headed up the ridge to the fire. The fire was about a quarter acre on the ground and burning at the top of a huge 150 foot fir snag. Our choices were to fall the five foot diameter tree or climb it and put the fire out on top. Since it looked to be about a six hour ordeal with the saw, I opted to climb the sucker. I tied a rock on the end of my letdown rope and threw it over the first limb. From there, going limb to limb, it took about one hour to climb the tree. I had finally reached the top when it started thundering, hailing and then raining. I used the letdown rope to haul-up a five gallon can of water to put the fire out and stayed long enough to dig all the burn. I made my letdown using all 110 feet of the rope and then some. Buster headed down the ridge to retrieve the wet chutes and hang them over some manzanita bushes to dry. While I was putting the finishing touches on the fire, I suddenly caught sight of a huge dark brown wolf standing in a clearing looking at me about 50 yards away. Two things crossed



CPS-103 Reunion 2006, North Manchester, Indiana. Front L-R: Russell Palmer, Joe Eigsti, Wallace Littell, Lee Hebel, Norman Moody, Luke Birky, Lowell Sharpes Jr. Middle L-R: Tedford Lewis, Dick Flaharty, Bob Painter, Hubert Rohrer, Jim Brunk, Eldon Eash, Donald Hostetler. Back L-R: Clarence Quay, Dale Landis, William Weber, Earl Schmidt, Al Inglis, Harvey Weinrich, Willard Krabill.

my mind: What is a wolf doing in California and why does his head look too big for his body? I thought the wolf would catch my eyes and turn and run. Instead, it put its head down low and started walking toward me. I remember it had yellow eyes. It was about 40 feet from me when I realized that I might be his next meal. My initial reaction was to run, but quickly realized running would be dumb. Instead, I grabbed a pulaski, backed up against the big snag and started throwing pine cones. The wolf was not deterred. I started yelling, hoping Buster would hear me. The wolf was 20 feet away and crouching when Buster came running up the ridge. The wolf looked at him, stopped, looked back at me, and slowly turned and trotted away.

We finished the mop up and decided not to spend a night in the woods with a wolf. Our map showed a ranger station and boy scout camp about ten miles down the mountain, so we started hiking out. A couple of cows were headed down the same trail, and we considered catching one and tying our packs on it. The idea was dropped when the doggies deviated into a bunch of trees. We arrived at the scout camp about 9:00 p.m. The scouts were sitting around a big campfire when we unexpectedly appeared out of the darkness with 100 pound packs, faces blackened with smoke and wet with sweat. The kids were really startled, and we played the smokejumper roll to the hilt with emphasis on the wolf story. They didn't want to go to bed that night and instead ran to the nearby ranger station to get the ranger. Even the ranger was amazed when we related the wolf episode. He said there was documentation of wolves in that particular area, but he had never seen one in the nine years he had worked on the Stanislaus.

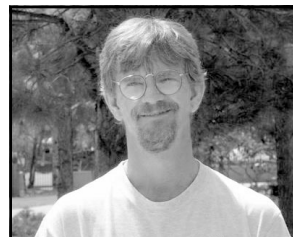
The last summer that I jumped in Redding, I met a nice gal named Loa. She said it was divine intervention and that we should hook-up. We dated that summer, but, after a time, I informed her that it was not divine intervention but merely wishful thinking on her part. In August 1971, I got a call from my brother-in-law, Jack Newell, the Resident FBI Agent in Twin Falls, ID. He relayed the story to me that a Loa Kirk had seen a composite drawing of D.B. Cooper in the Seattle newspaper. She had called the FBI and reported that the picture had to be Jim Kloepper, a former smokejumper who once bragged to her that he knew how to commit the perfect crime. I pulled the composite up on Google and must say the picture did resemble me slightly. She also remembered that I had gone to the University of Idaho. The Seattle FBI office located my records at the University and this led to Kuna, ID, then to Twin Falls and finally to Santa Cruz, CA, where I was employed as Finance Director of a local hospital. He told me he was sitting at the TWX machine in Twin Falls when the message came in. He was rather amused about the whole incident, but also a little concerned. He called the FBI office in Seattle and told them that the D.B. Cooper suspect was, in fact, his brother-in-law, living in Aptos, and recommended that any further investigation of subject Kloepper stop. I will not forget what they say about a women scorned.

My Redding brothers may remember me as a person who stuttered; in fact I still do. I remember I had a difficult time yelling "horseshit" when I exited the plane. Stuttering has its advantages: when I have to give a 30 minute presentation, I

only have to prepare a 15 minute talk. I retired in 1999 after 40 years of sitting behind a desk as an accountant. When I spoke with Lee Gosset recently, he said he couldn't see me as an accountant. I agreed. My smokejumping experience had a positive, lasting effect on me all my life.

I look forward to meeting you all in Boise in June. Best regards and remember – stay above ground. 🦋

Jim can be reached at: jimnancykloepper@sbcglobal.net or 225 Shadowmere Way, Aptos, CA 95003 831-688-7514



Tim Eldridge (NSA file)

Dirty Friends Wanting A Beer

by Tim Eldridge (Missoula '82)

The season of '88 had us digging, swinging, chopping, digging, Sawing, tired even in our dreams.

Hot sweat, hot smoke, Pulaski swings of a million multiplied by a billion this season of '88.

Yellowstone was just a sample of action, a playground for media. Hundreds of fires went unnoticed in the great northwest, but not unmanned.

It was the year the fires won their wars.

By July you had just begun to give us a taste, like a gourmet spread to a starving man.

We hungered for overtime, we hungered for your starts, we waited for your bolts of white hot electric.

And you came smashing in, homing down, blasting violent into old growth and new, you did more good than harm. Headlines from D.C. waged war on mother nature bureaucrats who had never swung a tool or wiped smokey sweat away.

Two weeks of ash, no sleep, no shower, starch grey nomex salt stained dirt.

A truck full of Al Jolson's afraid to look at their feet, hot water and soap would not sit right after this much fire.

To eat in a restaurant is heaven, people look at your dirt face and white teeth, they smell sweat smoke from funny dirt men, they come close, smell you again. They like you in your dirt suit self.

The waitress knows jumpers tip big and the beers are there, cold on the palm, sweet burning cold on the throat. A three-hour drive to Missoula in the morning it starts again, 1988 July four months till the snow.

The Monarch

by Hal Meili (Cave Junction '52)

The full moon appeared to dilate over a sawtooth peak
As ice water ballooned our boots, crossing Cataract Creek.

Our feet sunk slowly in the aqueous forest floor
While trailing wapiti, seeking a majestic herdlord.

Unabated scent, water charging his tracks
Spelled an imminent encounter with a royal mossback.

The alarming bugle of an enraged bull
Froze us like statues, alert and fearful.

The steam of his cape rising from the alder,
The force of his breath asserting the order.

Pridefully he paraded out on the mountain face,
Majestically he moved with incredible grace.

Throwing my fogged glasses into a rain drenched cap,
On one knee, I keenly adjusted my rifle strap.

Through my Leupold appeared a sight
I've only witnessed once in my life.

With antlers too heavy for us to pack,
The herd bull raised his head, scratching the middle of his back.

Even today, I call that monarch part mine,
The one I left standing in the Mallard Larkin alpine.

NSA Life Membership Benefits include:

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Redding Smokejumpers Turn 50

The Redding Smokejumper Base will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on *May 19, 2007*.

50 years as an operational smokejumper base in California is quite an accomplishment. Anyone and everyone who has contributed to the success of this smokejumper base are invited to celebrate our anniversary. Let's face it, this includes just about everybody. If you are not quite convinced you should attend, think of it as a primer for the National Smokejumper Reunion in Boise just three weeks later.

This is a one-day affair that will include an open house and evening social.

Open House from 8am to 4:30 pm: The base will be opened up for the day and offer in-depth tours and demonstrations to all visitors.

Evening social from 6pm until midnight: The evening of the 19th is when the informal celebrating will begin. We have reserved a hall in Caldwell Park (right on the banks of the beautiful Sacramento River) and will have a Santa Maria style Barbeque (Tri-Tip, beans, bread, salad, etc.) which can be washed down with some of the finest libations California breweries have to offer. A special video will be shown, and a skit by the Rookie class of 2007 will culminate what should be a wonderful spring evening in Redding.

The price: Fifteen dollars per person, spouses and kids are free.

RSVP by May 10th, 2007 and *make checks payable to the Smokejumper Welfare Fund*.

Mail to: Redding Smokejumpers
ATT: Annette Moore
6101 Airport Road
Redding, CA 96002
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Ventura, IA 50482 ☎

Fire on the Yukon

by Jerry S. Dixon (McCall '71)

My first view of the Yukon River was from the open door of a DC-3 jump ship in 1972. Like so much of the west, Alaska's upper Yukon will always be framed for me in the door of a smokejumper plane. The third week of Sept. 2005, I drove up to Eagle. The town was settled in 1898 when Klondikers figured out they only had to float 90 miles downstream and they were back in the US.

The amount of country burned by fire in the last 15 months is staggering. For 100 miles driving north from Tetlin to Eagle, the landscape on both sides is black. It has burned to the horizon and fires are still smoking in every direction.

I was the last BLM FMO for the three million acres of the Upper Yukon 1978-1982. My home was the old FAA building built in WWII that sits above the Yukon and has the most outstanding view I have seen. So I know this country as I was in charge of firefighting here for four years. What I see is outside my experience.

Alaska had 6.5 million acres burn in 2004 and 3.6 million this year. That is over 10 million acres that were torched. I had not been to my log cabin at Eagle for five years. Friends told me not to bother, "The town is smoked in and there are burning trees on the road."

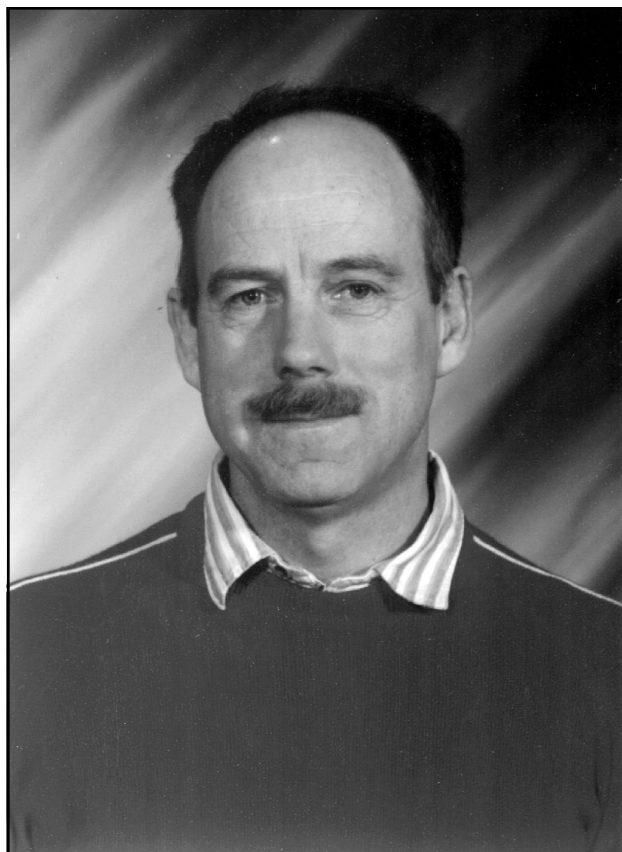
There is little doubt that without the efforts of many firefighters, Eagle would have burned to the ground and my cabin along with it. Friends described the wall of flame that approached the town with burning spruce cones being blown a half-mile in front of the inferno. I would like to thank all those smokejumpers and firefighters from across America who made such a difference.

In addition to the town, the landscape has changed. I first came to Eagle in the mid 1970s when I flew fire re-con. The first time I stayed was when I floated the 40-Mile River and the Yukon River to Ft. Yukon. When I became the FMO, I moved into the FAA building.

This was the time when John McPhee was here and wrote his classic, "Coming Into the Country." John put up a window in Eagle circa 1976 so that one could look in. I was fortunate to live there at that time. Almost 30 years later we are still corresponding.

During the late 1970s it was a difficult time to be a federal employee in remote Alaska locations as President Jimmy Carter had just signed a bill setting aside millions of acres of public land. Many Alaskans had a sense of entitlement to the wide stretches of land that in fact belong to all Americans.

Public land was seen by many Alaskans as their personal domain for hunting, trapping and building cabins. NPS airplanes were torched in Glenallen. Once a person from town told me that I should not sleep in the BLM fireguard station as there were individuals considering burning it down. I was already sleeping in a tent by the river, but I



Jerry Dixon (NSA file)

moved my whitewater kayak just in case.

I did my master's research on "Raptors of the Upper Yukon" during my off hours. I made first descents of three rivers conducting the research. Two of those rivers, the North and South Tatonduk Rivers in the Ogilvie Mts. of the Yukon Territory, have not been repeated in 25 years. With a partner I got two fishing permits and built a fish wheel that was a highliner for the upper Yukon. Then I horse-logged and built a log cabin near the river. I learned how to build saddle-notched log cabins from **Bruce Yergenson** (MYC-54) when we built a sauna in McCall.

The one thing I really wanted to do was jump again. It had been six years since I had jumped. From the Officer's Club at Ft. Wainwright, I called **Doug Abromeit** (MYC-71) in McCall. He talked to **Harry Roberts** (MSO-53) and an invitation was extended. I jumped 1982 in McCall and it was a great season.

That next summer I was the first Fire Ecologist for a newly created park in Alaska. I got to spend the summer flying in a helicopter to the remote areas to study fires and lived in my log cabin overlooking the mighty Yukon River. 🦋

Adventurer's Apex Would Be To See Education Funds Restored

by Beth Bragg

Reprinted with author's permission from the "Anchorage Daily News" 11/26/06.

Jerry Dixon doesn't do things halfway. He might eat the elephant one piece at a time, as he is doing with his ongoing effort to ski the historic Iditarod Trail all the way from his hometown of Seward to the Bering Sea. But once he decides he's hungry for an elephant, he keeps biting and chewing and swallowing until the task is complete.

His resume is a doozy. It's filled with all sorts of wilderness "firsts"—first ascents of mountain peaks, first descents of raging rivers.

But ask Dixon, 58, what rates as his biggest achievement, and he'll tell you it was the two days he gave testimony as a plaintiff in *Moore v. Alaska*, the lawsuit that claims Alaska doesn't fund schools well enough to give kids the education guaranteed them by the state constitution.

Dixon is one of the faces of *Moore v. Alaska*, which lists five families as plaintiffs. He's the father of two school-aged children and is an award-winning educator who taught for 20 years in Shungnak and Seward.

He looks more like an egghead than an X Games contender. His body is compact, his hairline receding, his demeanor intense. His wife describes him as a man who doesn't know half-measures—he's either totally committed or not interested.

These days Dixon is committed to spreading the word about education in Alaska—and the word he delivers isn't good.

From a perspective gained during two decades as a teacher, Dixon watched Alaska schools go from first to worst in the nation. He offers

damning evidence to support his view.

When Dixon was in Shungnak during the 1980s, he and his wife, Deborah, were among a group of teachers who stayed for several years. Openings attracted 100 or more applicants.

Now, with benefits shrinking and salaries no longer putting Alaska near the top of the nation's pay scale, villages struggle to keep teachers. While skiing sections of the Iditarod Trail in recent years, Dixon has met educators who tell him how hard it is to find teachers willing to stay for a single year. "One of the villages had a student teacher and was paying him to teach," he said.

In 1990, Dixon and his family moved to Seward, where he taught gifted students. He won a Christa McAuliffe Fellowship in 1997 and was named the BP Teacher of the Year for the Kenai Peninsula in 2001.

He resigned in 2003, dismayed by budget cuts that he said cut the number of teachers in half. The district cut music, art, drama and the gifted program, he said. It required students to take remedial math even if they were proficient in advanced math. Dixon's oldest son is in New Zealand this year on an exchange program, in part because the curriculum at home is no longer challenging.

Collin Middleton, the attorney for the plaintiffs in *Moore v. Alaska*, said Dixon brings a unique perspective to the case. Much of the trial has talked about how the state fails students who are just barely making it. It has talked about high dropout rates, low graduation rates and the achievement gap between rural and urban schools.

"What Jerry represents to me is a group of people who have really bright kids and they aren't receiving their kind of education either," Middleton said. "It's not all about the gap. It's also about program and special forms of education for gifted kids."

Dixon says it's also about the way the state funds various districts. The Peninsula has 44 schools in a 20,000-square-mile area, he said, including at least three that aren't on the road system. "Yet the state funds us as if we all lived in Soldotna," he said.

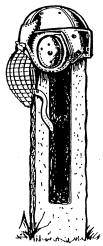
Closing arguments in the trial will be heard next month, and Dixon is glad—and proud—he was along for the ride.

"People are going to know that we're hammering the small schools," he said. "I'm as proud to be a part of this as I am to do first ascents of alpine peaks, first descents of white-water rivers and snow-filled couloirs, or to jump from DC-3s with the best firefighters in the world." 🦁

Trail Crew-Can You Help?

From Bill Yensen (McCall '53)

I just got word that the Pine Valley District on the Dixie Forest here in St George (Utah) will use the NSA for a trail job on Pine Valley Mountain. It will run from May 7-11. I need to recruit about **six more hike-able NSA trail guys**. Digger Daniels is coming from Montana and will bring the gear. **Please contact Bill Yensen at: 435-674-1178.**



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.

Neil Tracy Shier (Cave Junction '46)

Neil, 79, of Grants Pass, Oregon, died Monday, Sept. 25, 2006. During WWII he joined the Navy at age 15 and served two years. After returning from the war in 1946, he trained as a smokejumper and jumped at Cave Junction for the 1946 and 1947 seasons. Neil obtained his commercial pilot's license in 1947 and, in 1948, joined the Air Force. He retired as a decorated Chief Master Sergeant with the rank of E-9 in 1980.

Willard D. Handrich (Missoula '45)

Willard died October 6, 2006, with his son and daughter-in-law when their boat capsized in Lake Superior. He served in Civilian Public Service from 1942 to 1946 including jumping the 1945 season at Missoula. Willard was an ordained minister and pastored the Grand Marais Menonite Church for 32 years. He was also a self-employed woodsman and owned and operated Grand Marais Industries from 1966 to 1978.

Gordon H. Matheson (Missoula '47)

Gordon, of Conrad, Montana, died October 15, 2006, at the age of 80. He enlisted in the Army in 1944 and served in the 394th Field Artillery during WWII. After being discharged in 1946, he enrolled in the School of Forestry at the University of Montana and jumped at Missoula during the 1947 season. Gordon was a farmer and served on the boards of many cooperatives. He was a lifelong member of the Montana Farmers Union and served two terms on the Montana Chamber of Commerce board.

Ira J. "Ted" Kittell (Missoula '49)

Ted, 77, passed away November 17, 2006, in Seattle. He grew up and graduated from high school in Missoula and served in the Air Force during the Korean War. After his discharge from the service, Ted returned to the University of Montana, receiving a degree in physical therapy. He was a smokejumper for six seasons in Missoula and five seasons in Redding. Ted worked for the Forest Service and retired as Fire Control Officer for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in northern California.

James T. "Jim" Hain (Missoula '44)

Jim, a long-time resident of Seattle, died in April of 2006 of cancer. He rookied in the CPS-103 Smokejumper Unit and jumped for two years, making a total of 21 jumps. In recent years, he made two tandem parachute jumps in memory of his smokejumper youth. After two years of college, he pursued a career in logging, building and tunnel construction, and work-

ing in a power plant. Throughout his career he was active in back-country hiking and mountaineering, climbing in the Alps and North America.

Stanley D. "Stan" Ramsay (McCall '58)

Stan died January 3, 2007 after a long battle with cancer. He grew up and went to school in Meridian, Idaho. After joining the Forest Service in 1958, he rookied at McCall in 1958 where he jumped through the 1969 season, moving to Boise where he jumped 1970-73. After retiring, he worked at the Spurwing Golf Course. Stan's interests included weightlifting, reading the Bible and fishing.

William L. "Bill" Carver (Missoula '47)

Bill, 79, of Missoula, passed away from complications of lung cancer on Jan. 27, 2007. He graduated from Hamilton High School, but before attending graduation ceremonies he was ordered to report for duty in the U.S. Navy. He was discharged from the Navy in 1947 and attended college at Montana State University and later transferred to the University of Montana, where he graduated. Bill jumped at Missoula from 1947 through the 1957 seasons. He worked for the U.S. Forest Service as an administrative contract officer until his retirement in 1982.

Roy R. "Dick" Carpenter (Missoula '49)

Dick died February 4, 2007, at his home in Dillon, Montana, after a short battle with cancer. He served as a paratrooper in the Korean War and jumped at Missoula from 1949-54 and the 1960 season. Dick worked in the timber industry before working 36 years for the USDA Animal Damage Control in Montana and Alaska. He moved to the Dillon area in 1967 and was a regular spectator at the area wrestling matches watching sons and grandsons wrestle. Dick was known to the Beaverhead County ranchers as the "Government Trapper". 🐿



Fred Donner (MSO-59), on left, and his 74-year-old Minnesota neighbor, Larry Elg, repeat for the second year in a row as "Old Timer Crosscut Champions" at the Old Logging Day at McGrath, Minnesota on July 4, 2006. (Courtesy F. Donner)

A Jump To Remember

by Harvey Weirich (McCall '44)

It was 60 years ago that I was working for the Forest Service as a CPS- 103 Smokejumper in Montana and Idaho. On July 10, 2004, I went to our local airport to relive some of my memories of parachuting from airplanes in 1944-45.

In the morning our class of fourteen guys and two ladies spent four hours listening to our instructor and studying three pages of information about how skydiving is a dangerous sport, about how there is no insurance coverage or liability for injuries, and about how there would be no lawsuits whatsoever against Sky Dive Goshen, Inc. We signed our names after each paragraph. The instructor was a school teacher who said he had fallen out of airplanes 2500 times and was proud to let us know that he had only experienced three failures so far and had used his emergency chute with success each time. I decided I would rather make my 2497 jumps first and save my three failures to some time later. He showed us the harness you wear that holds the main and emergency parachutes, took them all apart and explained everything in detail. He let us know that you

shouldn't try to land between two telephone poles because there were wires between them that might tear the parachute. He said if you land in a lake, don't come up and get tangled in the parachute, but dive down and swim for shore as fast as you can. He told us always to look up to make sure your chute was open, and if not, pull the emergency. If that doesn't work, enjoy the ride and come on down anyway. He was a lot of fun and a good instructor.

Next it was down to the hanger, jumping off a two-foot box, doing rolls on the ground, putting on our equipment and getting acquainted with all the details. Our last stop was the cash register to pay in full. It seemed they didn't want to take a chance you might go home before you got on the airplane, or jumped and never came back. While waiting my turn with everyone around me, I was all alone in my memories, reliving those days 60 years ago when I was a 19 year-old boy, thinking about the guys I jumped with and about the half of our group who had made that last long jump beyond. One young man wanted to know what year I was born to make sure I was 80. He gave me a "cool man"

with the thumb up sign. He didn't know I had helped put out forest fires from airplanes.

The climb to 400 feet was all in silence, except for the 100 mph wind rushing past the open door. Each of us, two young jumpers, a licensed jump master with 200 jumps, one pilot and myself, were alone with our thoughts. I was thinking about my mother, who had worried about me jumping, and about my sister telling me years ago how she had helped my mother write a letter before they would accept me for training at Missoula, Montana, in April of 1944. I still have that letter. The jump master held his thumb up and yelled, "Are you ready?" When I left the plane I felt a gentle tug, then all was peace and quiet, with a slight flutter from the square umbrella above me. There was no feeling of movement, just a gentle breeze, total freedom like I was standing on top of the world. I saw no dead trees, no stones, no green trees, no smoke or fire, just a large green carpet with friends who were concerned the old man might hurt himself. Suddenly the green grass grew large very fast and then, with a rush, I was standing free again as an 80 year- old man with 60 years of memories all in one day. For a young 19 year-old Amish farm boy from Indiana it had been quite an experience.

John 8: 32-36 If HE has set you FREE, you are really FREE. 🙏



Harvey Weirich (Courtesy H. Weirich)

Harvey can be contacted at: hhweirich@yahoo.com

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