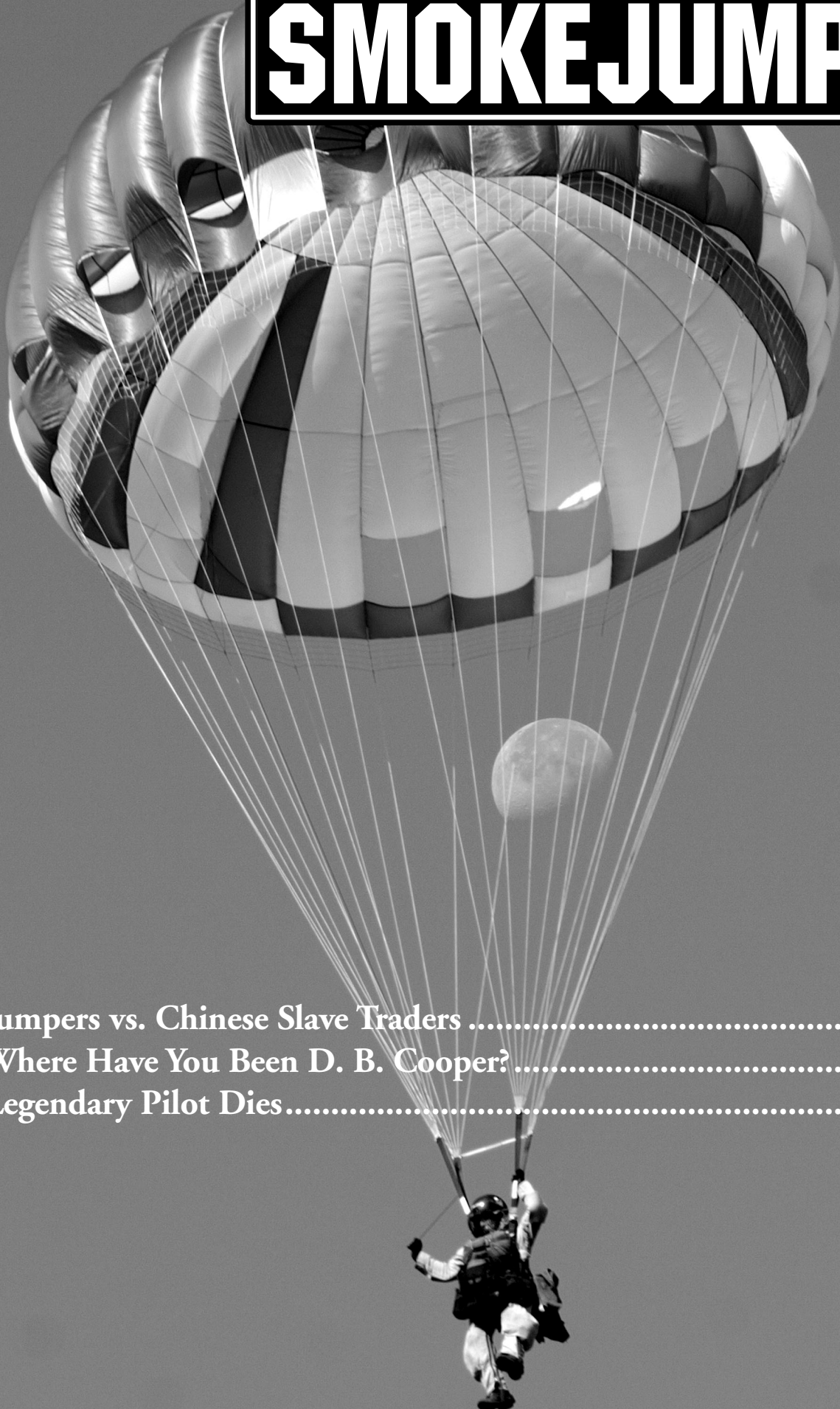


THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JULY 2007

SMOKEJUMPER



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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

AS YOU READ THIS MESSAGE, I will have started my 4th year as your President, and I thank you for that. It has been an honor and a privilege. What has made it enjoyable is the commitment of the NSA board members, their total dedication to continuing on the heritage of the smokejumper program, and their openness to new ideas. Not bad for a bunch of old farts. And, it's not just the work of the board members. There has been an awful lot of work put in for the Redding Reunion this past May, the National Reunion in Boise, and the upcoming reunion in Winthrop. A lot of effort made all of these events very successful and, once again, has shown the "can do" attitude of smokejumpers, young and old, well older. Let's not get carried away. We all thank you for your fine efforts. I also want to thank those of you who donated items to the Boise reunion for the silent auction. The proceeds will help us in meeting our organizational mission.

This message is being written on Friday, April 13. This has been a fine week as my wife and I saw and talked to many ex-jumpers/current jumpers this week in Missoula. The current jumpers were in Missoula for their first refresher and completing training

jumps with mixed loads. It was a lot of fun and tomorrow night, we are meeting **Kim Maynard** (MSO-82), **Billy Thomas** (MSO-75), **Rod McIver** (MSO-64), **Bruce Ford** (MSO-75), **Willie Von Bracht** (MSO-68) and **Andy Johnston** for dinner. All jumped out of Missoula and Andy was one of America's finest smokejumper pilots. It should be fun catching up on world events at the Flathead Brewery. To me, it just re-emphasizes the camaraderie and closeness that the jumper community has. We lifted one high to all of you.

At least two of the NSA trails projects will have been completed by the time you read this magazine. Thanks to Jon and all of you who are out there this summer. Have a great summer and enjoy the cooking. It's a great program, and it gains greater recognition yearly.

One last thing. As federal budgets get tighter, with monies going elsewhere, the smokejumper program is constantly under scrutiny. Regional and national managers are looking at wherever they can cut expenses, and the smokejumper program is perceived as expensive by some. The smokejumper community is still a very mobile, highly efficient, skilled, and diverse bunch. So if you get a chance, pass along your words of encouragement and support for the National Smokejumper Program.

Until next time, we are on final, there is a hundred yards of drift, your static line is clear, and the door is yours. Take advantage of this one and have a great summer. Jumpers away..... 🪂

Where Are These Guys?

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

Stanley C. Ball (MYC-55)
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Bob Calverley (CJ-55)

Hook Before You Leap

by Dave Wood (Redmond '66)

I read in the July, 2006, issue of *Smokeyjumper* of the passing of Mike Goehry (RAC-67) who jumped out of Redmond for a year or two. What folks might not know is that Mike was the jumper who tried to jump hooked only to a rubber band.

We were on a flight in a Twin Beech bound for a fire near Winnapee Lake, west of Cultus Lake on the Deschutes N.F. The spotter was Jim Dent (RAC-65). Besides Mike and myself, Jim Damitio (RAC-69) was on the flight, and it may have been his first fire jump. I don't recall the fourth jumper.

We got over the fire and Jim and Mike were in the first stick. Jim was in the door, and Mike hooked up behind him. In those days, protocol was for the second jumper to take his static line clip and hook a rubber band at the top of the cable. Then hook his clip to the cable and jerk on the static line to close the clip

and test the anchor. What we didn't know at that moment was that Mike had hooked the rubber band but had missed the cable. He jerked the static line; the rubber band held the static line clip, and he prepared to jump.

I was getting ready to jump in the second stick and was fastening a radio onto my harness. In those days, the radios were quite large and were hooked in

the leg straps and went between your legs. I remember clearly, to this day, the image of what happened next: Jim Dent slapped Jim Damitio's shoulder, and he exited the aircraft. Mike followed, and it took me a moment to realize what I was seeing. Mike rolled over headfirst, and his static line formed a perfect arc behind him. In other words, his main did not open! The rubber band was not strong enough to deploy his chute.

I lost sight of him as he went under the aircraft. We all came to the same conclusion at the same time and started yelling that Mike's chute hadn't opened. Moments passed, and the pilot said he saw a white chute open in the trees. It looked like Mike had deployed his reserve but at the very last moment before hitting the trees.

I moved to the door to see what I could see while Jim looked through the window in the floor of the aircraft. Neither of us saw anything. We formed a plan while the pilot flew the same path. Jim was to look through the window while I was in the door, hooked up ready to go and looking out at the ground. The agreement was if Jim saw the white reserve he would signal me to go, and I would look for it in the air. Or if I saw it from the door, I would go on my own. We both saw it at the same time, and, as I began to exit, Jim yelled at me to go. When my chute opened, it took a moment to orientate myself, and I saw the white reserve in the trees. I steered for it, keeping my eyes on it at all times. As I neared the ground, I started to yell for Mike but received no answer.

I landed not far from the reserve and kept yelling. Still no answer. I thought I knew what I was about to see. As I approached the deployed reserve, I saw a jump suit and a main parachute still packed, but no Mike Goehry. I yelled again and again and still no answer. I ran around the site and soon found



Dave Wood (Courtesy D. Wood)

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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

Mike sitting beside a creek, with his feet in the water, smoking a cigarette. To this day I don't know if he was in shock or something else (you would have had to have known Mike to make that call). He calmly said it took him a while to figure out that his main wasn't going to open and that he'd better deploy his reserve. He had sprained his ankle(s) upon landing as the reserve had just deployed as he hit the trees and ground.

Soon the other two jumpers showed up. The fourth man had jumped after I jumped. Jim hadn't known anything was amiss. A call was made to the jump plane and a helicopter deployed. Mike got a stretcher ride to the helicopter and was gone.

We all compared notes and figured out that Mike had hooked the rubber band, but missed the cable with his static line clip. We wondered out loud how many rubber bands it would have taken to have deployed the main.

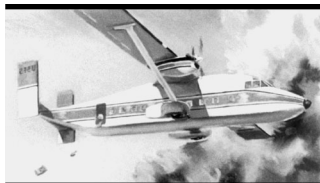
Upon returning to Redmond, the debriefing and re-debrief-

ing were quite significant. The "Big Brass" from the U.S. Forest Service showed up, and there were more and then more investigations. The net result, as I recall, was that we no longer could hook the rubber band and then the cable. We had to thread the static line cable through the rubber band and then hook the cable. Then, rather than just jerk the clip to see if it was attached, we had to do an additional visual check. In the end, it most likely was not a bad idea.

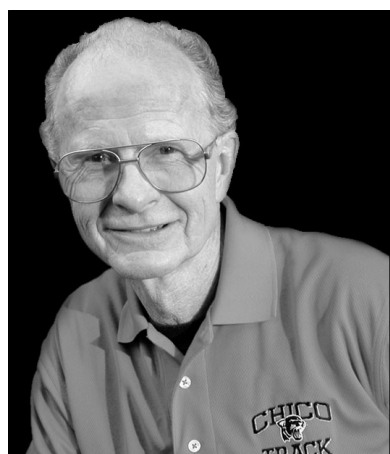
That's the end of the story, and I think I have all the facts correct. Any variations in what actually happened may be due to old age. However, I still have most of my memory and I do remember clearly the day when Mike Goehry made a jump, hooked only to a rubber band. ☹

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Sounding Off from the Editor



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

I'VE BEEN HOBBLING around on a bum knee since my last surgery at the end of the 1969 Alaska fire season. My initial knee repair was done after the 1961 season, a result of a couple years of constant re-injury just doing normal fireline activities.

In 1961, I had been fortunate enough to be selected, along with **Ron Thoreson** (CJ-60), to jump the 1961 season with the New Mexico crew. Up to that time, my knee had "gone out" on several occasions working fires, but never on the actual jump itself. During the refresher training in Missoula, it went out again when practicing rolls off a platform. Training instructor, **Delos Dutton** (MSO-51), took mercy on me and gave me a couple days to "recover." I completed the two refresher jumps with a double-sized knee by steering as far away from the jump spot as possible and away from the eyes of the instructors. Better to be downgraded on my steering than sent home. Went on to make 25 fire jumps that season and to remember the New Mexico crew and season as one of the highlights of my career.

The knee continued to go out a couple times a season; each one a bit

easier than the time before. Near the end of the 1969 season in Fairbanks, I stepped on **Mike Clarkson's** (RAC-65) foot during a volleyball game and "bam," white lights screeching across my eyeballs, it happened again. Since I was about to return to my job as a physical education teacher in Chico, I thought I'd take a few days off until I could walk again and then head to the lower '48. The phone rang and **Bill Robertson** (MSO-57) said there was some sort of

problem between the Area Manager at McGrath and the jumpers stationed there on standby. Would I mind going to McGrath and straighten things out? By the time I flew out to McGrath, only two jumpers were left, and they were the only two available in the state of Alaska. Then comes the fire call. Only in Alaska could I land directly on my butt and come out OK. When I got home that fall, the knee was "re-built" and permanently locked in place. That was the end of my smokejumping career.

About 37 years since that surgery, I just had a complete knee replacement and am looking forward to being able to walk normally. I've wanted to sign up for the Trails Program, but have been hesitant to do so with my inability to hike any distance. I'm on the list for Colorado in June and hope to have completed my first of many such projects by the time you read this.

The biggest thing about my recent surgery is the drastic improvements in surgery and the new joint replacement procedures. In 1969 I was in the hospital for 14 days, had a cast from hip to toe, lost four inches off my quads along with 20 pounds. They allowed smoking in the wards in those days and I was nauseous the



whole stay. Cigarette smoke still makes me sick. Pain management was rationed out and only given when it reached ten on a scale of one to ten. After 37 years, I can still taste and smell that hospital.

Now to 2007. Enter the hospital at 0700, surgery at 0900 with a spinal given so there was none of the after effects of anesthesia, back in an individual room by 12:00 noon, knee wrapped with elastic bandage, up for first

walk at 3:00 p.m., a normal dinner at 6:00 p.m., two 15-minute sessions with knee being moved through the range of motion by a machine, and discharge from the hospital the next day. When the pain reached four on a ten-scale, medication was administered.

It's been a little over a week now. I've been going to my track coaching job in the afternoon, but coaching from a position on a chair. Joint replacement is not a painless procedure. I remember "waking up" once during the process and feeling concerned with all the noise from the saws and hammers. I told them so and was back in never-never land quickly.

And talk about coincidence, **Bill Fogarty** (MSO-57), who does a ton of editing for this magazine, was also getting his knee replaced about the same time. We're comparing notes almost daily over the email.

I will be walking a lot better at the reunion in Boise. Hope to see you all **there!**

Where Are These Guys?

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

Ben S. Corley (MSO-55)
Thomas H. Greiner (MSO-55)

Who Are Those Guys? Troop, Jerry and The Pirates vs. Chinese Slave Traders

by Troop Emonds (Cave Junction '66)

On October 6, 2006, my wife, Rivena, received a phone call from her 22 year-old niece, Lannie Ejercito, who lives in the Philippines. She was crying, extremely upset.

"Auntie, I am sorry, I made a wrong choice! This is not what I was expecting. They want me to sign a contract for eight years. I don't want to sign it! I want to get out of here! I want to go back to the Philippines! Please help me!"

My wife asked, "Where are you?"

"I'm in Malaysia."

Then a woman took over the phone and said, "We need \$1,195 in U.S. dollars in order for us to send her home. I will text you a message where to send it." Then the call ended.

We later learned from Lannie that Religen, the woman who was on the phone, told Lannie that she and her Chinese husband had sent my wife information on where to send the money. This was a lie, as we waited in vain for two weeks for just such a message. They simply would let time pass and, at a later date, they would just mention the distant aunt in America was not interested in helping her. They never dreamed that Auntie's husband would come from America to look for her or even care about some poor Asian young woman on the other side of the planet.

My wife called relatives in the Philippines and found out that Lannie and eight other young women had been recruited to work as singers in a Malaysian nightclub. Other than the phone call to my wife, Lannie had not been heard from since.

My wife looked at me and said, "Go find my niece. Just go to Malaysia and find her."

Off To The Philippines

I called my old smokejumper friend and retired FBI agent, **Jerry Howe** (CJ-65), and explained the situation. He immediately let me know that he was in on going over to find Lannie. Jerry started organizing and trying to raise money to support the mission. He was also bringing a friend, Manny Divina, who was formerly in the Philippino National Police. I ordered three airplane tickets from Portland to the Philippines. Jerry and Manny arrived, and we left on 26 October. I felt we should have left at least a week earlier to have any hope of following the trail of Lannie.

Someone contacted NBC news and got them interested in doing a story on finding a human trafficking victim. Adam Ciralsky called me from NBC News, and an NBC News crew showed up at my factory in Nehalem, Oregon. Adam asked

me what I planned on doing? I told him that we would follow the clues and find Lannie.

Chief Jacob Gutib Macabali

Upon arrival at the Manila Airport, we met David Lom, a free-lance video news guy, and his Thai sound guy, Samet. Also waiting at the Manila Airport were three of Manny's pals. We bought plane tickets to Cebu for the next morning where we told our story to Deputy Regional Chief Jacob Gutib Macabali. He befriended us and told us he would help us track down the human traffickers.

We went to the home of Rachael Sabal, the Philippine recruiter of the young women, and took her to the police station. Once in the police station, Lannie's Mom and Dad brought charges against Rachael for illegal recruitment and conduct leading to human trafficking. It was here that Rachael called her sister, Religen, who was the receiver of the new recruits in Malaysia. Rachael actually drew a map of where the



Lannie Ejercito (Courtesy Jerry Howe)



Chief Macabali (Courtesy J. Howe)

women were held.

Rachael told Religen that she was at the police station with Americans, one of whom was Lannie's Uncle. I was handed the phone and was able to tell Lannie that we were coming for her.

Rachael would not list the names of the other young women and continued to insist she was not recruiting employees. A District Attorney came over and asked a few questions. He was very careful. After one quick visit with Rachael, he came out and told the cops to book her as this was a very strong, clear-cut case of human trafficking. The legal council said they could hold Rachael for 72 hours, but it would require a complaint from the human trafficking victim herself for the charges to stick.

The police read Rachael the formal charges and told her they were throwing her in jail. Her previous belligerent and defiant attitude suddenly changed. She fell apart screaming and begging not to be thrown in jail.

The next morning we heard a rumor that Lannie was going to be released and flown to her hometown of Cebu that day. We told police Deputy Regional Chief Jacob Gutib Macabali about the good news. He was more than skeptical and called Immigration to check on Lannie and found that she was not listed on any incoming flights.

The Police General for the entire Cebu Region, an old friend of Manny's, invited all of us to come to see him. While in the General's office, I got a call from Lannie. She wanted to know what happened to Rachael. I told her that she was in jail for human trafficking and could serve a life sentence. I handed the phone to Chief Jacob Macabali, and they talked

briefly before the connection went dead.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Since the rumor of Lannie's return seemed to be false, Jerry, David Lom (the video news guy), and I flew to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where we were supposed to meet with Adam Ciralsky, Producer NBC News. Adam had called me in Oregon before we left and told me that if the trail was hot, he'd fly to Malaysia and meet us. While waiting for Adam to make the 34-hour trip, we went to the Philippine Consulate in Kuala Lumpur and told them what we were doing and asked for their help. They assured us they would do everything possible to help.

Eventually we made a night flight to Pinang and learned that all of the captives (21) had been moved out of the condo where they were being held. Lannie had been taken to Kuala Lumpur (the city we just left) where Religen and her Chinese husband, Kenny Danial Kang, went to the Philippine Consulate. Their aim was to file an Affidavit stating that Lannie was not in Malaysia against her will, with hopes of getting Religen's sister, Rachael, out of jail in the Philippines. Under duress Lannie signed, and it was sent to Cebu, and the District Attorney ordered the police to release Rachael from jail.

It was disturbing that Lannie did not simply ask for help from the Philippine Authorities once inside the Philippine Consulate. Later we deduced that, due to many negative situations involving authority figures, she could not bring herself to the point of trusting that they would help her escape. Most citizens in third world nations are more afraid of police and authorities than they are of the bad guys.

We had no contacts with the Police in Malaysia. Knowing this, the NBC guys hired a fixer to find out whom to contact locally. We then made contact with Superintendent Razali Basri of the local police. After hearing our strange story, Supt. Basri assigned us a couple of fit-looking cops with lots of metal decorating their shoulders.

Things moved incredibly fast. The police drove us to the condo and quickly tore down the iron-barred door and forcefully entered the locked-up condo. But, no Lannie! The cops questioned the residents and learned that four taxis came to move all the people from that condo the previous evening.

Inspector Saddamett

Inspector Saddamett, an easy-going type, was a big help to us filling out the paperwork. One of the policemen had a problem with the NBC filming crew being there. Who's paying these people? We shrugged our shoulders.

So Saddamett looks at Jerry and says, "I understand Troop's position, but not yours. You are FBI?"

"No, I'm retired FBI," and he hands over his Gobi Investigations business card.

"What is Gobi Investigations?"

"Troop and I used to smokejump at a place called the Gobi a long time ago!"

"So this is a private company. You are a private investigator?" Then Saddamett looks over at me and says, "So Troop, you pay Jerry to investigate?"

"Jerry is my friend, I don't pay him anything?"

When he hears this, he bursts out laughing. Just then a man came into the room with a folder. Our friend, Saddamett, still laughing, takes the folder and reads it at a glance. Closing the folder he lights up and says, "We have all the particulars on Kang. Trust us, I promise you in two days we will have your niece." Then another Officer in civilian clothes enters the room. This is Inspector Ismail. He will take charge of the case.

Inspector Ismail

We left shaking Inspector Ismail's hand, and Saddamett insisted on driving us back to our hotel in his personal car. It felt like we had known him all our lives. He was just a good cop trying to serve the little people.

After the condo break-in, the NBC crew became worried about the local Chinese mob, and they hired a special security guy trained and capable of watching our backs and able to parry any human threats. This guy was from New Zealand and was a Special Air Service retiree who farmed out to corporate folks all over the world. His name was David, and he had just spent two and a half years in Iraq.

We had a meeting with Inspector Ismail where he assured us he was not sleeping much on this investigation and the continued effort to find Lannie. He again said, "We will find your niece, just a bit more time." We left Ismail's office thinking he really is a good cop and is giving this particular case his devotion. Unlike the other officers, Ismail was Muslim and the only time he took off from the case were quick bursts of time to put in his prayer time five times a day and grab an hour of sleep here and there.

After two days, Jerry decided to call Inspector Ismail. As luck would have it, he was sitting down with Lannie and Kang



Manny Divina (Courtesy J. Howe)

at that time. He had been trying to contact us at the hotel, but the hotel told him we had left.

Kenny Danial Kang

When we entered Inspector Ismail's office, Lannie and Kang were there. Lannie jumped up and hugged me. I was so happy and relieved to be with her. I reached over and shook Kang's hand and introduced Jerry to both of them. Inspector Ismael said, "Lannie is safe and insists she is not being held against her will. Everything seems to be OK."

At first I thought this is all a misunderstanding and, if she wants to stay here, I can at least tell her mother and her aunt that Lannie is well and OK. Jerry was not as quick to conclude all was well. He asked Inspector Ismail to get Kang away from Lannie for a couple minutes. Ismail quickly agreed to Jerry's request.

Before Kang, Jerry and Ismail left the room, I called my wife and told her we were with Lannie. My wife told Lannie to go home! As the phone call ended, Lannie sat down and grabbed my hand and said that she would return home with me. Inspector Ismail entered the room and told Lannie to make the decision to go with Mr. Kang or her Uncle. Inspector Ismail then made a video asking questions about whether she was harmed in any way or held against her will, and he wanted statements signed and dated by her.

Lannie was fearful and basically wanted no part of saying anything negative against anyone. She told me that Mr. Kang still had her passport.

I went to the room where Kang was located and asked him for the passport.

He said nothing, but his look told me more than any words could. His look told me that she was his property and would be leaving the building with him. My look must have told Kang something as his look turned to fright. He backed away, ducked and tried to get away, and I was after him as he ran out of the room.

Inspector Ismail saw what was happening and told me that he would take care of getting the passport and the situation was diffused. The Inspector then told Kang to get back in the room. Ismail got the passport. Kang ran out of the room and made for the elevator. NBC was getting all this on video. After seeing Kang's behavior, the Inspector evidently came to the same conclusion as I did. He wanted to know if Lannie wanted to add anything more to her statement. Lannie, however, wanted nothing more to do with saying anything negative. She wanted only to go to the condo and retrieve her belongings.

Dr. Ng Kok Kwang

Enter Dr. Ng Kok Kwang, who seemed to be the head of the sex-slave trade business. In front of the NBC cameras, he explained how well the girls were treated. The contract they signed was for eight years. The girls are charged for training, transportation, food, lodging and security. Security consisted of being locked up 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They work for six days a week, 14 hours a day. At the end of their contract, they would have saved nothing after expenses were deducted.

On our way out of the police station, Dr. Kwang told Lannie that she had caused a lot of disruption in the business,

a big loss of money, and a great loss of face. Religen was very disturbed about the way I had pushed around her husband, causing him loss of face.

I didn't remember pushing Kang around at any time and would swear to that in a court of law. The NBC guys said they had me on tape pushing Kang around. I must have been so upset that I just did not remember doing it. NBC was worried about the Chinese trying to save face by attacking us, so we left Pinang that night and flew back to the Philippines. Once back home, Lannie did not eat for a couple of days, and we began to slowly understand how scared she was and how much she was in shock.

NBC was worried about Lannie's safety. They wrote a wonderful letter to the U.S. State Department in an effort to get her to the U.S. to do a half-hour interview with Ann Curry on the Today Show. This failed and we ended up sending her back to Cebu. Meanwhile the intimidation had already started by the traffickers threatening the family with a suit to recover the money lost for transportation, training, housing and food. We told the family not to worry as the Philippine National Police told us that attempting to bring suit would result in an admission they were involved in the crimes of illegal recruit-

ment and human trafficking.

No charges against either illegal recruitment or human trafficking can proceed without a complaint from one of the victims. Lannie has been afraid of risking further trouble with really bad people and has not filed a complaint. Deputy Regional Chief Jacob Gutib Macabali understands the situation very well and has said he'll try to give Lannie time to heal and then maybe she will realize she really should press the case.

A couple of weeks after her arrival home, Lannie's fear and nightmares have tapered off and she says she will file a formal complaint with the various police departments in the Philippines and Malaysia.

Post Script: Lannie has pressed charges against the recruiter and receiver. Troop says that conviction on human trafficking results in a life sentence.

"Christianity Today" (March 2007) estimates that 27 million people are being victimized by modern-day slave trading, called human trafficking. About 17,000 are trafficked annually into the U.S. They are mainly being funneled into two forms of servitude: sex and labor. Examples of organizations formed to counter human trafficking are: International Justice Mission, World Vision, Shared Hope International, Project Rescue, Anti-Slavery International and The Salvation Army. 🙏

The Lost Dutchman Mine ?

by Chuck Pickard (Missoula '48)

The 1948 fire season wasn't that much, but quite a few jumpers did manage a jump or two. For the majority of us, it was doing duty on the many districts all over Region 1.

Another first year man and I did get called for a two man down on the Nez Perce. We jumped the Travelaire and landed without a problem. The fire was on a sidehill, about a quarter acre, and putting out a lot of smoke. We ringed it and knocked it down. By 5 p.m. there wasn't much left, so we decided to get inside the line and plow. Heck, we had it almost out by midnight. At daybreak, we went over it again and declared it out by 10 that morning.

According to the map we were close to the northeast corner of the Dixie Ranger District. We located what was marked as a trail along a ridgeline, but it soon disappeared. We decided to drop down toward the creek bottom and were facing about a ten mile hike to the Dixie Ranger Station. We made pretty good time, and the going wasn't bad in spite of no trail.

About half way, the creek began to drop in a series of small falls and then leveled out. The area was lined with big cedars, and on one side of the creek stood a small cabin. Closer examination showed it to be in a falling down condition. There was no door and inside we found bunk beds, shovels, picks and a small iron stove. Outside, there was a lean-to with small saplings growing up through a table. The table had a couple of plates, cups and silverware laid out. There were pots and frying pans. It was like time had stopped a long time ago.

We searched downstream a ways and located a mine. It had been dug into the sidehill. It was about five feet wide and just under head high. We didn't enter, but our light showed the shaft to be about 30 to 40 feet in length. There were more hand tools inside the entrance. Nature had taken over the area, and the brush and small trees were waist high. It was obviously a hard rock mine, as there was no evidence of any sluice operation.

Our inspection was brief and we left. For the remaining walk out, it was uphill all the way. We came to a guard station at the end of an old road, called the Dixie Ranger Station, and were flown out a couple of hours later.

I talked with Ranger "Highpockets" Higgins about the mine we'd found, and he said he had heard about a mine in that back country before the war.

Nothing was ever heard again about it. Like so many small mining ventures in the Salmon country, the war came along and swallowed-up that part of history. Was it a good strike? We'll never know. 🙏



Chuck Pickard (NSA file)

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

CALIFORNIA REPRESENTATIVE Mary Bono (R) wants convicted arsonists to be forced to register with a national database similar to one used for sex offenders. Bono's proposed MATCH Act, for Managing Arson through Criminal History, would require convicted arsonists to report to authorities each year where they live, work, or attend school. Their photos and fingerprints would be maintained in the database. If the convicted arsonist fails to comply with the statutes of H.R. 1759, they will incur a criminal penalty that includes a maximum term of imprisonment of more than one year. Representative Bono said the idea followed the deaths last fall of five Forest Service firefighters battling the Esperanza Fire. The man charged in that fire is also accused of setting nearly two dozen other fires between May 16 and October 26. States including California, Montana and Illinois already have their own state arson databases, but a national database would help alert authorities when convicted arsonists move into an area. According to Representative Bono, "Tracking criminals of this nature that have high recidivism rates will allow our officers to more

efficiently investigate new offenses." The bill has widespread support in the law enforcement and fire communities. Representative Bono is in her 5th term, serving the 45th congressional district in the Palm Springs area. She was first elected to Congress in 1998, after a special election was held to fill the seat left vacant by the death of her late husband, Sonny Bono.

Just when I thought I would probably not write again about global warming for a while, **Chuck Mansfield** (CJ-59) sent me an excellent response to some of my previous comments on global warming. Chuck states in his response, "The requirement for understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of science has diminished as time has gone on." To that I would add that it would seem the teaching of ethics has also diminished over time. I have been thinking about graduate school for some time and out of a half dozen programs I am interested in applying to at various units of the Montana University System and the University of Denver, only one program at Montana Tech requires a course in ethics, and that course is only one credit. Somehow the world would be a better place if students were required to take at least one course in ethics. I was required to take environmental ethics as an undergraduate. The Professor was a radical environmentalist. While I see the world in a much different light than the radical environmentalists, I learned a lot in that class. I wish more business majors would take that class.

Former Billings, Montana Mayor Chuck Tooley has given Al Gore's global warming presentation to 20 audiences and has returned to Tennessee to teach the presentation to the next group of 200 presenters.

Elsewhere in this issue is the story of the NSA Vietnam trip earlier this year written by Mary Pickett. Many of you probably knew Mary's late husband Vinnie Frezzo. Vinnie was a 1966 graduate of the University of Montana Forestry School, served in the Air Force in Vietnam, and later worked on a graduate degree in Range Management at the University of Montana. He flew for Johnson Flying Service, Strand Aviation in Kalispell, and Minute-man Aviation in Missoula. He ran his own Italian Restaurant for 10 years and in 1996 became Chief Pilot for Lynch Flying Service. Vinnie lost his life on Barker Mountain, south of Great Falls, Montana, in a plane crash on May 31, 2000. ☹

Please Tell Us When You Change Your Address

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

Where Have You Been Hiding, D. B. Cooper?

by Sheridan Peterson (Missoula '53)

Remember D.B. Cooper? He was the guy who hijacked a Boeing 727 some 35 years ago and parachuted into the woods somewhere south of Seattle with \$200,000.

Well, the FBI is still looking for him. That's what **Sheridan Peterson** (MSO-53) of Santa Rosa, Calif. found out when he returned home from his computer class recently. Stuck in his door was a calling card from Mary Jean Fryar, special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She had scrawled above her name: "Please call. Thank you."

Peterson recounted his encounter with the government.

At the time I was 77 and living at a senior center in downtown Santa Rosa. The previous year I had moved there from Deer Park, Washington, where I'd spent the past four years writing a lightly fictionalized eyewitness documentary of the Vietnam War.

The next day two women in look-alike formal attire showed up at my door flashing their Secret Service badges at me. "I haven't seen one of those since I was with the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi," I said. I had gone there during the summer of 1965 to set up a freedom school and got arrested for taking part in a protest march through downtown Jackson. At the time, the FBI was partial to the white segregationists.

Actually, the FBI had good reason to suspect me. Friends and associates agreed that I was without a doubt D.B. Cooper. There were too many circumstances involved for it to be a coincidence.

For one thing, I could have known all about the 727, for in the early 1960s, I had been a technical editor at Boeing—and on top of that I was an experienced skydiver.

I was president and founder of the Boeing Skydiving Club, and I later jumped at the Issaquah Sky Port, earning an instructor's license. Fellow jumpers remembered me as a maverick—for example, I had a penchant for experimenting with homemade bat wings. At that time, it was a flagrant violation of both FAA and U.S. Parachute Association regulations.

There were those who recalled the time I jumped with a 50-pound sack of flour between my legs, leaving a white, powdery stream in my wake. And, oddly enough, Issaquah was where the elusive Cooper got the parachutes for his getaway.

At the time of the heist, I was 44 years old. That was the approximate age Cooper was assumed to have been, and I closely resembled sketches of the hijacker. But what was even more incriminating was the photo of me simulating a skydiving maneuver for Boeing's news sheet. I was wearing a suit and tie—the same sort of garb Cooper had worn, right down to the Oxford loafers. It was noted that skydivers don't ordinarily dress so formally.

As for my colleagues at Lake Washington High School in

Kirkland, a Seattle suburb—where I later taught English and journalism—they agreed that I had a lot of off-beat ideas. A real maverick. Nothing I did would surprise them.

But where was I? That's what the FBI wanted to know. During the summer of '65, the Federation of Teachers had sent me by Greyhound bus to Mississippi to set up a freedom school in Amite County.

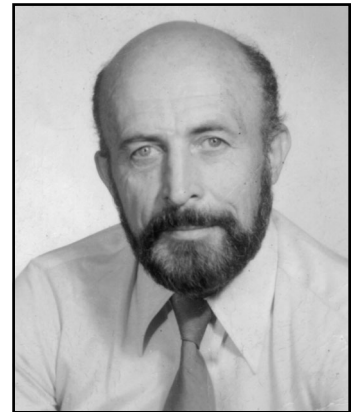
From there, the U.S. Department of Defense had sent me to The Philippines to teach dependents at Clark Air Base. I had moved to Vietnam by June 1966.

Checking my tax returns, the FBI noted that from June 1966 to August 1970 and from March 1973 to April 1975, I had worked for a number of U.S. contractors and government agencies.

The two FBI women wanted to know where I was located from August 1970 to March 1973. There was no work record during that span. The heist occurred in November 1971; they assumed that I had come back to the states at that time, hijacked the 727, and returned to Vietnam by 1973.

"Good try," I said. "However, I was in Nepal at the time, and I can prove it," I added, handing them copies of my children's birth certificates. "They were born there."

But why Nepal? It seemed implausible. The women weren't buying it. I explained that I had gone to the mountain kingdom to write a protest novel of the Vietnam War. As a refugee advisor for the U.S. Agency for International Development, I had been in the very thick of things. For 2 1/2 years I had lived in a mud hut near the base of Annapurna.



Sheridan Peterson 1976 (Courtesy S. Peterson)

One's Civil Liberties

Next the FBI agents asked for my DNA. They needed to be sure. Things just didn't seem to add up. I protested that it was a violation of my civil liberties, but then I relented; it would only confirm their suspicions if I refused. They asserted they had Cooper's DNA, which they collected from several cigarette butts he had left on the plane.

The younger of the two women held out a plastic container with two cotton swabs. "Simply rub the inside of either cheek," she instructed. The other agent wanted my fingerprints. Both women insisted on details. They wanted the names, dates and locations of everywhere I had worked since November 1971.

For more than a week, I didn't tell anyone. Who would have believed me? D.B. Cooper! He was a legend and after such a long time—33 years. So many books had been written about his escapades, and at least two movies had been filmed. Then I remembered the calling card. That was proof. I could show it to someone and ask how that person thought I'd received it.

I wondered if I would have believed it. No, probably not.

While speaking on the phone with my son, Mark, in Boise, Idaho, I said quite casually: "The FBI thinks I'm D.B. Cooper."

The revelation came as no surprise to him. He'd known that for a long time. Soon after the 1971 heist, agents visited his mother at her high school counseling office in Bakersfield, Calif. They wanted to know where her ex-spouse was; she said she had no idea.

"Could he have been D.B. Cooper?" they asked. "Yes, that sounded like something he'd do," she said.

Under Their Noses

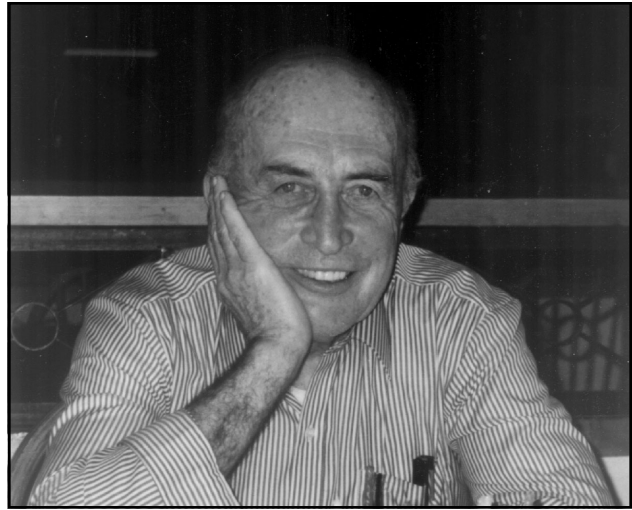
For thirty-three years, the FBI had been looking for me, but it wasn't as though I'd been hiding. I had returned to the U.S. several times since then and found employment. In 1975, prior to going to Saudi Arabia, I'd worked for the Santa Rosa Public Schools and taught journalism at Napa Community College. Fleeing the Iranian Revolution in 1979, I'd settled in Redondo Beach, near Los Angeles. I was special assistant to Northrup University's dean of the College of Engineering.

Later I headed an Upward Bound program for disadvantaged youth in the Watts section of Los Angeles. Then I was a technical writer for Garrett Aircraft, Inc., in Compton, a company under contract with the Department of Energy to purify uranium for nuclear weapons. After an in-depth investigation, the department granted me a top-secret clearance.

Returning from Papua New Guinea with an injured back in 1983, I'd resided in San Jose and worked for Verbatim in Sunnyvale as a technical writer.

In addition to my clearance for the DOE at Garrett, I had been cleared by Bell Helicopter in Tehran, Iran; Bechtel in Papua New Guinea; the Agency for International Development in Vietnam; and the Department of Defense at Clark Air Base.

Where on earth had the FBI been all this time? Isn't there a central clearinghouse?



Sheridan Peterson 1999 (Courtesy S. Peterson)

Did Cooper survive?" the older woman asked. "What do you think?"

"No, absolutely not," I replied.

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing, he wasn't a skydiver," I said. "Obviously he'd never made a delayed freefall. Probably never jumped from a plane before ... certainly not a 727."

"How's that?"

"Well, someone had picked up two main chutes and two reserves at the Issaquah Sky Port as Cooper had instructed," I explained. "Whoever picked them up didn't know anything about skydiving rigs. No one was there at the time, so this guy grabbed a skydiving rig and a pilot's emergency chute as well as a genuine reserve and a dummy reserve used for instructional purposes.

"The shroud lines of the dummy reserve had been daisy chained so that the canopy could be shoved back into the pack easily."

"That wasn't Cooper's fault," the agent retorted.

"I know," I said, "but D.B. did everything wrong. First of all, he picked up the pilot's chute instead of the skydiving rig. Falling at an estimated speed of over a hundred miles per hour, the canopy's opening shock would have been devastating. Skydiving rigs are packed in such a way that they open gradually, lessening the opening shock.

"Furthermore, Cooper took the dummy reserve. Any skydiver would have known that immediately.

"What's more, as far as we know, he had neither an altimeter nor stopwatch, and besides he quite obviously had no idea what the elevation of the terrain was. Consequently he wouldn't have known when to pull the ripcord.

"There was also an 18-knot wind. Not being a skydiver, he probably opened the chute immediately, and at 10,000 feet, the wind would have carried him possibly 30 miles out over the Columbia River. I'm assuming that there would be a downdraft over the river sucking him into the water. That probably accounts for the \$500 found buried in the sand along the shore. The bills were traced to the money D.B. had stolen."

"How about you?" the agent asked. "Would you have

survived?"

"Absolutely," I said. "First of all, I'd have known which chute and reserve to take. Besides," I added, "I would have had an altimeter and a stopwatch and had an approximate idea of the elevation of the terrain."

"I would also have insisted upon a helmet and have been wearing boots and warm clothing. And above all I'd have gloves, warm gloves. What's more, I'd have needed a flashlight to spot my landing."

"Cooper was not foolhardy. He was stupid," I declared.

Jumping From A 727

"What's it like jumping from a 727?" the younger woman asked.

"Yeah. What's it like?" the other said.

I laughed mockingly, shaking my head in disbelief. "I've never jumped from a 727," I said.

Perhaps my tone of voice was somewhat misgiving, because they later asked again. This time I got my two skydiver log books in a stained tattered cloth cover. They dated back to my very first sport parachute jump August 1962 from a Cessna 175 at Auburn, Wash. with the Boeing Skydivers.

All 270 freefalls were recorded right up to the last one from a Cessna 182 in Spokane, Wash., June 28, 1999.

Over the years I had jumped from a Ford Trimotor, a Travelaire, a C-47 Dakota, an H-34 Helicopter, an HUB Huey Helicopter, a Soviet Y-5 and all models of the Cessna, but never a Boeing 727.

The agents wondered: How had I started making parachute jumps? Had it been with the military?

No, I was a Marine in World War II, and had learned to jump with the U.S. Forest Service's Smokejumpers in Missoula,

Mont. I made 30 static-line jumps into the Northwest's vast wilderness areas in order to fight forest fires.

Several days later, one of the agents paid me a second visit. She assured me that there were no matches for my DNA. However, they were checking me out at my address the previous year in Deer Park.

I was perplexed. Surely they didn't think that I, alias D.B., had been camping out there for 33 years, hiding out in the woods. What were they expecting to find—membership in one of many Aryan Nation guerrilla bands scattered throughout the Northwest? Did they think I was some sort of right-wing bigot?

On her way out the door, the agent asked: "Why have you been living in so many communist countries?"

"Only one," I said. "Only China." There was a government that I loathed, for I had witnessed the worst of the Tiananmen massacre at Muxidi, some 4 kilometers west of the square in 1989. Two of my students at the College of Economic Management had been killed that fateful night.

"How about Vietnam?" the agent retorted.

"I was on the capitalist side there," I replied.

So that was it, I thought. D.B. Cooper might simply be the cover story. That makes sense. But what was the real story? What did they want of me? Would I ever know?

It was like wanting to know who killed Kennedy, or whatever happened to the weapons of mass destruction, or what was Saddam Hussein doing in a hole in the ground. Where were his ardent supporters? Would the truth ever be known? I wondered all of these things, but I knew answers wouldn't come anytime soon—that was for sure. ☹

Sheridan "Pete" Peterson can be contacted at: eagleeye@sonic.net

BOOK REVIEW

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Fire in Montana

Greg Martin, author

ISBN: 0595388159, paperback, 118 pp., iUniverse, Incorporated, \$13.95

Bob Sallee calls the book "a piece of fiction based on the Mann Gulch Fire."

Sallee, the last living survivor of the 1949 blaze that killed 12 smokejumpers and a former jumper, is one of 26 men and women listed by author Greg Martin as contributors to his 118-page self-published account of the tragedy.

Too bad Martin didn't listen.

One of the 26 reviewers listed by Martin is **Laird Robinson** (MSO-62), a former Missoula smokejumper foreman. He was the technical adviser to and researcher with Norman Maclean, author of "Young Men and Fire." That book is the most definitive popular account of the Mann Gulch tragedy.

Robinson says he thoroughly reviewed Martin's manuscript prior to its publication, and then sent the author a list of suggested revisions.

"I don't believe he used a single one," Robinson says. "He obviously had made up his mind as to what he wanted to say."

Another former Missoula smokejumper foreman **Fred "Fritz" Wolfrum** (MSO-53), who's also among the 26, says the author told him he originally wrote the account as a movie script. And, he was told by Martin, Robert Redford (still another of the 26) was interested in developing it as a motion picture.

"I listened to him, and I looked over the script versions which were entitled 'Decision at Mann Gulch' and 'Circle of Fire.' But, I didn't contribute anything to the book," Wolfrum says.

One of those Martin acknowledges in his book declines to be identified because, he says, he doesn't like to discourage budding authors.

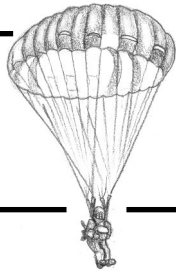
He recounts a visit with Martin who, he says, "told me all about the project and of Redford's interest, but didn't ask me a single question."

The author describes himself as a former fire company captain who has fought wildfires throughout the western states. And, he writes, he has "hiked, boated and flown through every location in this true and tragic story."

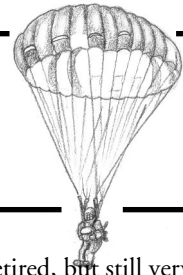
Sadly, Martin didn't take advantage of opportunities to learn smokejumper culture or operations through his travels or the contacts he lists in the book.

The author freely invents dialogue. On page 23, for instance, he portrays a jocular relationship between Missoula smokejumper overhead **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) and **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41). No one who has known those crusty veteran jumpers could ever conceive of a cozy, kidding exchange between them.

Continued on page 20



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Bob Clithro** (MSO-50), **Ron Vari** (Associate), **Doug Houston** (RAC-73), **Victor Nicholas** (FBX-69), **Hugh H. "Corky" Benton** (NCSB-57), **Bill Kolar** (MSO-59), **Doug Bernhard** (NCSB-58), **Greg West** (FBX-64), and **Starr Jenkins** (CJ-48) who just became our latest **Life Members**.

I was working on some membership business this morning (Jan. 28) and a new Life Membership came through the web store. The gentleman joining as a Life Member was an Associate member of the NSA. Associate Life Members are fairly rare to us and to have that type of support for our mission is appreciated.

I wanted to find out more about Ron Vari and sent him an email. Here's what I found and I would like to pass this on as an introduction to a new Life Member:

"I heard about the NSA from a few retired Special Forces guys living in the Missoula area. Although I am not a smokejumper, I would like to support the association.

I am a retired Force-Recon Marine of 21 years. During my career in the Corps, I compiled 367 static line jumps (mostly water-jumps) and have attended the civilian AFF Course in Deland, Florida. I currently have my own Security business, employed mainly in PSD details and Security Contracting overseas. Although I reside in Florida, I plan to retire in the Missoula area. The folks who spoke about the Association and the life of the smokejumpers really had an impact on my decision to become a life member.

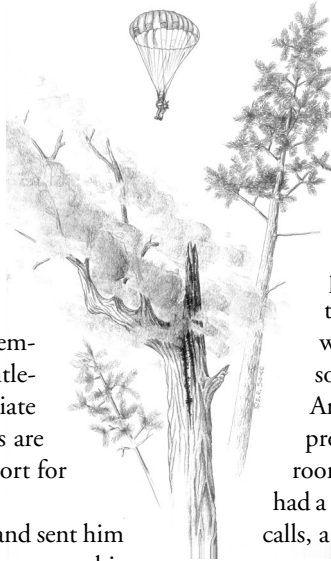
I appreciate the opportunity to become a donor and yearly contributor to your Association. It is a cause that I truly believe in."

Ron—we certainly welcome you to the NSA!

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is adopting a new moniker—**CAL FIRE**. **CAL FIRE** responds to more than 350,000 incidents each year and protects more than 31 million acres of California land.

The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base site has been accepted into the National Register of Historic Places by a panel of authorities in Washington, D.C. Acceptance of the base into the National Register is a confirmation of the site's national significance in U.S. history. The site is still at the center of negotiations with Josephine County who took over the airfield in 1986.

Frank Fowler (MSO-52): "On February 7, *Books and Books* of Butte, Montana, held a book signing for my book—*High-mountain Two-manner*. Three ex-jumpers living in Butte showed up, and we had a great time getting acquainted.



Bill Morin (MSO-46) is retired, but still very active. **Marvin Amundson** (MSO-47) is also retired, but hasn't slowed up a bit. He and his wife do a fantastic job helping with the foster children program. Marv and I worked together just before we retired, but I hadn't seen him in 25 years. **Eric Shelton** (GAC-92) was the young one of the bunch. He owns a distributing company in Butte, delivering pasties (a meat and potato pie) and tamales. He looks like he could still be working on the fireline. We all plan to have lunch some time soon."

An update from **Gary "Tex" Welch** (CJ-60) on his progress in his battle with cancer: "I just made my room reservations for the reunion in Boise. Sure have had a lot of support from the Old CJ Crew. Lots of phone calls, a few cards and a few prayers. I appreciate each and every one of them. This has been an ordeal that I hadn't bargained for, but I think I will emerge a better man. For once in my life I have realized the true value of friendship and know that I will be a better friend for it all."

An update (April 11) on **Gary "Tex" Welch** (CJ-60), who is battling cancer. Email comes from brother, **Larry Welch** (CJ-61): "After spending most of the last five months in the hospital, Gary has had the last couple of weeks at home. He came back for a check up and checked out good with no infections. His Dr. said the chances are good that there will be no leukemia left. This is very encouraging & we all have our hopes and spirits up."

April 19th update from Larry: "Good news, Gary got back his biopsy and there were no leukemia cells. He is suppose to come back for a biopsy every month. They said that if he does not have a relapse in the next two years, he should be cured."

Clay Morgan (MYC-74): "(I was taking) a trip in the Trimotor from McCall to Grangeville for some special anniversary. Jim Larkin was at the big wheel. I sat next to **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43), who was McCall's first foreman. He told me about a trapdoor 'gallows' invention, which McCall was developing back in the day, to drop jumpers through the bottom of the airplane. The spotter was supposed to pull a big lever. Johnson said the device was never used and lay behind the Old Barracks for years, next to the Bear Safe. He also told me about being McCall's Foreman during WWII, when the Conscientious Objectors were working as jumpers. Said the COs were polite, and he ran a nice base. But when the war ended, former paratroopers showed up. 'They took over. I couldn't tell them to do a damn thing.' I remember that **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) jumped into Normandy and **Del Catlin** (MYC-47) jumped on Corregidor.

Then Mr. Johnson looked out the window of the Ford and saw all the clearcuts below. He said, 'The forest looks like a plucked chicken!'

It almost ruined his day.

"Speaking of history, on June 28, my dear wife Barbara will launch aboard the space shuttle Endeavour on a 14-day mission to the International Space Station. I'm going to be quite busy with NASA and family in Florida at the time, but I'm going to try to arrange a BYOB gathering for all our friends on some public beach a day or so before the flight. I know there's a reunion in Boise a few weeks before launch, but Greyhound can get you to Florida in less than four days."

Jerry Dixon (MYC-71): "Recently talking to **Rick Hudson** (BOI-73) I found out his son Garrett has just been accepted to be a smokejumper. This will be Rick's last season (35 now) and his son's first."

Jerry also recommended a new book, *Fire in Montana* by Greg Martin.

"This book is about the Mann Gulch disaster of August 5, 1949. The story explores many aspects of the lives of the smokejumpers who died there. We meet the jumpers and their families. There are also sections about Helena Trailriders who rode horses through this area just before the fire exploded. This book tells about their lives before the disaster. It is an interesting read."

Martha Gonzalez (Associate): "Just wanted to thank you for working it out to send my subscription to the Netherlands. I think I get it nearly as quick as I would in the states. I really appreciated this April issue with the large article by **TJ Thompson** (Missoula '55) on my father, *Paperlegs*, in India."

Bob Hough (NCSB-51): "I just read the account of your Saigon trip. I flew many missions over Vietnam in B-52s. Stationed on Guam during the Vietnam evacuation, we adopted four Vietnamese children. One of our daughters just went for a visit in December 06."

On December 27, 1971, an Air America C-123 was reported missing and later presumed to have been shot down. "**Animal**" **Ed Weissenback** (CJ-64) was one of the kickers on the aircraft flown by pilot George Ritter and copilot Roy Townley. It was thought that the plane had strayed into an area where the Chinese were building a road in Laos, and the area was heavily fortified with sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons.

Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64) recently forwarded a copy of a letter Ed wrote to fellow Gobi jumper, **Dick Zediker** (CJ-64), shortly after Ed's arrival in Laos. Ed was encouraging Dick to apply for a flying job with Air America.

"Dear Dick,

I have finally arrived in Vientiane (Laos) after eleven days of hopping from Seattle to Tokyo to Taipei to Hong Kong to Bangkok to here. The setup here is terrific. As of late they've been hiring civilian pilots with a low number of hours flying time. You're crazy if you don't whip an application on them.

Johnny Kirkley is in Okinawa at the moment, and so I am staying at his villa with another guy. We've got servants,

air conditioning and all. Man, this is hard to take. Kickers are making about \$1400 a month. Pilots are making half again and in some cases double. Get married first, though. It's a lot better over here if you have a wife.

Get your head out of your tail and get on the stick. I think you need an instrument rating too. Write soon.

Animal Ed"

Fred Donner (MSO-59): "A friend in our church just died, and after the viewing there was a small gathering at the family home. A son of the deceased is engaged to a girl from rural Oregon, and a neighbor of the deceased had been in Oregon as part of a congressional study on forest fire money spent by BLM and USFS. He was describing the Biscuit Fire landscape aftermath. My ears perked up, but I said nothing. Quite full of himself, he then began telling her about firefighters and smokejumpers, as if he knew a lot about them. (He didn't.) Although within earshot, I avoided looking at them as he waxed eloquent. Then I heard my wife say, 'That's quite interesting. My husband, Fred, over there was a smokejumper.' Later she said to me, 'Too bad you weren't looking. You would have seen an embarrassed jaw drop five feet as it hit the floor!' Another illustration of the need to avoid running your mouth in front of strangers."

Dale Matlack (Pilot): "In 1953 I was a Fire Control Aid stationed at West Yellowstone with the National Park Service. I lived with the detailed jumpers from Missoula in an old Ranger Station, just inside the gate at West. The squad leader was **Tom Milligan** (MSO-51), and the crew included **Chuck Viviano** (MSO-53), **Don Heinicke** (MSO-51), **Fran Polutnik** (MSO-52) and **Art Flick** (MSO-53). I was present when Scotty Chapman, Chief Park Ranger, gave them their instructions for the fire season. Looking at Tom Milligan in particular, he indicated that they behave themselves or he would have to go to the hospital with him so that they could remove his foot from Milligan's ass. Apparently they got the message because the year was uneventful. Art Flick was injured during a jump later that season and was assigned to monitor the garbage dump of the nearby Yellowstone Park tour-car garage and barracks. A delinquent bear kept breaking into the mess hall. Sure enough the bear returned and Art shot him. I remember this well as I was scheduled for the same job that night, but ended up spending it in town with a girl friend whom I later married. I often wonder what might have happened had Art not got the bear that night, as my girl friend left town the next day for home. Jerry Wilson was the pilot for the detail flying a Fokker aircraft.

Jerry Dixon (MYC-71) completed the last leg of a 1,000-mile ski trip between Seward and Unalakleet, Alaska, along the Iditarod Trail on the evening of March 9. Jerry has skied different sections of the Iditarod Trail over the past six winters. The most recent leg completed the adventure.

An update (April 11) on **Gary "Tex" Welch** (CJ-60), who is battling cancer. Email comes from brother, **Larry Welch** (CJ-61): "After spending most of the last five months in the hospital, Gary has had the last couple of weeks at home. He came back for a check up and checked out good with

no infections. His Dr. said the chances are good that there will be no leukemia left. This is very encouraging & we all have our hopes and spirits up.”

Doug Houston (RAC '73): “Alaskan native, smokejumper and fire manager **Ken Coe** (FBX-80), made March 31, 2007, his last day as a Alaskan BLM employee. Kenny jumped from 1980 to 1996, performing in many capacities during his career and was the lead rookie trainer in 85, 86, and 87. Kenny and I jumped a memorable fire on the Deschutes in the 80s. What made it memorable was the packout. It was a small fire that didn't take much to put out, leaving an awful lot of stuff to packout, along with a chainsaw. We divided it up to the best of our ability, although Kenny had an awful hard time getting over logs and navigating his large pack through the lava fields. I just thought that he was a wimp, especially when he fell over backwards off of a log and ended up in the turtle position. I helped him up, giving him lots of encouragement. As soon as we reached Redmond, the packs went

on the scale to see how well we had done in the division of weight. My pack went on first and marked at 98 lbs. Kenny's tipped the scales at a little over 127. So wimp he wasn't, just not a very good judge of equality in the weight division. Hats off to Ken for a long career in fire management and enjoy retirement.”

Max Glaves (MYC-47) is recovering from artery surgery on March 27th, and hopes to be well enough to see everyone at the Boise Reunion in June. “He received his latest issue of *Smokejumper* magazine in the hospital today and the article about Paperlegs Peterson was a cheerful note. Thanks for a great magazine and a lots of great memories.”

Jon McBride (MSO-54): “I have just had a call from the American Hiking Society. They confirmed that the NSA Trail Maintenance Program is the recipient of a \$4000.00 grant for the purposes of purchasing new equipment for the use of our volunteers. I would like to thank **Bill Ruskin** (CJ-58) and **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) for their personal efforts in securing this grant.” 🐼

Mega Fly

by Jon Paul (Kawczynski) Frisch (Fairbanks '96)

In September of 2005, I swapped my Alaska job for one in the Garden State. On October 18, 2006, a New Jersey based research and development team took their passion for parachutes to an unprecedented level. They successfully engineered, packed, rigged, deployed, and

recovered the world's largest ram-air parachute, now infamously called the Mega Fly. The team's success will play a key role in safely deploying heavy aerial cargo resupply to forward based troops and humanitarian relief scenarios.

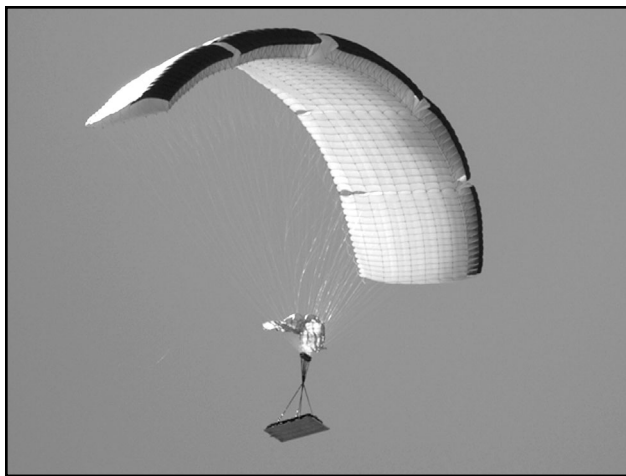
Having a hand in developing the Mega Fly was a good deal, so here is a story for all of you who are a parachutist first and a firefighter second.

Why build a 30K autonomous ram-air cargo parachute? The future. Scud running door bundles through rugged terrain is risky business. Okay. It is a US military program sponsored by Soldier Systems Center (affiliated with the US Army) in Natick, Massachusetts.

What does it take to build a 30K system? You spend days grinding your teeth waiting for the next gnarly hung cargo run and never turn down a jump. You spend nights promising your wife you might be home in the next three weeks (just one more chain). From the get-go I started building autonomous cargo and personnel parachute systems. I also packed ram-air canopies ranging from 360 to 9000 square feet. Why? It's just too darn fun.



Jon Frisch (Courtesy J. Frisch)



Mega Fly (Courtesy J. Frisch)

The 30K Mega Fly canopy has a surface area of 9000 square feet, utilizes five miles worth of suspension line, and is a fully elliptical gliding parachute. The wingspan of the canopy is over 170 square feet, just 20 feet less than a Boeing 747.

The airfoil and slider are both modular. Each of the five sections weighs roughly 200 lbs. This enables speedy recoveries (speedier than A-22 bundle landing in the spruce) and saves recovery time when low attention span calls for lopping off suspension lines! The excitement comes from utilizing one canopy and not clustering six G-11's prone to damage after extraction. Mega Fly allows the choice to be autonomous, locking GPS, or remote control. This satisfies even the most safety conscious (or paranoid).

I did some of my best thinking during an Alaska spring refresher course. As I looked up into the round tower, it hit me like a widow maker:

Why don't we just PRO (proper ram- air orientation) pack the canopy? And why not do it while it is suspended from the hooks? Why not flake it and lower it to the ground...then stuff it into the D-bag?

Done. Standard. Who could have thought this would be the packing method for the monolithic airfoils? It almost seemed impossible for our small team to pack a canopy roughly the size of a football field. Of course, you can't do it if you don't dream it up first.

Dropping 30,000 lbs. takes time and dedication. The team started with a 500 square foot canopy and worked incrementally to 9000 square feet. There were times when it all seemed impossible. To paraphrase Ben Franklin, you just find 10,000 ways that don't work.

I can only imagine what it was like when the Bureau of Land Management pushed for ram-air operations. I would love to have been a part of that scene. Many of us would.

Before you know it, 100 years of aerial cargo support will have gone by.

We will be remembering historical events such as the Berlin Air Lift, Operation Provide Comfort and Alaska's fire season of 1988. Those of us on the receiving end of resupply will celebrate the history. For me, resupply always meant hope. Supplies hucked from above enabled us to beat down

the enemy, giving us hope in seemingly dismal situations.

If you ever stopped working to watch cargo resupply, raise your hand. 🙋

Jon Frisch is a veteran Marine who spent a decade jumping fire with adult attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Eventually Jon learned to blast out his creativity like a full blown flame thrower, igniting new challenges (instead of extinguishing). Jon now works for the largest military supplier of personnel/aerial cargo parachute delivery systems in the world. You can find him grinding away in the research and development/testing department or rallying with his wife and two dogs outside of work.

Jon can be reached at: paracargo@hotmail.com

Gold -----> Ashes----->?

by Bob Boyer (Redding '67)

Once upon a time,
A time not long ago,
A jumper was a hero,
He jumped both high and low.

Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho,
Were all his battle cries,
R-5 said, "Send the Hotshots,"
As the jumpers they did sigh.

'69 was a teaser,
'70 was a better show,
'71 was a bummer,
'72 f--- no!

I started as a rookie,
A poge, a ned, a snook,
Advancement to the sopwith,
To get the head Feds shook.

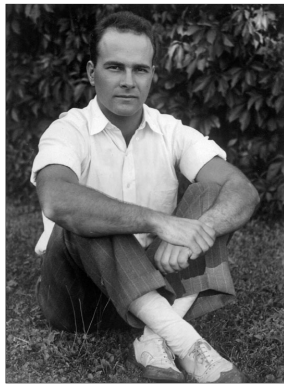
I've seen a little fire,
Excitement here and there,
Ass-chewins from a squadleader,
Sensitivity ala-chair.

Now I'm terminating,
It's been fun I'll admit,
But fires unseen and greener grass,
Might make me give a shit.

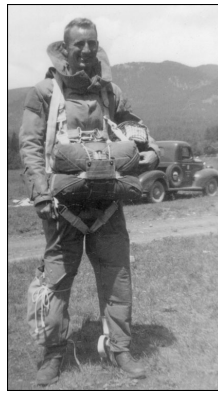
Too all you would-be-jumpers,
Tuck your chin and count to four,
For there's better years ahead lad,
So kneel and kiss the floor.

Don't 10-19 your attitude,
Or 10-7 the nomex suit,
Just keep that T-10 handy,
And pucker for a toot.

I'll see you on that fire,
Beyond the rising sun,
When jumpers once again will be,
Advanced to #1.



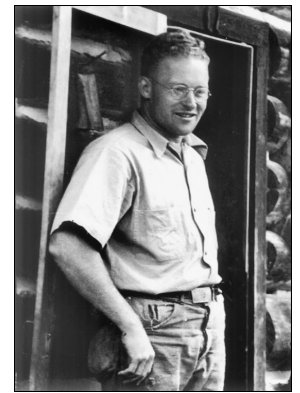
Lee Hebel



George Leavitt



David Kauffman



Oliver Perry



CPS-103 Smokejumpers 1943-1945



CPS-103 Reunion July 2004, Hungry Horse, Montana



Roy Wegner



*Sitting L-R: Wayne Kurtz, Ray Funk, Don Unruh, Vic Peters
Standing L-R: Ivan Holdeman, Norman Kauffman, Jim Brunk,
Ned Arnett, Wesley Matson
June 1945*



Dick Flaherty & George Leavitt



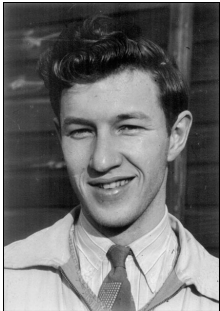
Forman Glenn Smith & Wagner Dodge



Forman Bill Wood



Byrn Hammarstrom, Phil Stanley & Gordon Ratigan



Robert Painter



Tedford Lewis



Roy Piepenburg



Earl Schmidt



Gregg Phifer



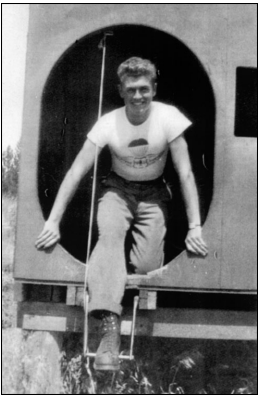
Wilmer "Bill" Carlsen



Spotter with Norm Moody



*Eagle Parachute
Noted for
Tremendous Opening
Shock*

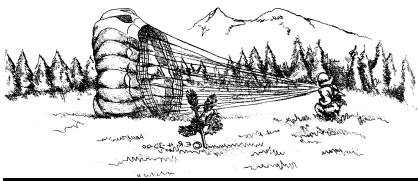


Jim Brunk

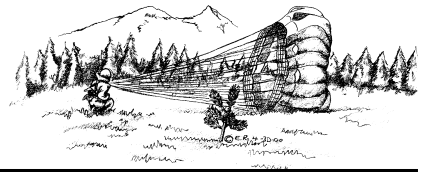


Joe Coffin

All Photos Courtesy NSA File



Checking the Canopy



Tom Decker
(Idaho City '64)

Mae Wests and D-Rings

PARACHUTES MALFUNCTION. A parachute that deploys but doesn't open is a "roman candle," with no fire! The same malfunction is also called a "streamer." A parachute that deploys and then turns inside out is an "inversion," the result being that the chutist descends backwards, and the sorry jumper must do a backwards roll to avoid injury.

Dreaded and colorful names all, but none to match the "Mae West," the slightly risqué equivalent to the more technical "line over." A parachute with a "line over" has one or more shroud lines slipped over the top

of the chute to blossom not one canopy, but two! Jumpers dubbed the parachute malfunction a "Mae West" by its similarity in appearance to the famed movie star's prominent breasts.

As I remember the standard operating procedure for a malfunction—bear with me here, it's been a while. The jumper was to "check the canopy" and, if not there, then "pop" the reserve chute. With one hand, the jumper pulled the reserve chute's D-ring handle. With the other, the jumper "held" the reserve's canopy to keep it from flying out and entangling in the main chute's suspension lines. The falling jumper—by now an expert at multi-tasking—then threw the reserve parachute clear of the offending main chute. Trainers said, "It might work," since the ensuing result was not always predictable. The reserve chute sometimes tangled with the main. With both chutes deployed—and hopefully opened—the jumper lost steering control of the main and drifted where the wind would take him. Then sometimes the deploying reserve chute snapped air into the collapsed main; the jumper then had two chutes to deal with... obviously better than none.

The standing joke was that if a malfunction occurred, the jumper was to "hang onto the D ring" handle of the reserve...and if he were able to do that, the jumper could keep the "D ring" as a souvenir. If he lost it, and most did, there was a \$1 charge. Jim Lindell got a Mae West on a practice jump, pulled the reserve, and we watched the D ring fly, never to be seen again somewhere over the Idaho City dredge tailings. Jim said he didn't care and gladly ponied up the one-dollar fine.

Life has its malfunctions, and for the life of me, I can't think of any as colorful as a full-blown Mae West. The failures of life that once seemed remote—because of youth, income, and control—literally become all consuming. How to regain control? How to pull off a decent landing? Are there any walk-a-ways? Where's that D ring when I need it?

Jesus didn't talk about what to do when the chutes of life failed. He washed feet, healed the sick, forgave the sinners, and told others to pick up the cross and follow him. To show the way, he walked the talk. Some would say that he held onto the D Ring. We're still looking to grasp it. Hoot! 🦉

BOOK REVIEW

Continued from page 13

In addition, the book is rife with grammatical errors and careless mistakes.

Unfortunately, Martin's research is worse than his writing. Most egregious of all is his recounting of the events leading up to and then culminating in Mann Gulch on August 5, 1949. There are many errors in his recounting of that day and night.

This reviewer contacted five sources listed by Martin. Of them, only Roger Jansson, son of the late Ranger J. Robert Jansson and his wife Lois, was complimentary of the book.

"I gave him a copy of remembrances

my mother wrote, and he stuck pretty much to the facts in it," says Jansson. "It was fictionalized and not a great work of art, but he struck pretty close to the truth as I know it."

Martin took liberties with facts, presumably to enhance the drama for a motion picture script. But once he decided to publish his account as a book, he should have excised the contrived dialogue and returned to original sources to ensure the accuracy of his account.

And, Bob Sallee says, "If anyone calls me Bobby, as Martin has others referring to me frequently throughout the book, I'm

gonna smack him with my cane. In all of my life, my grandma is the only one who ever called me that."

SOME ERRATA

Grammatical: Martin describes an "arrival Canyon Ferry," rather than "arrival at Canyon Ferry" (p. 16); a "loan attendant," rather than a "lone attendant" at a gas station (p. 34); a wooden tool handle is checked for "spits," rather than "splits" (p. 47); Dodge "waived" his arm (p. 86); it's the "great northern planes," rather than "plains" (p. 98); and Martin refers to jumper Joe Sylvia by his correct name on page 112, and in the very next sentence he becomes "Silvia."

Smokejumper Culture and Procedures: A static line becomes a "static cord"

Continued on page 32

A Busy Season

by Don Hertzog (McCall '48)

In the summer of 1944, after our junior year of high school at Caldwell, Idaho, **Lyle Rogers** (MYC-48), **Ed Case** (MYC-46) and I started working for the U.S. Forest Service in McCall. I was assigned to the Krassel Ranger District clearing trail, and I believe Lyle and Ed went to the Big Creek District. Eventually we all became smokejumpers.

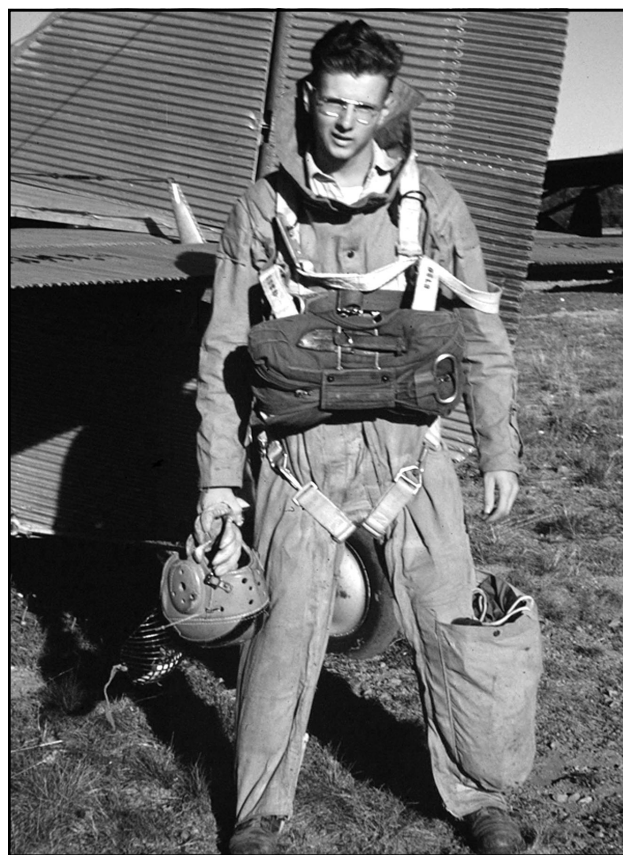
In 1945 and 1946 I again worked at Krassel, at times working with smokejumpers assigned project work in our area. In 1945 many jumpers were conscientious objectors, neat guys with a tremendous work ethic. They were men whose religious belief prohibited fighting or killing others, but who were supportive of our nation's WW II effort. They served as medics in the armed services and as smokejumpers and other hard to fill positions.

In 1946 Ed Case was one of the jumpers who tackled a fire in our district and, after they packed out to the road, I picked them up and drove them to McCall. Despite seeing Ed's 105-pound pack, I still thought this was an easier way to fight fire than having to climb up to them. After returning from Korea in 1948 and fighting three fires as a jumper, 1949 was my most exciting year.

In late May 1949, Lyle Rogers and I drove from the University of Washington in Seattle to McCall. That year was a bonanza for me so far as fire jumps went. Training was shorter, requiring mostly conditioning, review of safety and fire suppression, and three practice jumps instead of seven. There was a movie producer from Washington State College who produced *Telephone Creek*. It starred eight of my fellow jumpers and is now available on VHS. It isn't too bad. Since a hot fire season was not expected, the hotshot boys and the film crew were shipped out to Big Creek Ranger District for project work. Not being on the "favored" crew, I was assigned to menial tasks around camp when the fires began coming in like crazy. There is justice after all.

On July 6, 1949, six of us jumped the Jug Creek Fire on the Payette Forest: **Dale Fickle** (MYC-45), **Bernard St.Clair** (IDC-48), **Burton Lenker** (MYC-47), **Monford "Monte" Brooks** (MYC-48), **Ladd Sutton** (MYC-48) and myself. Monty got a splinter driven through his wrist. I pulled it out with a pair of pliers, and we bandaged it up. We could see McCall from the fire but ended up carrying our 90-pound packs three miles to the road. There was no trail, so it took us most of the day. Groan and moan.

On July 11, four of us were sent to a small fire in Bear Basin on the Salmon: **Lonnie "Curley" Rea** (MYC-46), **Del Jones** (MYC-48), St. Clair, and myself. The fire was located in a basin nestled between two rounded peaks. We jumped on one and hiked through the saddle to the other where the fire was located. We worked until everything was under control, then Curley suggested we go back to the jump spot, have some supper and sack out until daylight. He led the way in the black



Don Hertzog (Courtesy D. Hertzog)

of night, and I brought up the rear. After a while I smelled smoke and found my tools. We had veered too high and, instead of crossing the saddle, walked around the peak to precisely where we had started.

Two days later, on July 13, **Virgil "Red" Greene** (MYC-48) and I were called out on a rescue jump to Tumble Creek. **Ralph Wilde** (MYC-46) had jumped with three others and, on landing, hit a rock and sustained a severe back injury. Our spotter was **Stewart "Lloyd" Johnson** (MYC-43). As we surveyed the scene, he decided to attempt a helicopter rescue. They were growing in popularity as rescue vehicles, and he thought it could land at the spot. To my knowledge that was the first use of helicopter rescue in Region 4. I think we only had access to a little Bell two-person unit but figured they could tie a stretcher to the skids. How we've improved since then. I breathed a huge sigh of relief. I'd been on that same spot before and, although the spot was good for jumping, getting out was a long descent down a very steep hill, then a raft trip down the Middle Fork for several miles, followed by 65 miles of rough road. Besides, I knew that Ralph had probably fudged his weight a bit. There was no way he was under the 180-pound maximum. I liked Ralph a lot and knew such a trip would be tortuous. I wasn't real sure I

was up to the job. The good part of this story is that Ralph survived, although he didn't jump anymore. Since we didn't make the rescue jump, Lloyd had the pilot fly us directly to Cub Creek and a Class B fire on the Salmon Forest. Greene and I got it out in good order.

On July 17, ten of us jumped a large fire on Stoddard Creek on the Salmon. **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), **George Schreiber** (MYC-47), **Francis Doffing** (MYC-48), **Charles Blanton** (MYC-47), **Earl Dodds** (MYC-49), **Jonathan Scott** (MYC-48), **Ed Kyle** (MYC-48), Greene, St. Clair and myself. The jump was to a 9,000-foot peak and made for a fast descent. After working most of the night and the next day, a packer arrived. He would lead us all out but didn't have enough pack animals to take all the gear. The walk out was long and tough. We left our camp about 1:30 p.m. and hiked down to the Middle Fork of the Salmon. We crossed the river at about 3,500 feet elevation, then climbed to a 7,000-foot saddle where a plane dropped us some dinner. Included in the drop were steaks and some large frying pans. The steaks were larger than the pans! It took about hour to cook and eat, and we started out on the remainder of the trip. It was nearly all downhill, so there was a lot of running and cutting switchbacks to beat the other guy. We got to the road about 1:30 a.m. Total distance: 33 miles in 12 hours, less the hour for dinner. Elevation change: 9,000 to 3,500 feet, then up to 7,000 feet and back down to 3,000 feet. Being short of gear we doubled up on the sleeping bags and bedded down. A truck picked us up about 7 a.m. for the 65-mile drive to Salmon.

Back at McCall we finally got a little rest but were nervous about the number of large fires going on. While on standby, we spent considerable time making up hundreds of lunches every day to be dropped to ground crews. Many went to crews on Huntz Gulch, a 1,000-acre fire that had been started by a careless fisherman or camper. On August 6, eight of us were called to jump the Huntz Gulch Fire. Lloyd Johnson thought we could stop a lead before it got out of hand. As we loaded into the plane, a man came running out to the Trimotor and told us two Missoula jumpers had jumped into a fire and had been burned. (Thanks for the good news, fella!) By the time we got to the runway, the pilot learned from his radio that the count was five. When we had gained altitude the number was eight and by the time we got to Huntz Gulch it was up to 13. Thus, we learned of the Mann Gulch tragedy. Very sobering and, as we approached the fire with that in mind, very intimidating. The smoke from Huntz Gulch looked like pictures of an atom bomb blast. The column of smoke rose about 6,500 feet above the ridgetop and had a mushroom head. It took the old, slow Ford 15 minutes to fly around it. Finally Lloyd picked our spot, and we lined up for the run. **Don Smith** (MYC-48) and I were to be the first out. Don had had a sprained ankle, and this was his first return to fire duty. The tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife. The engines went silent, the tail lifted and "Smitty" went out. As I started to follow, Lloyd grabbed me and pulled me back in. He wanted to see how Smitty did. Poor Smitty. After checking his own chute, he looked around and couldn't find me. He was sure I had not opened and plunged to my death. Three of us followed on the next pass, and we could hear Don screaming from 1500 feet

below, "Where's Hertzog?" When I answered, the cuss words were intense to say the least. He had hung up in a tree, so I still beat him to the ground. With that fire roaring up the next canyon over, he wasted no time coming out. Jumpers on that jump included Smitty, Greene, Fickle, Jones, Rea, Lenker, and **Roger Davidson** (MYC-47). On that fire I saw the whole side of a canyon explode into a firestorm in about five seconds. This was a hillside a mile high and mile long. Later, about 2 a.m. we were taking a ten-minute break and most of us fell asleep in the fire trail. When a tree gave a "crack" before falling, the posted guard and seven of us were awake and 50 feet down the trail before it hit the ground! To cap this story, we did stop the fire on the ridge where we jumped, but it subsequently got away from the ground crew down below and became one of the largest ever to that time.

Other less memorable jumps I made in 1949 included West Fork Monumental Creek on August 11 with Virgil Greene, the Middle Fork on August 15 with seven others, Bear Creek on August 17 with three others, and Cliff Creek on August 19 with seven others. On August 19 eight of us jumped on the Payette Forest: **Walter Brafford** (MYC-49), **Jesse Rainey** (MYC-48), **Fred Pearson** (MYC-48), Davidson, Jones, Greene, and Sutton. Greene and I were the last two out. As I went out the door my eyes locked on an outcropping of rock on one side of the shale-covered mountain. I seemed to be drawn irresistibly toward it. I was trying to get above it where the outcropping was only about five or six ft. high. On the downhill side it was closer to 30 to 50 feet. As I approached for the landing, Virgil passed right under me, and I dropped about 10 feet as his chute stole my air. I slammed into the cliff, badly spraining my ankle and knocking me unconscious. Luckily, my chute draped over the top and kept me from falling down the cliff side. When I came to, Fred Pearson, a relatively small guy, was climbing the cliff to help me. I was upside down, and Fred had to help me out of my chute and over the outcropping, and subsequently to our base camp. I was worthless for fighting the fire. The packer had started for the fire even before we did and had no idea how many of us there were. He rode a horse that was pretty skittish and was pulling a packhorse and a mule. I don't think he had ever walked farther than to the coral before in his life, and he was not a happy packer when he had to give me his skittish horse. We had 17 miles to go, six of it with no trail and rough country. That involved jumping the string over downed logs and along steep side hills. I managed to roll the packhorse, crushing my hard hat and other gear. Luckily, the horse came up OK. By the time we got to Big Creek Ranger Station for the ride out, that cowboy was most unhappy. He would have to return for the remaining packs and equipment and send them back with the next truck. I believe this one was my undoing as I made no more jumps in 1949.

You can see we got very little rest that summer. In all, the McCall based jumpers had 386 jumps on 101 fires and Idaho City had 143 jumps on 52 fires. I participated in 11. The forest supervisor complained we were making more money than he was. We had many hours of overtime that helped a lot with college expenses that September. 🙏

Contact Don Hertzog at peregrind@comcast.net



NSA Trail Crew



Team Two Silvertip Creek

JULY 15TH TO 21ST, 2000

Jon McBride (MSO-54), Squadleader, Missoula, MT

Jim Anderson (MSO-58), Morale and Night Life Coordinator, Germantown, TN

Robert Derry (MSO-43), Chief Trail Scout East, Wenatchee, WA

Charles Brown (IDC-56), Tool Master, Wichita, KS

Bill Kolar (MSO-59), Trail Maintenance Consultant, Dillon, MT

Joe Kroeber (MSO-62), Chief Cook and EMT, Jamestown, ND

Terry Danforth (MSO-59), Fire Safety Officer, Bozeman, MT

They came from all directions to work on the trails. Most of this group were veterans from the summer of '99. The few who were new to the NSA trail project were very experienced woodsmen and fit right in to this high performance team.

After a rousing "Good Deal" send off in Missoula by **Fred Brauer**

(MSO-41) on Saturday, the team proceeded to Spotted Bear Ranger Station for the night. **Dave Owen** (MSO-51) met the team, gear was packed for the Mule string, and everyone prepared for the early morning hike into the "Bob."

After spending the night in "Stalag 13," the Spotted Bear Bunk House, morning came early. After a special breakfast at the cook shack prepared by Joe Kroeber, the team cook, we were briefed by Ranger Deb Manley concerning the fire situation. Then we proceeded to the trailhead.

The 10-mile hike up Silvertip Creek to the campsite was without incident, and camp was set up well before dark. Just as dinner was ready, in rode **Hal Howell** (MSO-55) on horseback with his friend Todd, the packer, who owned the horses. Todd was 80 years old and was tough as shoe leather.

Hal was a volunteer in '99, had hurt his shoulder skiing and could

not take on the trail work this year. He was able to ride a horse and volunteered to come in as photographer for team two.

The first night in camp was spent being thoroughly entertained by Todd, the packer. His stories were unbelievable, and Jim Anderson was very proud and took full credit for arranging entertainment the first night. Morale was high, as we hit the sack!

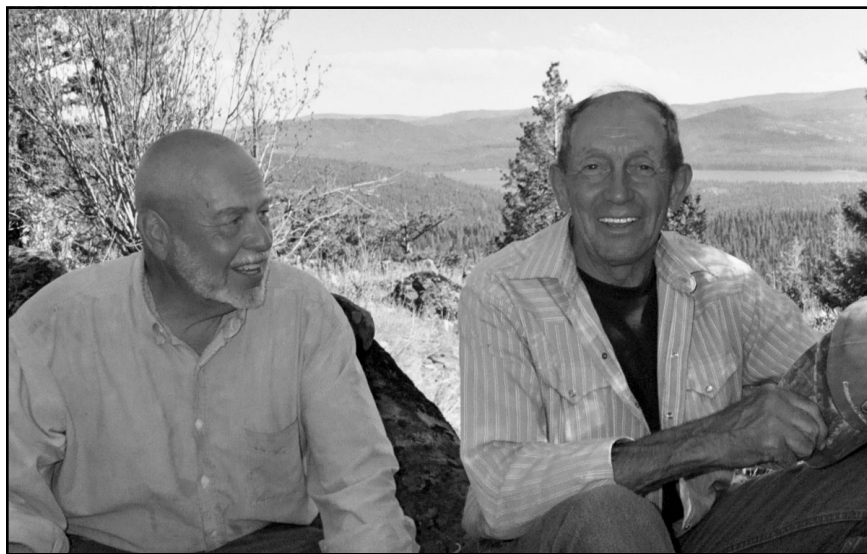
Monday came early and, after a few photo shoots, Hal and Todd were on their way home as we began serious work on the trails.

The week went by fast and the food was outstanding. Joe Kroeber was able to dish out some very tasty meals, and all team members were impressed with his cooking skills. Joe brought along a camp oven that allowed him to bake and propelled him into the major league of backcountry cooking. Joe donated the oven to NSA Trail Maintenance at the end of the week.

Jim Anderson arranged for interesting hikers, who were passing through the area, to visit our camp most evenings and provide a form of nightly entertainment for the team. At the end of the project all agreed that Jim had far exceeded his duties and voted him a "well done" for the week.

As with other teams this summer, we had trouble finding and following the assigned trail. Many of these trails have not been maintained since the 1930s and they are almost gone. Next year we will look for a trail-scout team that would hike all proposed trails and flag them to save time for the maintenance teams.

The weather was perfect, and large fires had not yet developed in the northern Bob Marshall.



Summer 2006: Don Courtney (MSO-56) and Larry Nelsen (MSO-56) taking a break during the total rebuild/repair of the Double Arrow Lookout Tower on Double Arrow Mountain, Seeley Lake MT.

On Friday, the 21st, the Forest Service Packers were on time and our gear was packed out, reaching the Spotted Bear trailhead about five

minutes before we arrived. Dave Owen was waiting for us with cold refreshments!

In summary, the country was

beautiful, the camaraderie was outstanding and most volunteers advised that they would be back again next year. 🌲

Bear Wallow

by Stan Ramsay (McCall '58)

Well, there we were, two thousand feet over Scriver Creek. **Eldon Down** was flying the DC-3. **Herb Corn** (IDC-67) was the spotter and “**Smokey**” **Stover** (MYC-46) was the check spotter. It was early October. **Tony Beltran** (IDC-69) and I were the designated jumpers for this drop. I was first in the door and Tony right behind me. The whole thing didn't look bad at all from the beginning. A smoke was coming from the timber on a small ridge, which was downhill from the road.

Corn began dropping drift streamers over a slight ridge above the road where we had agreed was the best place to land. Corn dropped more streamers to determine the wind direction. The streamers went ever which way.

Well, there happened to be a thunderstorm cell moving in playing havoc with the air currents. Corn couldn't get any streamers anywhere near where they should be. Stover got excited and told Herb, “You've gotta get the guys outta here.” I knew this, and I knew it was getting windy and that it would get worse with that approaching storm. I told Herb, “Next pass get the plane over the spot and I'm leaving.” I figured that would satisfy everyone. I told Tony what my plan was, and we both hooked up and got into the door. I looked at Tony and his eyes were as big as eggs. So were mine, I suppose.

Herb did good and got us over the jump spot. I left the aircraft with Tony right behind me. I don't know, but I think that surprised Stover. It shouldn't have because I never liked regulations and he knew that. Anyway, I opened up, looked down, around, and discovered that the designated jump spot was half mile or more away. Not the first time that had ever happened. However, this was the first time this was intentional on my part.

Well, I recall moving backwards while I was in the air. As we know, if you are moving away from the designated target area you have to turn the canopy around and face into the ill breeze that is blowing you away. I watched the beautiful countryside slide away beneath my White boots and down the canyon. What a ride! I began to look for a place to land. Had to look over my shoulder, saw one clearing now down about three to four hundred feet. Decision, shoot for that big fir tree on the edge of the clearing. Coming in hot. Just past the ridge top everything stopped, no wind and I just settled down real easy. I got up to remove my gear, looked around and here comes Tony Beltran. Tony says, “Followed you all the way down. About all I did was go backwards.”

Now we had to pack up our jump gear and hike up to the

fire. I suppose we landed a mile or more from the fire. I had a little asthma trouble and had to take a pill which helped. We got to the fire and checked it out. Found a small hunter fire smoldering in the duff. Tony and I went looking for our gear which was dropped on the original spot. It's good we didn't land there as the whole ridgetop was mostly rock. Quaking aspen hid most of the rocks from the air.

The fire was a man-caused fire from a hunter. Within 20 feet of the origin of the fire, we found spent shells and animal guts. We put the fire out and woke up next morning with frost all over our sleeping bags. 🌲

Stan Ramsay died of cancer January 3, 2007. He jumped at McCall from 1958-69 and Boise 1970-73.



Stan Ramsay spotting Jim Freeland (Courtesy Denis Symes)

Vietnam: A Country Moving Forward

by Mary Pickett

Reprinted with the permission of the author and the "Billings Gazette" from the Sunday, February 18, issue. Mary was on the NSA Vietnam Tour that took place in January 2007.

As we dropped down out of the clouds over Ho Chi Minh City, the landscape seemed eerily familiar and yet nothing like I'd ever seen before.

Starting with Tan Son Nhat Airport where we landed, names so familiar to Americans of a certain age would surface again and again in a new context during the 10 days I spent in Vietnam on a tour organized through the National Smokejumper Association.

The tour was organized by **Fred Rohrbach** (MSO-65), a University of Montana graduate who is a former smokejumper and Vietnam War veteran and now travels to Asia frequently on business.

When it didn't look like enough members of that organization would sign up to get the tour off the ground, my name was suggested through friends as one of several non-smokejumpers to go along on the trip.

I didn't hesitate to say yes. Not only had I never traveled to Asia before, I also wanted to see the place where my brother and my late husband had served with the United States military nearly 40 years ago.

Being half way around the world and immersed in tropical weather in early January was disorienting at first. It didn't take long for the reality of being in Vietnam's largest city to kick in.

Renamed after South Vietnam fell in 1975, the former capital still is referred to, even by locals, alternately by its current and old names.

The company that organized our tour goes by the name "SaigonTourist."

HCMC is a high-energy, bustling city in constant motion.

Within a few hours of arriving, we were wading into the river of motorcycles that stream through the city's streets night and day. That traffic was by turns an endless source of fascination and terror.

With few traffic lights in Saigon, we were instructed in the Vietnamese way to cross a street—slowly walk into traffic and keep going at a steady pace. That gives cyclists time to drive around you. Suddenly running or stopping could bring disaster.

At the busiest streets in downtown Saigon, young men dressed in bright green uniforms and called tourist police stepped into traffic and politely escorted nervous tourists across the street.

Cars are too expensive for many Vietnamese to own, so motorcycles do the job that cars would.

We saw just about everything transported on the back of a Honda motorcycle including a family of five; children in their school uniforms being taken home by parents or grandparents;



Mary Pickett (Courtesy Billings Gazette)

two 4-foot palm trees; a tall flower arrangement on a stand; hundreds of eggs; and boxes of fresh melons.

Many young female motorcyclists wore scarves or masks over their faces and long gloves past their elbows even in 90-degree heat to protect themselves from tanning.

Bicycles were in a class of their own. One morning we saw a man muscularly pedaling his way through traffic with a sign about 4-to-5-feet-wide and 20-feet long cantilevered out over a cart in front of his bicycle.

High school girls gracefully bicycled along streets in white ao dais, the beautiful national dress of a long tunic over pants.

We quickly were introduced to street vendors selling caps, T-shirts, handbags, knickknacks, woodcarvings and just about everything else. Usually using gentle, persuasive tactics rather than a hard sell, vendors above all were persistent.

One day, our group started wrangling over prices with a group of street vendors during one of our stops.

When it was time to go, we got on our tourist bus with a few of the purchases and set out on a city street. A few blocks later, we looked out the bus window to see the woman we had just been bargaining with seated on the back of a motorcycle driven by a male associate. The woman's arms were loaded with shirts and caps in different styles and sizes and books of Vietnamese coins and stamps.

As we moved through traffic, she held up a book of coins and proposed a price with several fingers. One of our group, **Jerry Timmons** (MSO-62) of Alaska, began negotiating for two books of coins and suggested counter offers by holding up Vietnamese money. He eventually bought a couple of the

coin books and a \$3 shirt after money and purchases were passed through the open window of the moving bus.

Traveling in three small buses with English-speaking guides, we hit major tourist spots in and near HCMC.

At the War Remnants Museum, formerly named the Museum of Chinese and American War Crimes Museum, visitors get the winning side's view of the 1960s war in graphic detail.

We also toured the massive Reunification Palace, formerly the headquarters of the South Vietnamese presidents. After walking through lavish official rooms upstairs, we went into a basement bunker filled with 1960s-era communications equipment.

The next day we drove about 15 miles to Cu Chi to see part of the complex of tunnels from where Viet Cong planned and staged raids on Americans and South Vietnamese. The tunnels had an underground hospital, dining room and kitchen, with vents to direct cooking-fire smoke far from the tunnels to hide its location.

Above ground, we walked by a crater carved by a B-52 bomb, a display of jungle booby traps and a firing range where tourists can shoot off real AK-47, M-16 and M-60 guns at targets.

When Cu Chi was opened to tourists, a part of the tunnels was rebuilt to accommodate less agile visitors. Even so, they were plenty dark and cramped when we crawled through a short stretch.

After two days in HCMC, we flew north to Danang, the fourth largest city in Vietnam. We touched down at the airport that, during the late 1960s, had been called the busiest airport in the world when it included a large U.S. airbase.

We stayed at The Furama Resort on the famed China Beach. When it was built 10 years ago, the Furama was the first luxury resort built in Vietnam. A decade hasn't dimmed its appeal, great food and excellent service.

One morning we drove to Hoi An, an old trading port that is listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Undamaged by war, the town has buildings and bridges built by Chinese and Japanese who did business during Hoi An's heyday.

Then it was back to Danang to the Cham Museum to see its display of Indian-influenced stone religious carvings dating back to the 7th Century. The day ended with a climb up Marble Mountain capped by religious shrines.

On our way to Hué, we drove along Danang's modern, graceful waterfront and headed over 1,600-foot Hai Van Pass.

At the top we took a short walk up a trail. On top of a concrete bunker along the way was a mortar of uncertain origin. No one touched it. Old ordnance left over from the war continues to be a problem in Vietnam. While we were there, one English-language newspaper told of four Vietnamese fishermen who were killed when they accidentally set off a wartime bomb.

Hué, the former imperial capital of Vietnam, is a cultural center with a wealth of royal tombs and religious sites.

We visited several, including the burial site of Emperor Tu Duc located on peaceful park with a lake and open green spaces.

One morning we boarded a dragon-prowed tourist boat and chugged up the Perfume River to the Thien Mu Pagoda, where Buddhist monks now live.

A car that a Thien Mu monk drove to Saigon in 1963 be-

fore setting himself on fire in protest of the Diem government is on display.

We spent several hours at the Citadel at Hué, a vast, former residence of Vietnamese emperors. In 1968, it was the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Parts of it, including the Purple Forbidden City, were destroyed during the fight to retake it from the Viet Cong. Bullet holes from that battle still can be seen.

The highlight of Hué was a royal dinner at a local restaurant. We all dressed in silky Vietnamese robes and put on headgear appropriate to our station in the royal court. One couple chosen to be king and queen for the night ate on a raised platform at the front of the banquet room.

Speaking of food, we ate traditional Vietnamese fare at most meals. At every lunch and dinner, we were served five or more courses of an endless variety of vegetables dressed with light sauces, soups, spring rolls made from translucent rice paper and fish, pork, chicken or beef dishes.

Nuoc mam, or fish sauce, was served as a dipping sauce at every meal.

One question I've been asked several times since getting back to Billings is "Do the Vietnamese like Americans?" The answer is "yes."

Traveling through the former South Vietnam, we were received nearly universally with exceptional warmth.

Katherine Dayton, a 1992 graduate of Billings Central Catholic High School, spent several weeks in Hanoi before and after the smokejumper tour.

She found people friendly and helpful there, too.

Any American 50 to 70 years old takes a complicated set of emotional baggage to Vietnam. The Vietnamese our age and older probably had as many complex feelings as we did about the time our countries, as allies and as enemies, were at war.

Several participants of the NSA trip had served during the Vietnam War and were coming back for the first time.

Larry Lufkin (CJ-63) of Olympia, Wash., was one of them. Lufkin was in Vietnam with the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division from April 1968 to May 1969. Some of his friends who had served in Vietnam have told him that they would never go back. Lufkin respects those who don't want to return, but he was glad to have made the trip.

"The war is long over," Lufkin said, "and it is time to move on." 🦋

Where Are These Guys?

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

Ben S. Corley	(MSO-55)	Ralph R. Myers	(MSO-55)
Thomas H. Greiner .	(MSO-55)	Thomas S. Newman	(MSO-55)
Lawrence D. Gunn ..	(MSO-55)	Richard O. Patten ...	(MSO-55)
Richard G. Hancock	(MYC-55)	Robert D. Payne	(IDC-55)
Dan Hayes	(CJ-55)	Eric A. Peto	(MSO-55)
John B. Keith	(MSO-55)	John W. Richardson .	(IDC-55)
Jim Kesterson	(CJ-55)	Ralph B. Roberts	(MSO-55)
Bill L. Klunder	(MYC-55)	Brian C. Scheuch	(MSO-55)
Bob Lawrence	(NCSB-55)	James A. Seely	(MYC-55)
Jack Long	(CJ-55)	Richard S. Smith	(MYC-55)
Jerry E. McKinney ..	(MSO-55)	Wade Thomas	(MSO-55)
James M. Mitchell ...	(MYC-55)		

Ski Trip/Reunion in Utah

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

It was great ski trip, but, better than that, a grand reunion for 13 old guys and five of our wives.

So, this was a homecoming, to the slopes, to the Forest Service, the military, to good friends, and to remembrances of the exciting lives we'd once led.

We came from Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana and Washington state. Our ages ranged from 60 to 73 and in our group – reflective of our generation – were veterans of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force.

Eight of us had worked together as smokejumpers a half-a century ago. Later, most of us had worn military uniforms or served in mufti in intelligence assignments. We'd soldiered on land, on the sea and in the air over Southeast Asia. A couple of us had even served together.

The jumpers, all of whom had trained in Missoula, represented a variety of occupations from which we'd retired: CIA agent (**Don Courtney** '56), consulting forester (**Fred Ebel**, '57), land developer (**Chuck Fricke**, '61), corporate pilot (**Jon McBride**, '54), stockbroker (**Roland Pera**, '56), airline pilot (**Roger Savage**, '57), optometrist (**Roy Williams**, '60), and government bureaucrat (the author).

And our wives – nurse, teacher, homemaker, businesswoman.

All but one were in remarkably good health. The exception was a retired Air Force pilot with Parkinson's disease. Still, he skis. He falls often, but he skis.

Five of us had retired from the uniformed services and thus retain certain privileges, including the opportunity to stay on military bases and to sponsor friends and family members for on-base guest housing if space is available.

Hill Air Force Base in Ogden,

Utah, is within an hour's drive of eight splendid ski areas, and a fairly easy drive from most of our homes.

So, earlier in the year, one of our gang reserved four three-bedroom townhouses on the base, each with a kitchen, pots and pans and utensils.

First, we needed an off-base place to meet. A Mexican restaurant within a mile of Hill filled that bill. It offered a table that accommodated 18 and a couple of television sets to watch the Super Bowl on arrival day.

But the game was secondary to the gathering. With sidelong glances to the TVs as the teams scored, we recounted long-dead fires and wartime adventures, some of which might have been true, and generally flooded the place with laughter and hot air.

Courtney loves to cook. In fact, each summer he's a chef for veteran smokejumpers who return as volunteers to Idaho and Montana to maintain Forest Service trails.

So, most of our evening meals, based on raw materials from the Hill commissary, were communal.

To those of us who'd served in the military, it was a thrill to once again

listen to the bugles that punctuate the day on a military reservation: Reveille at 7:25 a.m. alerts the troops for roll call; Retreat at 5:25 p.m. signals the end of the official day, followed by the National Anthem; then Taps around 9:30 p.m. to signal bedtime, which we totally ignored.

During our suppers and at bull sessions, we relived the day's runs and our early adventures, of course, but also kicked around our current military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our opinions on the war are as disparate as those in the general population. Some support the Bush Administration's policies, others are adamantly opposed.

There was, however, a telling moment one evening. As the bugle started playing retreat, one of the vets stepped onto the porch, then stood at attention, hand over his heart.

As the notes of the anthem faded away, he turned around to find the other men in identical poses behind him. 🇺🇸

Carl can be reached at smokejumper@adelphia.net



L-R: Fred Ebel, Roland Pera, Laura Fricke, Jon McBride, Ron Larsen (retired R-1 Deputy Regional Forester), Anita Courtney, Tom Blunn (retired FS ranger), Carl Gidlund. (Courtesy C. Gidlund). Neither Larsen nor Blunn were jumpers, but we bring them along to curry their favor in case they get a chance to order jumpers once again.



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (FBX-96)

Spring has sprung in Alaska, with no snow at the shack in mid-April. Our 58 returning jumpers are list-ready as our second refresher winds down.

Eleven of 12 rookie candidates remain after their first day of exploring Fort Wainwright's running trails, enjoying brisk hikes and making new friends.

New to Alaska's rookie training cadre is **Gabe** "Crazy Legs" **Lydic** (FBX-99). Always the optimist, **Lydic** has renamed the trainers' infamous "House of Pain" (a pushup-pullup-situp marathon). **Gabe** insists the dreaded training regimen should rather be known as the "House of Fun." "Just so nobody gets the wrong idea," added **Gabe**.

Over the winter, **Togie** "Big Country" **Wiehl** (FBX-91) married Michelle Vanderpool of the Alaska Fire Service. In one day, **Togie** became a husband, father and grandfather. Reports say Michelle looked beautiful in her dress, and **Togie** was dapper in his black tux. Congrats to them both.

Our fastest 1.5-mile time in 2007 was claimed by **Ben Dobrovolny** (FBX-04). In March and minus 11 degrees, **Ben** ran 7:40, also earning him a mild case of frostnip.

In the realm of frozen winter fun, three Alaskans report an impressive tale of self-imposed adventure and survival, transpiring last March.

Led by **Marty Meierotto** (FBX-94), **Robert Yeager** (RDD-92) and **Chris Swisher** (FBX-03) towed supply sleds behind their respective snowmachines, following frozen rivers for 350 miles (one-way) through the heart of the Alaska Range en route to a remote cabin built by **Marty** (and friends) on the Big River.

At one point, the trio found themselves atop a narrow pass, too steep to descend with their sleds in tow. Tying down loose supplies, they unhooked and launched their sleds in a ghost ride of gear carnage, recovering what they could on their descent into the valley. "All of our sleds were detonated," said **Yeager**. "But we had no choice."

As the sun set, **Marty** embedded his snowmachine in an icy overflow, unable to pry it free from the fast hardening slush. Leaving **Marty's** machine, the trio forged onward to the cabin, returning in the morning to chainsaw the snowmachine from its frozen parking spot. Efforts to rehabilitate it were unsuccessful.

After a week of temps dipping to minus 40 at night, **Marty** used his satellite phone to call **Derek Patton** (RAC-00), just to chat. After a minute or two of polite conversation, **Marty**



asked **Derek** if he wouldn't mind flying his airplane out there to save the lives of three fellow smokejumpers, if he wasn't too busy. **Derek** replied, "Sure" - once his favorite cartoons were over he'd be right along. And so he was. **Derek** promptly plucked **Marty** from the ice, flying him back to Fairbanks. From there **Marty** and **Derek** flew their respective airplanes back to pick up **Chris** and **Robert**. **Yeager** was especially appreciative to see his friends return - he knew if it came down to cannibalism, **Chris Swisher** would not likely die from hunger.

The trio left all their gear behind, planning to return in December to fetch what remains. "We'll be taking applications for the recovery party," offered **Marty**. I asked **Robert** and **Marty**, "If you weren't hunting, trapping, fishing or skiing, was there a point to this adventure?" They stared blankly at me, then abruptly looked at each other, then again at me, shrugging their shoulders. "It was a hard trip," **Marty** said, laughing loudly.

Also in backcountry news, **Jeff Stark** (FBX-03) made a splash in his first winter season of trapping. He reported a bounty of three wolves, 27 marten and two river otters. He also blasted one moose, as did his lovely wife **Laura**.

Meanwhile, back at base we've made some changes. **Chris Silks** (FBX-91) is now our paracargo section head. **Jim Dibert** (FBX-99) was promoted to lead paracargo specialist. **John Fremont** (FBX-05) is our only paracargo rookie specialist in 2007. PC is ramping up for a busy fire season with continuing fuel drops to archeology projects on the North Slope.

Gary Baumgartner (FBX-88) is our new assistant base manager, and **Togie Wiehl** is now our loft supervisor.

Base Manager **Dalan Romero** (FBX-83) reports concerns over pending "deep cuts" in AFS' preparedness budget. "Nationally, Congress is cutting preparedness budgets in favor of funding initial attack, which is directly related to preparedness," explained **Romero**, who feels pending cuts could be short sighted. "The zones will be more directly impacted, affecting our ability to do our job as smokejumpers," added **Romero**.

Not returning to our list in 2007 is **Frank** "The Tank" **Goodson** (RDD-95), hungry for more project work and now happy in Boise. **Pete Hearn** (FBX-02) is spending the season with the Vale Hot Shots in Oregon. **Oded Shalom** (FBX-95) will spend the summer as a saw boss with the North Stars Fire Crew here at AFS, teaching the finer points of jumper chainsaw techniques to a band of wide-eyed firefighters. Filling **Oded's** shoes as lead garden-master is **Rob Miller** (FBX-05). **Rob** is already cracking the whip about dog crap on the lawn, and he

eagerly awaits the arrival of boosters to help in the garden to escape jumpshack doldrums.

Gerry Suomalinen (FBX-06) is soaking up life away from wildfire this summer, hunting and fishing all the way from his Minnesota homeland to Alaska. We look forward to seeing Gerry on his travels.

T.J. Gholson (FBX-04) is nursing a knee after winter surgery and will serve as right-hand man for **Dave Whitmer** (FBX-92), FMO of the Galena Zone. T.J.'s spirit is unyielding, to say the least, and the bros can look forward to a great time if Gholson is on his Galena game. T.J. confirmed that he's considering opening a new spike base in the village of Nulato.

Mitch Decoteau (GAC-78) is missing from our ranks this season. His final retirement is still pending, and he's currently on a detail as a safety officer for the Prescribed Fire Training Center in Florida.

Mitch was a one-time world skydiving champion with more than 5000 jumps and 60 hours of free-fall time. He was also a Marine Corps Corporal and Vietnam Veteran, *perhaps* the last active smokejumper holding this distinction.

In recent years, Mitch was our paracargo section head, keeping the boys of PC in line while maintaining their good faith. Mitch kept a steady flow of DRMO surplus streaming through the jumpshack, outfitting the bros with plenty of bunny boots and all cold weather gear. "For being so ornery, Mitch sure is good with people," commented **John Lyons** (FBX-90). But Mitch is never one to pull many punches, either. "Thanks to Mitch I was fortunate to witness the best free-form rant of parachute instruction I've ever seen," recalled Lyons, describing Mitch's reaction to a young jumper's improvisational malfunction procedures after a bad jump. After several minutes of eloquent delivery, Mitch concluded his speech, scolding, "If you're not going to use our reserve malfunction procedures, just leave the damn thing on the ground." "He has a way of getting to the point when others are content to juggle the issues," added Lyons.

Decoteau's contribution to our crew has improved this organization for decades, and the Alaska Smokejumpers thank you for that, Mitch.

It's also good to have Lyons back in Alaska. JL has returned as a fuels management specialist for the military zone. His wife Ellen is soon expecting their first child. Congrats!

Boise Base Report

by **Quincy Chung** (NIFC-03)

Jump what? That is the buzz, with two jump refreshers done, one to go and fires already starting in Nevada. Well folks, yet another winter has come and gone, and it seems like there was not enough time to take care of the Honey-Do-List. At least there wasn't for me. As of right now, there is one jump refresher and one fire refresher remaining before the Bro's can capture the summer sun in the West. Although the fire season is near, it is hard to grasp with daily temperatures recently differing by as much as 30 degrees. The only thing remaining constant is the ticking of calendar days.

As always, winter and spring in Boise have proven to be a busy place. Echoing from the sewing room this winter was the always familiar buzz of multiple machines running full throttle.

In addition, there have been four new test parachutes; two Atair models, one Paraflite, and one Eiff thrown into the mix of potential jump canopies. Also, as going hand-in-hand with the spring, currently of the original twelve, eight rookie candidates are still fighting through the program. Prescribed fire has been the topic on the board for the last few months with jumpers spawning into the Montana, Washington, New Mexico, Idaho, and various South Eastern states. Furthermore, during the winter, "**Iron**" **Al Seiler** (FBX-85) had the privilege of assisting the Aussies with suppression and prescription alike for 30 + days in the Outback.

This past winter has also proven to be a time for change. A huge congratulation is owed to husband and wife **Dan Zach** (RAC-00) and **Michelle Moore** (MSO-99) in bringing a beautiful life into this world. Welcome Baby Boy **Task**. Also, congratulations to recently married **Mike Haydon** (RAC-97). Mike married another fellow firefighter, Christina Alvarado. Congratulations Mike and Christina. Likewise, **Brian Cresto** (NIFC-04), and long time girlfriend were recently married. Congratulations, Brian and Liz. **Kevin Maier** (RDD-02) purchased a sailboat and sailed the ocean, **Mark Urban** (NIFC-03) explored New Zealand, and **Lisa St. Clair** (BOI-03) traveled to Antarctica for the winter. Congratulations all and welcome back.

Likewise this winter, current Boise Smokejumpers **Dale Springer** (NIFC-01) and **Hans Germann** (RDD-01) spear headed adventure when they and past Boise Smokejumpers assisted one of our own in the Baja 1000. For those who don't know, the Baja 1000 is an epic off-road race that motorcycles, buggies, trucks, VW Beetles, and fabricated race vehicles attempt to conquer as individuals or as teams once a year. The race is usually over 1000 miles and takes place on the Baja California Peninsula in the fall each year. This last fall a former Boise Smokejumper, **Scott Salisbury** (RDD-94), took on that challenge. He wasn't able to run the whole thing, but he is still alive to talk about it.

However, on a more somber note, a few jumpers have decided to move on and spread their wings. **Ryan Jordan** (NIFC-02) has taken a job with the Grand Junction Fire Department; **Richie Campus** (RDD-99) has taken on the challenge of being a boat captain in Hawaii; **Sam Dearstyne** (BOI-06) went back the GJ to be on the Fuels Module; **Steve Frugoli** (NIFC-06) has decided to be studious and finish college; and **Eric Newell** (NIFC-06) has found a different facet of fire. All will be missed this upcoming fire season.

To counter the losses of these fine individuals, selections have been made to fill the following voids: **Todd Jinkins** (BOI-98), Assistant Loft Manager; **Jared Hohn** (BOI-01), Sewing Room Supervisor; **Mike Boomer** (NIFC-01), **Paul Lenmark** (FBK-96), **Shane Roach** (RDD-95), **Shannon Orr** (RDD-92), and **Phil Gerhardson** (RAC-99) have filled the Fire Operations Supervisor roles. Boise also picked up a few rehires and transfers. **Boone Zimmerlee** (NIFC-2001) and **Jake Brollier** (RDD-95) have returned after a brief hiatus from jumping. Likewise, **Alex Abols** (MYL-02) and **Frank Goodson** (RDD-95) have transferred from their respective bases to join the Boise Bros.

From the Boise Base, have a safe and productive fire sea-

son, and we will hear from you all this fall.

Grangeville Base Report

by Robin Embry (GAC-85)

It's the beginning of May, my favorite time of year. The fire season is not "good" or "bad" yet; it's just a much-anticipated event that looms on the near horizon. Twenty of our thirty smokejumpers have completed their annual migration, are healthy, happy in each other's company, and happy to be back at work. The rest of our contingent, made up of students, rookies, and transfers, should be in place by the first week of July.

We had twelve smokejumpers in the Southeast, at various times this winter, working on prescribed fire details. Six jumpers worked on the Idaho Panhandle, two went to Michigan, and three worked on the Nez Perce this spring on hazardous fuels projects. Grangeville will have two jumpers on the Silver City Detail this year.

With a lot of effort and support on the part of many good people (first nationally, and then locally on the Nez Perce NF), we were able to fill some new positions at Grangeville, which will align our overhead structure with the National standard. Special thanks go to Kenda Tribble and others at our personnel office who were invaluable in filling these positions, even in the midst of their own move to Albuquerque.

Congratulations to the following folks in their new positions:

Kelvin Thompson (GAC-95)	Assistant Operations Foreman
Chris Hertel (GAC-91)	Assistant Training Foreman
Ted McClanahan (MSO-95)	Assistant Loft Foreman
Mike Blinn (RDD-01)	Spotter
Matt Smith (GAC-01)	Spotter
Nate Hess (RDD-01)	Spotter
Jason Jones (GAC-04)	Squadleader
Isaac Karuzas (RDD-01)	Squadleader
Clem Pope (GAC-03)	Squadleader
Alessandro Potenziani (RDD-01)	Squadleader
Jodi Stone (MSO-02)	Squadleader
Dan Vanderpool (GAC-01)	Squadleader

Congratulations also to **Mike Ward** (GAC-01,) who accepted an Assistant Fire Manager position at Moose Creek on the Nez Perce NF, and **Kai Friedrichs** (GAC-99), who accepted a Spotter position in McCall.

Joining the Gacsucker ranks for the 2007 season are: **Angela Banfill** (RAC-06), **Amanda Holt** (MSO-06) and **Darby Thomson** (RDD-04). **Will Markwardt** is detailing to us from the Colville NF, **Jody Baxter** is a new hire from Moose Creek,

MEMBER PROFILE: **T.J. THOMPSON (MISSOULA '55)**

A NSA LIFE MEMBER, T.J. started working with the Forest Service in 1953, (age 17), at the St. Regis Ranger Station in Montana. After two seasons on the district, he rookied at Missoula and jumped three seasons before going Airborne until his discharge in 1959.

In 1960 T.J. joined the CIA where he worked until retirement in 1995 as director of Aerial Delivery Operations, Remote Area Training and other research and development programs. He served in many countries working with great people, many of them ex-smokejumpers.

After retirement, he was hired back as a consultant and has just completed writing the complete history of Aerial Delivery Operations for the agency. He commented, "You would be surprised by how many smokejumpers are sprinkled throughout that history and where they left their footprints."

T.J. now lives in Sisterdale, Texas with his wife of 42 years, Margaret,

and their two sons. They own and operate the Sisterdale Tracing Company, and T.J. owns and operates Precision Parachute Recovery Systems. There he designs, tests and manufactures parachute

recovery systems for unmanned aerial vehicles. He has a small factory in Missoula that is run and operated by Lue Yang and some of the Hmong warriors that he served with in northern Laos. 🇱🇦



T.J. packing a 1942 era German Paratrooper chute. (Courtesy T.J. Thompson)

and **Spencer Long** comes to us from the Lone Peak hotshots.

On a sad note, our dearly beloved base cat and termination specialist since 1991, "Turbine," passed away this April. We have been doing an outreach to replace him, but have found no qualified candidates yet.

The Grangeville Air Center building addition has been postponed until mid-September which will probably work out to be better timing for us. Another construction project that is already underway across the parking lot is the new Nez Perce Supervisor's Office and Clearwater Ranger District. We're expecting to see an increase in the demand for smokejumper base tours (up from the usual 2-3 a year) as more of the public will be bound to notice us as they drive by.

Scientists are studying the GAC water supply after the announcement of seven marriages and three new babies on the way at Grangeville. We're still waiting on the test results, but be forewarned if you come to visit us this summer.

McCall Base Report

by Rick Hudson (BOI-73)

Early April indicators for a local McCall fire season are relatively dry at 78% of normal precipitation for the Payette. The unsettled weather of spring will determine how soon we can expect fire activity to begin. Last season the McCall base had over two feet of snow still on the aircraft ramp as compared to an already bare ramp this season.

Early 2007 started the McCall jumper unit scrambling with 25 folks moving to either an upgrade or a new position. This brings the McCall jump organization into compliance with R-1, R-5 and R-6 jump base positions. The result will mean more responsibility and accountability for supervisors and jumpers down the line.

To add more excitement, the government property, where smokejumper housing has sat for 64 years, is to be sold. This has historically been the only affordable housing for 50% of the seasonal jumpers at the base since the property boom in the McCall area began several years ago. Local housing cost for a GS-6 jumper is about \$1200 a month with the median house going for \$350,000. With a busy fire season, a jumper could be gone most the summer, returning every 14 days and only live in the house 20 days.

New positions at the base will be Loft Foreman **Pete Pride** (MYL-83), Assistant Loft Foreman **Brett Bittenbender** (MYL-88), and Assistant Loadmaster **Joe Brinkley** (MYL-98). Filling the spotter positions will be **Ryan Garber** (MYL-00), **Eric Messenger** (GAC-00), **Dustin Doane** (MYL -00), **Andre Mascheroni** (MYL-01), **Forrest Behm** (MYL-00) and **Kai Friedrichs** (GAC). New squadleader positions were awarded to **Craig Martin** (MYL-98), **Jason Class** (MYL-04), **Dan Gustafson** (MYL-98), **Matt Galyardt** (MYL-02), **Todd Haynes** (MYL-02), **Matt Huber** (MYL-02) and **Jason Miller** (MYL-98).

After 33 seasons of jumping and 207 fire jumps, **Steve Mello** (MYL-74) was retiring at the end of the 2006 season... or so he thought. In January a determination of his time-in-service indicated "less than the required 20 year minimum for retirement." **Steve** will be back jumping at 57 years of age and performing squadleader duties for the 2007 season.

Rick Hudson is beginning his 35th consecutive

smokejumper season with 237 career fire jumps. Having survived parachutes FS-5A, FS-T10s, FS-12s and the present FS-14s, his goal is to reach his 600th jump this season with soft landings and no injuries before his retirement next spring.

Ten NEDs (rookies) will begin the six-week training regimen on May 29th. If all complete the training, there will be 70 jumpers at the McCall base.

The three jumper platforms will be Twin Otters 141-Z and 143-Z and Turbine DC-3, 142-Z. One of the Twin Otters will be the Silver City jumpship for the duration of the New Mexico detail, before returning to McCall later in the summer. Pilots **Erick Thompson** and **Will Steiner** are leaving the jumper community to fly elsewhere. **John Stright** moved to the BLM jumpers late last summer to fly for the dark side. Recruitment for pilots to cover R-4 smokejumper aircraft is presently underway.

NCSB Base Report

by Michael Noe (NCSB-91)

The winter brought lots of snow to the Methow valley and there were powder turns for everyone. The heaviest snows fell in early December followed by an epic wind storm that left Winthrop without power for almost three days. We were finally given the blessing to execute the "upgrades" that everyone has been waiting for and filled the three assistant positions, two spotter positions and three squadleader positions. We are expecting a rookie class of eight to start training on the 20th of May. The training will be held here at NCSB and I know our third-year rookie will be happy to see some new faces as will everyone else. The majority of the crew will be working for a BAER(Burned Area Emergency Response) Team falling hazard trees on what was the Tripod Fire. We look forward to having the Casa 212, contracted by Bighorn Airways, return as our jump platform for yet another year.

Redding Base Report

by Nate Hesse (RDD-01)

Getting warmer and drier as the days go on, with limited moisture over the winter, may mean there will be few idle moments here in Redding. This season marks 50 years of excellence for the Redding Smokejumpers. With an extremely dry winter, one can only wonder what may be in store for fire crews in Region 5. May was a busy month, containing two refresher training sessions, a bash for the monumental half century of supplying land managers with aerial firefighters, as well as rookie training for five hopefuls. Funding came through to hire a few more after the initial training had begun, so a few lucky souls headed to RAC for rookie stuff.

Altogether, winter work included fire and leadership classes in addition to teaching courses both at the Northern Cal training center and McClellan training center in Sacramento. The total number of jumpers on the list this season will be 40 strong, despite losing jumpers to other crews, bases, and other undertakings. From an operational standpoint, eight jumpers were sent to Region 8 for RX, some were sent to Sacramento to climb trees for ALB re-check, as well as recertifying the California Highway Patrol SWAT team for their tree climbing skills. **John Casey** (RDD-99), **Rico Gonzalez** (RDD-99), and **Jerry Spence** (RDD-94) put the SWAT team to the test

by simulating a rescue of garbage hurling protesters. Congratulations to **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) and Brian Pontes (RDD-03) who accepted permanent jobs in March.

Calls were made to available jumpers to build a run of jackets and pants for the Loft, while P.C. was toying with hand tool variations and modifications. For the season, our jump ships will include a Sherpa and a contracted Bighorn Dornier. John Lesnik will be our returning pilot. A contracted King Air will serve as our lead plane and air attack platform, in addition to the Cobra Fire Watch Program.

Reports from the winter included a few milestones; **Scott "Jed" Smith** (RDD-02) and Jeana having a baby girl, Sage McKenna, 7 lbs 2 ounces on January 16th. Three marriages took place over the winter. **Darby Thompson** (RDD-04) was married to Agnes in Europe, where a few jumpers included various traveling plans in combination with the ceremony. **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00) and Shelly were wed here in Redding in November. **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) and Kristi had a festive wedding in March.

Unfortunately, some jumpers are moving on. The transferring jumpers from Redding include **Nate Hesse** (RDD-01) and **Darby Thompson** (RDD-04) heading to Grangeville Smokejumpers; **Josh Voshall** (RDD-03) moving to Redmond Smokejumpers; **Ed McGavren** (RDD-02) accepting a job on a Santa Barbara Fire crew. **Casey Ramsey** (RDD-01) vacated his position to pursue his tree business and home building projects in Kellogg, Idaho. Lately, winter stories contain many ventures abroad as well as local. First off, **Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03) did a stint in Arizona giving sport jumping a whirl. **Derek Wheeler** (RDD-05) joined **Mark Urbani** (RDD-06) on a crab boat this winter, hoping to be the next star of the "Deadliest Catch." **Jesse Rowan** (RDD-06) traveled to Italy with his wife for vacation, upon returning, purchased a Harley for his commute home to Reno on weekends. **Kyle Dornberger** (RDD-01) graduated with a Masters in Architecture from Montana State University. Good job, Kyle! **Josh Mathieson** (RDD-94) is closing in on his B.A. in Political Science from Chico State University. **Brad Moschetti** (RDD-06) spent time on the slopes in Tahoe, sparing time to take lessons to fly airplanes. **Sean Hines** (RDD-06) is a new homeowner with rooms to rent for incoming jumpers.

Sadly, **Greg Fashano** (RDD-99) had a slight setback this winter while arcing wide turns on his skateboard in which an act of gravity sent him to the operating room for a plate and screws in the wrist. The prognosis looks like a full recovery by mid-season. **Dan Hernandez** (RDD-85) also went under the knife for a plate and screws in the ankle this past winter. Dan has been betting steak dinners he'll still beat jumpers' scores on the P.T. test during late refresher. In closing, Redding Jumpers are gearing up for another busy season. A personal thanks goes out to the Redding base for years of memories. I'll see you on the next boost.

Redmond Base Report

by Mark Hentze (RAC-00)

I recently returned to Redmond after spending most of the off-season in Colombia. This afternoon a short-angry-ops guy paged me to his office and assigned me the task of composing

this update memo. Because I was in Colombia, I am not aware of what happened at the smokejumper base during the off season, nor do I care what happened at the smokejumper base during the off season. I think mostly they drank beer. Understand that I am writing this annual smokejumper update with only six or seven months of the past year for reference. I am basing everything upon personal observations from the 2006 fire season, personal observations from the first week of this year's refresher training, general gossip, and the end products of the winter work performed around the base.

During the 2006 fire season, I think we jumped more fires, pounded more fires, packed out more pounds over more miles and over taller mountains, and crushed more spinal columns than any other base in the country. Thirty-three Redmond Smokejumpers and a bunch of boosters jumped 94 fires for 435 fire jumps. I have no idea how many cumulative miles we carried our pack-out bags.

Dan Torrance, neither a smokejumper nor a former smokejumper, banned Labrador Retrievers and all other breeds of canine from the premises after **Don Bell's** (GAC-95), a former smokejumper turned pilot, dog made a poo poo on Dan's office floor. We are all relieved that there are no longer Labrador Retrievers running around the smokejumper base "menacing" employees and causing "adverse" effects.

Bill Selby (RAC-91) married an M.D. April 21. We all hope he begins producing offspring soon. **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC-01) performed the wedding service of **Josh Cantrell** (MSO-97) and a charming and attractive blonde girl named Corey. **Jon** and **Jill Hernandez** (RAC-01) are now proud parents of a 15-pound baby girl. Jon plans to start stockpiling weapons now to fend off future suitors. She is already a cutie.

Jeff Robinson (RDD-86) managed to mold a 2"x4", the type of 2"x4" composed of cellulose and that may be purchased at a lumberyard, into the shape of a waist belt. He then covered it with cordura and webbing and attached it to our new line gear.

A couple of years ago, **Mitch Kearns** (GAC-89) transferred from Missoula to Redmond. He bought a nice house and built a cedar fence around it. Mitch reports he enjoys Redmond, and he is proving to be a useful addition to the mother base, although he is reluctant to adapt our leave policy. The two alpha-males continue their clash for supremacy, but now more silently and passively. More recently, **Mark Gibbons** (RAC-87) gained a slight advantage over **Tony Loughton** (RDD-83) when **Mark** purchased a bigger and badder Harley than Tony's. Neither of the two will retire and enjoy the rest of their lives. I suppose they still find more enjoyment in the job than they would in retirement.

Heidi Bunkers (RAC-04) injured her knee last year on a fire jump, and over the winter, her vastus medialis muscle atrophied to the size and shape of a half empty shot-bag. **Heidi** is recovering quickly, and we all hope and expect to have her back to jumping by late refresher.

At last year's t-ball, **Ralph Sweeney**, once known as McDrunk, pile-drove me to the ground from the top of a keg that was on the deck, a total fall of six or seven feet, surely the equivalent of the top rope, before impact. Ralph has since taken to ultra marathons and climbing tall mountains in the Himalayas, and

McDrunk again is all but a bad Silver City memory.

Dave Keller (RAC-04) circumnavigated the globe with a pair of skis via plane, train, boat and automobile. He returned with a Mohawk. **Dave** explained the Mohawk to a few people, but he was mumbling and nobody understood, so the Mohawk remains a mystery.

Dirk Stevens (RAC-91) says he will kick **Tony Johnson's** (RAC-97) fat-ass all over the tarmac the next time **Tony** waves an AgLearn spreadsheet in his face. When Tony is not tracking AgLearn and making AgLearn spreadsheets, he is busy hiring more and more rookies. Tony hopes to begin with 17 eager little workers, and only Big-Ernie knows how many will finish. Rookie training begins in mid-May, and when it is all over, we hope to have 45-50 smokejumpers for the upcoming season.

With those jumpers we intend to once again jump more fires, pound more fires, pack out more pounds over more miles and over taller mountains, and crush more spinal columns than any other base in the country. Hope to see you all this season so we can crush your spinal column too.

West Yellowstone Base Report

by **Cindy Champion** (MSO-99)

Except for the week with temperatures diving down to minus 46 degrees, it was a mild winter in West Yellowstone. Snow levels were below normal but the winter crowd at West

was still able to get some skating days in at the local Rendezvous trails.

With the exception of rookie detailer **Andy Huntsberger** (WYS-06), all seven 2006 rookies (Kevin Ames, Dean Chambers, JT Gilman, Jonah Gladney, Brian Hatfield, Eric Held, Tye Taber) will be returning to West. Overall, there was no attrition this winter, and our total count this summer should be 33, plus five rookie detailers.

As of April 2007 five permanent appointments were filled by **Kevin Ames** (WYS-06), **Justin Horn** (RDD-04), **Derek Hoban** (MYL-02), **Burke Jam** (WYS-04) and **Nick Stanzak** (WYS-05). Additionally, we're happy to welcome back **Joe Rock** (WYS-05), who exchanged positions with long-time jumper, **Carlos Trevino** (WYS-92), who is now the Gallatin East Zone Assistant Engine Foreman. **Cole Parker** (MSO-92) accepted the Air Tanker Base Manager position.

We also look forward to working with our new Office Manager **Melissa McCormick** and **Hans Smith** (MSO-00), who will be detailing as loadmaster foreman. Other folks returning to West after a year hiatus are **Mike Hill** (WYS-95) and **Melanie Pfister** (GAC-04).

Last September we congratulated rookie **Dean Chambers** (WYS-06) on his marriage to his sweetie Beth. Other additions to the crew family include: **Kasidie** born to Chauntelle and **Joe Rock** (WYS-05) and **Thorn Malloy** born to Meagan (Assistant Office Manager, 2006) and **Pete Lannan**. 📌

BOOK REVIEW

Continued from page 20

(p. 7). Standing landings seem to be the usual form (pps. 7 and 76). Martin writes that the '49 jumpers wore red felt hats, rather than the black felt hats they actually wore (p. 19). A woman repairs parachutes (p. 23) in an era when the parachute project was a male-only organization. A two-seater Piper Cub patrol aircraft somehow accommodates a pilot and two "ranger" observers (p. 56). The Mann Gulch jumpers descend on "30-foot" parachutes rather than the 28-footers in use at that time (p. 65). Martin erroneously states the jumpers suited up in the airplane on the way to Mann Gulch, rather than on the ground before takeoff as they actually did (p. 66). They attach their static lines to a "steel bar that ran along the ceiling" of the DC-3 (p. 75). And each jumper on a four-man stick receives his own pat on the leg (p. 75). On page 111, Rumsey is said to have slung his canteen over his shoulder. That's an unusual placement for a belt canteen, which was the model in use at that time.

The Fire: Martin places Sallee and Rumsey working together on a crew out of the jumpers' Nine Mile camp prior to the Mann Gulch Fire call (p. 30). That's untrue; Sallee was on a project on the Clearwater National Forest until summoned back to Missoula the morning of August 5.

On the same page, the author suggests that Rumsey knew Sallee was only 17 years of age, thus legally too young for the job. Not true, says Sallee; "I never told anyone."

Martin reports that a note left by fireguard James Harrison at Meriwether Cabin says, "Gone to fight fire, Jim." (p. 60). According to the Report of the Forest Service's Board of Review, the note actually said, "Gone to the fire, Jim."

Martin graphically describes a wound suffered by smokejumper foreman Wag Dodge as he landed: "He didn't feel any pain yet from the elbow gash, but he could see blood oozing from his jumpsuit sleeve" (p. 75). Sallee says the cut was clean; there was no blood.

On page 77, Martin says Cooley, who spotted the Mann Gulch jumpers, was alarmed at the smoke column as the drop plane left the fire. That's an original "finding" by the author. Nowhere in the official investigation was there any indication that the fire was menacing during or shortly after the jump.

"Wag shouldered his pack," writes Martin on page 81. Not true, says Sallee. Dodge wasn't carrying one.

And, according to the investigation, it's also not true that Dodge saw smoke below them while he and smokechaser Jim Harrison were at the jump spot (p. 84) Nor is it true that the jumpers' view of the Missouri River Canyon was hidden by heavy ground smoke (p. 86) as the crew headed downhill.

"There was never any smoke in the gulch until Dodge lit his escape fire," Sallee says.

Dodge didn't call a halt to talk to his crew (p. 86), but gave commands over his shoulder as he walked, according to Sallee who says the only time Dodge stopped was to light his so-called escape fire.

On page 89, Martin describes Dodge igniting that fire with waxed waterproof matches. He actually used book or "gopher" matches.

On the next page, Martin writes, "Dodge lights two escape fires." That's another original "finding" by the author; every other account has him lighting only one.

During the investigation, Dodge reported that someone responded to his suggestion that the crew join him in the rescue fire with, "To hell with that. I'm getting out of here." Martin writes (p. 90) that the crew heard Dodge, but ignored him. Sallee says Dodge himself was the only one who heard that remark.

Sallee characterizes the author's page 91 description of his escape from Mann Gulch with Rumsey as "all wrong. Walt wasn't pushing me with his head, and when he finally made it through the rock crevice, he collapsed. And, Diettert wasn't waiting his turn to follow us. He was 10 to 20 yards up the hill to our right, trying to find his own way through."

Contrary to Martin's description (p. 96) of the badly burned squadleader Hellman being below them when Sallee and Rumsey

heard his voice, he was actually above the two young jumpers as they hunkered on a rock slide in what became known as Rescue Gulch.

On the next page, the author arms Sallee with a scorched shovel that he allegedly picked up in Mann Gulch when he returned to look for a first aid kit. And, Dodge carries a Pulaski, says Martin.

However, says Sallee, "I didn't have a tool, and Dodge carried his own shovel."

Sallee recounts that he attempted to return to the jump spot for supplies, but abandoned that effort after a couple of hundred feet because of the threat of burning snags. He then returned to the rock slide in Rescue Gulch where Rumsey and he were attending to Hellman. That was their location when they heard Dodge's voice above them on the ridge.

That's contrary to Martin's description of the meeting of Dodge and Sallee which, on page 97, he places in Mann Gulch itself.

The author's recounting of the transport of the badly burned Sylvia and Hellman down to the Missouri River (p. 114) is also flawed. Contrary to Martin's account, Rumsey helped carry Hellman down Rescue Gulch, while Sallee was part of a group that carried Sylvia down Mann Gulch.

Finally, on page 117, Martin writes that "Air Force planes from Idaho, Washington and Montana would fly countless missions to drop water and retardant to help contain [the Mann Gulch Fire]."

According to the official Board of Review Report, only Air Force transport planes from Washington and Montana were used. No mention was made of water or retardant drops. 🕯

Carl Gidlund was a Missoula smokejumper for five seasons. He has bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism and is a feature writer for the Spokesman-Review newspaper.

Legendary Pilot Ken Roth Dies

by Kim Briggeman

Printed in the "Missoulian" Wednesday, February 28, 2007, and reprinted with author's permission.

Ken Roth was blue jeans and boilermakers. He was bull's-eye on the trap range and curly hair that stayed raven black until the day he died. And there might not have been a better mountain pilot ever born. "In every field, there's just somebody who's the best," said Steve Smith, a Missoula historian and author. "For lack of a better word, Kenny Roth was the dean of all the pilots that flew around here the last 50 years." Roth died Saturday (2/24/07) in the dining room of his home on South Fifth Street West in Missoula. He'd poured himself his daily shot of bourbon and popped open the beer chaser. He sat down, turned on "Gunsmoke" and never got up. Roth was a month short of 83 years old.

"What I find most fascinating was he passed away so peacefully, so unlike how he lived his life," said John Gisselbrecht of Kalispell. "He should have been killed any number of times." Gisselbrecht is special events coordinator for the Museum of Mountain Flying at Missoula International Airport. He's organizing what promises to be a packed and poignant memorial service at the museum on Saturday, one that will feature the antique planes and helicopters Roth flew.

There, as at any number of gatherings in the week after Roth's huge heart stopped beating, they'll talk about the kamikaze attack Roth survived as a Navy gunner's mate on a destroyer during World War II. They'll rehash the crash at Spotted Bear Ranger Station in 1953, when the doomed Ford Trimotor that Roth piloted pancaked nose-up into trees, instead of the ground. Because of that, none of the eight people on board perished.

"He knew he didn't want to let it go nose-first into the ground," said Dick Komberec of Missoula, a retired pilot who started the Museum of Mountain Flying more than 15 years ago with Roth's blessing. "It was the only crash of a Ford Trimotor that everybody survived."



Ken Roth (Courtesy Lloyd Hansen)

Seven years later, Roth was spraying weeds in a heavily laden Johnson Flying Service DC-3 southwest of Bozeman when the cargo plane rolled upside down. "When I finally got straightened out, I was looking right into a rock cliff. I didn't think there was any way over it or around it," he told Smith years later. As always, Roth found a way. He banked and missed the cliff with all but the tail section. Minus a tail wheel and

with a damaged stabilizer and elevator, he limped back to the Belgrade airport. He was back spraying in a different aircraft the next day.

"Kenny didn't fly an airplane; he strapped it on and it just became an extension of him," the late Bob Johnson, founder of Johnson Flying Service, told Smith. Smith has written an as-yet unpublished book called "Sons of the Western Sky: Kenny Roth and the Mountain Pilots of Johnson Flying Service." He's certain moviemakers could turn it into a blockbuster. Smith once asked Johnson to name the best pilot he ever saw, out of the hundreds he'd known and flown with since the 1920s. Smith said Johnson thought about it, but not for long. "That'd have to be Kenny Roth," he said.

Roth flew and eventually became chief pilot for Johnson Flying Service from 1952 until 1975, when the business sold. He continued as an airline pilot before returning to his pilot roots, flying smokejumpers and taking other jobs in the area. He was an innovator. "I'm positive he was the first one to use the airborne water system - not the balloons like they dropped from the bi-wings but the actual spray system," Gisselbrecht said. "He could do just about anything you'd ever want done in an airplane or helicopter, and do it right, then come back for more," Bob Johnson told Smith. "He could fly anything and everything we had, and he could fly it to any place you wanted it flown."

But Roth preferred mountain flying. "The real Ken Roth was a boondocker. He loved flying in the boondocks," Smith said. "He had a chance at one point to go to Eastern Airlines. But his family was here, he loved to shoot trap and skeet when he wasn't flying, and he loved to be with Johnson Flying Service, even though he almost starved to stay here.

"That's where his heart was, flying the mountains of Montana." And that's why his picture's on the wall at the Missoula airport. He was the last surviving charter member of the Montana Aviation Hall of Fame. Yet Roth's wife of 51 years, Sally, and their three children don't think of him as a flying legend - and Ken would never have called himself that, daughter Tammy Mantei of Missoula said. Son Mike will remember Roth as "just being a very strong man. He's credited with saving a lot of lives with his flying. He's just bigger than life, really," Mike Roth said. "I wish I was half the man he was." Flying took Roth away from home a lot, especially in summers when the kids were on vacation. "But even when he wasn't here, he was here, you know?" daughter Trina Anderson said.

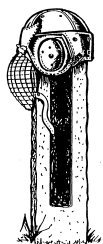
Anderson remembers swinging in the yard as a child. "We'd see a plane fly over and sing, 'There's daddy, there's daddy.' Even though it wasn't." Mantei said her dad liked to dip his wings as he passed over one of his favorite hangouts, the trap and skeet range, west of the airport. "I'm sure he was flying lower than he was supposed to," she said. "Everyone would stop shooting and calling for their traps for a minute and kind of wonder, what the heck is that? 'To us, nothing was going to happen to him. He was the best pilot there was,'" Trina said.

Roth was deeply involved in the flying museum, and no doubt would have been helping at the museum's table during the three-day Montana Aviation Convention that starts Thursday at the Hilton Garden Inn. "He was really the spiritual center of the museum. One of the reasons I even thought to start it was because of Kenny," Komberec said. When the museum rolled out a restored DC-3 last year, Roth was in the captain's seat. Komberec took a photo of the 82-year-old pilot's hand. "He was starting the engines, doing run-ups. His skilled hand was adjusting the settings on the throttle and it just seemed so natural," Komberec said. "Skilled hands, great man."

Age didn't seem to slow Roth until the last few weeks of his life. He was 72 when he finally retired from flying. Smith said he parked a B-26 tanker for Lynch Aviation in Billings and caught a commercial flight home. "But he didn't just go sit in his chair. He went out to Missoula Cartage to drive chip trucks," said Smith, who sometimes rode with Roth to mills in Thompson Falls and Eureka. "Driving a chip truck requires guys to go up those ladders on top and tarp that load so the chips don't blow off," Smith said. "So here's Kenny Roth, 72 years old, climbing on top, tying the tarp on, and coming back down and driving a great big old Peterbilt, or whatever it was. He was a horse."

Komberec, 22 years Roth's junior, retired from a career as a commercial airline pilot last June. He piloted for Johnson Flying Services for a few years with Roth. "Kenny was the guy that could walk on water," he said. "He wasn't somebody you were going to fight with, he wasn't going to harass you, he wasn't going to be mean to you. He was just a great, great man. He was always that way with whatever he did." "You've heard how some people are jacks of all trades and masters of none," Gisselbrecht said. "I've heard it said that Kenny Roth was a master of all trades he ever put his fingers to."

"My dad," said Tammy Mantei, "was the best of the best."



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.

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."

Robert H. "Bob" Walkup (Missoula '50)

Bob died on September 4, 2006, following a stroke. He jumped out of Missoula from 1950 through the 1953 season. He was a student at U.C. Berkeley in 1951 when he met and married his wife, Georgia. In 1952 he transferred to the University of Montana where he finished his studies and got his forestry degree in 1954. Bob was born in Butte and always kept Montana in his heart, although most of his career was spent in Oregon.

Frank R. Dotz (Missoula '49)

Frank died February 22, 2007, at his home in Missoula. He grew up in Ronan, Montana, where he attended high school and played football and basketball. Frank was dispatched to a two manner just before the call came in for the Mann Gulch Fire in 1949. He owned Dotz Pianos for over 40 years.

David W. Boyd (Missoula '69)

After an eight-month battle with brain cancer, David died February 27, 2007, at his home in Dixon, Montana. He jumped at Missoula from 1969 through 1975, was a ski ranger at Big Mountain Ski Area, and worked many years in fire management for the BLM and Forest Service. David was instrumental in coordinating rescue and cleanup efforts at ground zero after September 11, 2001, and came out of retirement to assist with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Among David's accomplishments he considered it an honor to raise Kira (Parker) Perdue after the loss of her father and good friend and fellow smokejumper, Dennis Parker.

David L. Crowder (Missoula '59)

A Texas native, Dave served in the Army prior to attending the University of Montana beginning in 1957. He began jumping out of Missoula two years later and continued for the next seven years. Later, as a commercial pilot, he flew for Frontier Airlines and, as a civilian, for the U.S. Air Force. In 2000 he suffered a stroke that slowed him down somewhat. Dave died of a massive heart attack at his home in Palm Bay, Florida, on January 5, 2006. He was cremated, and his ashes were scattered in the ocean off the coast of Florida, an area he often sailed.

Kenneth W. Roth (McCall '46)

Ken died February 24, 2007, in Missoula. He joined the Navy during WWII, serving as a gunner's mate on the USS Sumner. Ken jumped five seasons at McCall and took flying lessons on the G.I. Bill. He went on to log more than 13,000 hours and flew everything from Stinsons to Travelairs, Ford Trimotors, Lockheed Electras, helicopters to DC-4s. In 1952

he signed on with the Johnson Flying Service as a full-time pilot. On Aug. 17, 1953, Ken took off from an airstrip in the vicinity of Spotted Bear Ranger Station. He and seven smokejumpers headed toward a fire in the Hungry Horse area. The engines of the Trimotor cut out. He decided to land the best he could, short of the looming hillside, into a stand of timber. The impact literally broke open the Ford's cockpit and all but demolished the plane, with no loss of life. The only injury was a fracture to Ken's right foot.

In early July 1960, Ken flew himself and his DC-3 airplane out of trouble while on a Forest Service flight near Belgrade. Bad air and an altered center of gravity caused the twin engine cargo plane to roll upside down. Banking steeply, he missed the cliff, brushed the plane's tail section, and knocked off the tail wheel. Ken kept the plane in the air and returned to Belgrade.

Edgar L. Thorsrud (Missoula '42)

A NSA Life Member, Ed died March 27, 2007, at Finley Point, Montana. Ed moved to Missoula in 1927 with his family from South Dakota and attended Missoula County High School where he competed in Alpine and Nordic skiing. After his rookie year, he joined the Army Air Corps and flew troops and cargo from England to the Continent. Following the war, Ed flew for the Johnson Flying Service delivering cargo, smokejumpers and firefighters to fires throughout the west. In the mid '50s, he invested in his own retardant aircraft and worked for many years in that business. Eventually Ed moved to Finley Point full time, settling into one of the many homes he and son, Lloyd, built in their years working together.

Ernest L. Hunter (Idaho City '68)

Ernie died March 29, 2007, in Spokane, Washington of a heart attack. He served as a Naval Lieutenant and volunteered for two tours of duty in the Vietnam War. During his second tour while serving on the River Patrols, he was wounded and received the Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. He then went on to complete his education at the University of Idaho, Moscow, where he earned degrees in both Forestry and Sociology. Ernie went to work for the U.S. Forest Service and was based out of Boise as a smokejumper where he spent eight years and made over one hundred jumps. He then went on to the canvas business with a keen eye for design as he covered hundreds of boats in Idaho and Washington.

Cecil L. Cupp (Redding '68)

Cecil died April 11, 2007, in Burney, California, of lung cancer. He graduated from Hayfork (CA) High School in 1960 and worked for the U.S. Forest Service until 1989. Cecil worked in fire and timber before moving to McArthur fourteen years ago where he ran lawn care and wood cutting businesses. 🌲