

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JULY 2008

SMOKEJUMPER

Pilot Penn Stohr Honored.....	6
The Goode Olde Days	10
Eight-Mile Ridge Crash	14

CONTENTS

Message from the President	2
In the Wake of Lewis and Clark	3
Montana Airport Named After McCall's 1st Smokeyjumper Pilot	6
Odds and Ends	7
The Goode Olde Days: A True Account	10
New Display at Museum of Mountain Flying	12
Checking the Canopy	13
Eight-Mile Ridge Fire	14
Pushing Forty	16
Just an Idea	17
Items from the Fire Pack	17
The View from Outside the Fence	20
The Cherry Creek Fire, July 1986	21
Friends Helping Friends—the NSA at Work	22
Sounding Off from the Editor	23
Mountains	23
Uncanny Timing	24
Jumper Recounts Mann Gulch Experience	26
Off the List	27
Howling at the Moon	28
Items from the Fire Pack	29
Touching All Bases	31



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

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Editing: *Ed Booth, Johnny Kirkley, Jill Leger, and K. G. Sheley*

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

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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

GREETINGS FROM THE BITTERROOT. It is just about the end of March and the snow is still persistent. Not sure how that is going to equate to fire season, but I'll let you know in October. I gave up trying to predict fire seasons many years ago. I do know that the jumpers will be busy, regardless. Jumpers at both Boise and Fairbanks are going through refreshers and were jumping last week. Then rookie training begins the first week of April. I'm sure that early of a start date is pretty foreign to many of us old seasoned jumpers, me not included, of course. The seasons seem to be getting longer, and more fire training requirements take time. All of that requires earlier starting dates for training to have people qualified when the bell goes off. Good luck to all current jumpers for a healthy, active fire season.

The Board of Directors had a March meeting recently in Missoula. We also had a social gathering that Saturday night which was attended by 75 of America's finest, one dating back to the 1946 fire season. It was a lot of fun meeting the young and old.

There were many topics during our board meeting. The most

important topics, I feel, all relate to our Vision Statement that we are working on. What do we see our organization like in 10 or 20 years and what will entice jumpers to keep joining so that we can maintain our mission? It is not an easy process to develop one, although we will get there. I believe that one of our strongest organizational bonds is that we help those that are in need. Most people feel uncomfortable in asking for assistance. However, if the NSA is in a position to help, then we should. We are family. I say that, I feel that, and I will always feel that way. Once a jumper, always a jumper.

One thing that really cemented this feeling of family was when Ed Ward brought his son Finn to our board meeting to thank the organization for the help given him. It was a touching moment for all of us, especially when he was asked to give us a "thumbs up" if he thought all of us old guys still had some good looks, not a lot, just a little...and he did. Thumbs up. It showed me that we are doing some good helping Finn, Darrell Christian, Scotty Anderson, Floyd Bethke, and a scholarship for Don Mackey's daughter....all in 2007. We are helping family.

We will be working on our Vision Statement to define what we want to look like in the future, so if you have ideas of what you would like the National Smokejumper Association to be in a few years, please email Jim Cherry or myself. Our email addresses are on the www.smokeyjumpers.com website.

Until next time, the door is yours. You are hooked up and your static line is clear. There is a 100 yards of drift and the whole world is a jump spot. Get Ready. 🌩

In the Wake of Lewis and Clark

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

If you're a Lewis and Clark fan, there's still a "trail" from which you can view the land pretty much as the Corps of Discovery saw it in 1805 and 1806. It's on the Missouri River which flows gently through the 375,000-acre Missouri Breaks National Monument in central Montana.

In late June 2007, with four old smokejumper pals and a college friend, I took my second float trip through the Breaks, which are administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

Here's a sampling of our experience.

We put our pair of 13-foot and 17-foot motorboats, plus a canoe, into the brown water at Coal Banks Landing, about 30 miles northeast of Fort Benton and eight gravel-road miles off U.S. Route 87.

Prior to our launch, we had positioned our two pickups

NSA Members — Save This Information

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

Smokejumper magazine

Articles, obits, change of address

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

Membership

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

All else

NSA President
Doug Houston 406-844-0326
doughouston@montana.com
P.O. Box 12
Sula, MT 59871

Trails Project

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

Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

with boat trailers at Judith Landing, 46 miles down river from our launch point. With a van, we hauled the drivers back to Coal Banks.

The area was named for an outcropping of bituminous coal on the banks above the river. Skippers of the steamboats that plied the Missouri's waters in the 19th Century hoped that that coal would fuel their vessels, but it was too low grade.

So, until the end of the steamboat era in the late 1800s, "wood hawks" roamed the river basin, falling and hauling cottonwoods to the river's banks to fuel the vessels.

Since then, the trees have returned and the landscape now is nearly identical to that sketched by a Swiss artist named Karl Bodmer in the 1830s.

A pair of BLM volunteer hosts welcomed us to Coal Banks, which is a campground in addition to a boat launch. A storm was brewing that evening, and winds eventually whipped through at 55 miles-per-hour.

Because of the gale, they kindly invited us to share the government-issue trailer that was parked beside their motor home. One of our crew took them up on their offer, another slept in the back of the van, and four of us weighted down our tents with our bodies through the stormy night. By morning, the wind had abated, so we began our float.

The 41-mile stretch of river from Coal Banks to Judith Landing is the most spectacular on the Upper Missouri, and thus the most popular. But so far, the BLM isn't controlling access by issuing permits. They do ask that you sign a boater's register so, if you don't return, the government will know you're missing.

Anyway, permits weren't necessary when we went, since we saw only a half-dozen other floaters during our three-day trip.

The government has designated this stretch of the Missouri as a "Wild and Scenic River." Scenic it is; wild it is not. However, we did encounter rapids of a sort several times, but none of the white water variety.

One of our gang, **Chuck Sundstrom** (MSO-57) from Alberton, Mont., is a Meriwether Lewis reenactor, an authority on the Corps of Discovery, and a veteran of 23 floats on this stretch of the river. He came equipped with a book that provided a mile-by-mile history, and thus was our official narrator.

For about half our trip, our three vessels were lashed together as we drifted with the current at a leisurely 3.5 miles per hour and listened to his tales of times past.

About a mile down river from Coal Banks, we pulled out at Little Sandy, a camp with fire pits and a pit toilet. With Chuck leading, we climbed for 15 minutes to a hillside overlooking the river.

There he pointed out tepee rings, fire pits within several of them. He explained that Indians once camped here on the bluff, where a constant breeze keeps mosquitoes away. The



The four men on the left are all Missoula jumpers who trained in 1957. They are Dr. Tom McGrath, Nacogdoches, Texas; Charles Sundstrom, Alberton, Mont.; John MacKinnon, Helena, Mont.; and Fred Ebel, Post Falls, Idaho. The man on the far right is Jerry Gruber, a non-jumper who attended the University of Montana with all but MacKinnon, a University of Ohio graduate. (Courtesy C. Gidlund)

rocks were placed to hold down the sides of their buffalo skin tepees.

Ten miles into our float we entered the "White Cliffs of the Missouri," an area of stunning beauty. Lewis wrote a description of the bluffs that tower above the river, noting how water had shaped the limestone into "a thousand grotesque figures, pyramids and lofty freestone buildings . . . their parapets well stocked with statuary . . . so perfect indeed are those walls that I should have thought that nature had attempted here to rival the human art of masonry. . . ."

Homesteading laws in the late 19th and early 20th centuries encouraged settlement of unoccupied western lands. Hundreds of hardy men and women did their best to settle these lonely river bottomlands, but the environment was harsh, the land was isolated and unsuitable for farming, and drought and grasshoppers also took their toll.

Crumbling timbers and the occasional man-made rock piles, once the walls of crude cabins, line the river corridor, testament to abandoned dreams.

We stopped to examine a few of the sites, including the stones remaining where horse rustler Jack Munro built a

cabin of sandstone.

Jack Nicholson played the part of Munro in Arthur Penn's bloody rendition of his story in the 1976 movie "Missouri Breaks," which co-starred Marlon Brando as his protagonist.

Another few hours took us to Lewis and Clark's camp of May 31, 1805, which is now another BLM campground. The explorers called this site "Stone Wall Creek," but it's now known as Eagle Creek.

Towing their "pirogues" (boats) upstream, Clark writes, "Their labour is incredibly painfull (sic) and great, yet those faithful fellows bear it without a murmur.

"The hills and river cliffs (sic) which we passed today present a most romantic appearance. The bluffs of the river rise from a hight (sic) of from 2 to 300 feet and in most places nearly perpendicular. . . ."

A half-hour hike into the hills behind the campground brought us into a canyon so narrow that one can reach out and touch both sides. It's a place to avoid if there's a threat of rain, for water could sluice through this declivity in a torrent.

Chuck also took our party to a petroglyph, faded, but still clearly depicting a horse.

After a night at the campground, primitive, but with pit toilets, we were off again, soon to pass Grand Natural Wall, a mile down river on the left. It was one of a dozen or so dikes formed of hot magma that pushed its way into the sandstone, and then cooled.

The igneous rock comprising it is resistant to erosion, and rainwater has eroded the surrounding sandstone faster than the rock, resulting in the impressive vertical formation.

Five miles further on the right, we sailed past Citadel Rock. Capt. William Clark noted that it was "a high steep black rock rising (sic) from the waters (sic) edge."

It was sketched by Karl Bodmer, and its appearance today is identical to what he saw in 1833.

About two miles further is Hole in the Wall, a 20-foot gap in the rock high on our right as we headed down the river. When he passed it in May 1847, Jesuit missionary Father Nicholas Point characterized it as "Pierced Rock."

Several of the more ambitious members of our party made the hour climb to the ledge above it, while the rest of us made luncheon sandwiches for them.

Five miles further, this time on the left and a half-mile from the river, was Steamboat Rock, best viewed from down river of the large sandstone formation where it takes the shape of the vessels for which it's named.

Our camp that night was at Slaughter River, site of Lewis and Clark's camps of May 29, 1805, when journeying upriver, and Lewis's camp of July 29, 1806, during the Corps' trip home.

Another BLM-designated primitive campsite, it has pit toilets, fire rings and a shelter which was being used by another party, leaving us to pitch our tents once more.

The explorers affixed the name to the camp because of a concentration of dead buffalo they found down river. That led Lewis to believe they'd happened upon a buffalo jump, where Indians had hazed the bison over a cliff.

Archaeologists haven't found a jump nearby, so the animals had presumably drowned in the Missouri.

The next morning, about a mile down the river, we pulled out at the junction of Arrow Creek and the Missouri to view a scene cross-river painted by Bodmer in 1833. Absent from our view were the 200 lodges of Gros Ventre Indians on the far shore that the artist had captured from this vantage point.

But other than that omission, we saw a scene identical to that sketched by the Swiss artist 174 years ago. The remains of a homesteader's cabin made of notched cottonwood logs marks the spot.

About six miles below Arrow Creek, we floated through Deadman Rapids which required only a few easy paddle strokes to keep our canoe pointed downstream.

Called "Ash Rapids" by Lewis and Clark for the trees growing in the area when they passed, the later more ominous name was appended some years later, allegedly for four men who died when their canoe capsized in the rapids.

We reached our takeout point, Judith Landing, late in the morning of our third day on the river.

Buffalo burgers, ice cream, brochures, a toilet and a dumpster all got our attention before we loaded our boats and gear into the two waiting pickups, then began our drive

back to Coal Banks where we'd left the van.

We'd be remiss if we didn't mention wildlife. Throughout our voyage, flocks of pelicans kept us company. They're probably relatively recent residents of this country, since Lewis and Clark mentioned seeing them only twice during their voyages through this part of the country.

None of us are skilled ornithologists, but we did spot both a bald and a golden eagle, the latter being chased by a flock of "LBJs" (little brown jobs) for some infraction of bird protocol.

We did see lots of cows, for this is summer graze country. But only as we approached Judith Landing did we sight anything resembling a modern ranching operation.

During our return to North Idaho, we stopped in Fort Benton, founded in 1846 by the American Fur Co. at the head of navigation on the Missouri.

Proud residents have erected a series of interpretive signs along the main street which fronts the river, and just off the sidewalk is a keelboat built for the 1952 movie "The Big Sky" starring Kirk Douglas.

It's home, too, to the BLM's brand new Upper Missouri River Breaks Interpretive Center where you can purchase books and maps that would guide you down the river.

If we do it over again, that will be our first stop.

Fort Benton also boasts the Museum of the Upper Missouri, an agricultural museum, the Hornaday Gallery of Western Art and Taxidermy, Homestead Village and the Grand Union Hotel built in 1882, now a five-star lodging with associated restaurant and brew pub.

The town itself is worth a visit.

To Prepare for the Trip

We were lucky in that we weren't on the river when the big winds blew in. Since then, I've talked with others who have had to wait for two to three days at campsites along the way until the winds abated. It would be wise to pack extra food and water.

Dry wood is relatively scarce, so bring a propane or white gas stove and perhaps some charcoal for use in the fire pits provided by the BLM at their designated campgrounds.

The Missouri River water is undrinkable owing to mud and chemicals from agricultural runoff. Water in launching areas such as Coal Banks may or may not be potable, so bring your own from home or draw it from a reliable source like Fort Benton. The BLM suggests one gallon per person per day.

Summer temperatures on the water can be in the 90s and more, so be prepared to cover up and bring plenty of sun block.

Roads to the river along the stretch we floated are few and far between, and there is no cell phone coverage in the canyon. Bring a good first aid kit and be prepared to evacuate anyone injured via the river.

The BLM's campsites have pit toilets, but the agency requires floaters to bring portable toilets in the event designated campsites are full and visitors must use dispersed (non-designated) campsites.

For additional information, contact the BLM office in Fort Benton at 1-877-256-3252 or 406-622-4000, or visit the Web site at www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/fo/lewistown_field_office/UM.html. 🔔

Montana Airport Named After McCall's 1st Smokejumper Pilot

by Penn Stohr Jr. (Pilot)

Last fall (2006) several people of the Plains flying community approached my family about naming the newly-built city airport after my father. Following a nice dedication ceremony and fly-in on the opening day of the airport, the name *Penn Stohr Field* became official. My dad's name was chosen for the new airport because of his aviation roots in the Plains area. He was the first pilot and owner of an aircraft in that small town in 1926, after learning to fly from legendary pilot Nick Mamer. In September of 1927, he was chosen to be one of the escort pilots for Charles Lindbergh, who was on his triumphal tour of America after his famous transatlantic crossing. He and several other early Montana pilots escorted Lindbergh from the Helena air show to Missoula where they circled the town on their way to Spokane.

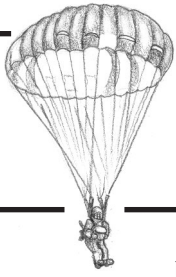
With my father's connection to Nick Mamer and the advancement in aviation, Penn Sr. began making a career out of flying airplanes that was rare in the 1920s. Mamer, who in 1922 is credited with making the first backcountry landing at the old Stonebraker Ranch in Chamberlain Basin, helped create job opportunities in the field of backcountry flying for young eager pilots like my father. Another good friend of Penn Sr.'s during this time was family friend Bob Johnson. In 1933 he began working seasonally for Johnson's company, *Johnson Flying Service*. The small group of pilots and mechanics were an instrumental part in the Forest Service's firefighting efforts, which included building backcountry strips for easier access, cargo hauling, aerial fire patrol and, most importantly, the smokejumping program. After the success of the Missoula Jumpers, the McCall base was started in 1943. During that period Penn Sr. ran the Cascade-based branch of *Johnson Flying Service* and was assigned as the pilot for the McCall jumpers. The first jump was made with my father at the controls of the Travelair along with spotter **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43) and two jumpers, **Lester Gahler** (MYC-43) and **John Ferguson** ((MYC-43). Dad later moved back to Missoula in 1945 and continued flying smokejumpers in both Travelairs and Ford Trimotors. My older brother, **Danny** (MSO-53), was privileged to have had him as the pilot on his first practice jump from the Ford.

Like my father and brother, I also took up flying and flew for *Johnson Flying Service* flying smokejumpers in the DC-2. When Bob Johnson sold the business to *Evergreen International Airlines*, I continued to fly for them, first in Missoula and later based out of Pinal Airpark (Marana, AZ). In 1979 I moved with them to their corporate headquarters in McMinnville, Oregon, as VP of Operations. When I was

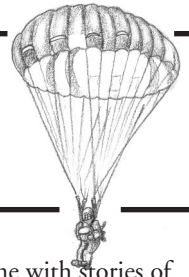


Penn Stohr 1943 (Courtesy Penn Stohr Jr.)

not on the flight line flying the big cargo haulers, I spent time flying some of the Evergreen Museum's vintage aircraft collection, which included the Ford Trimotor. Some of my best memories were flying the Ford to numerous smoke-jumper reunions. Often my son, Josh, served as copilot carrying on our heritage as the third-generation Ford pilot. I retired from commercial flying, a victim of the age 60 rule, but stayed on with Evergreen as Director of Operations for the 747 Supertanker project. I have since retired completely and enjoy spending time with family here in Tigard, Oregon, or at our second home on Swan Lake, Montana. 🐦



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to the McCall Reunion Committee who added **Jim Larkin** (Pilot), **Kenn Smith** (IDC-55), **James "Smokey" Stover** (MYC-46), **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) and **Ken "Moose" Salyer** (MYC-54) to our Life Member list.

Jim Sweaney (MSO-67) forwarded an Associated Press story from November 22, 2007, stating that **Stan Nye** was critically injured while working on a Boeing 747 at an airstrip near Marana, Arizona. The landing gear collapsed, and he was trapped under the aircraft. He died November 28, 2007, from his injuries. From Jim: "I was at Silver City during the 1971-74 seasons, and Stan was one of the Twin Otter pilots who rotated in and out of the base. He was regarded as a fine pilot."

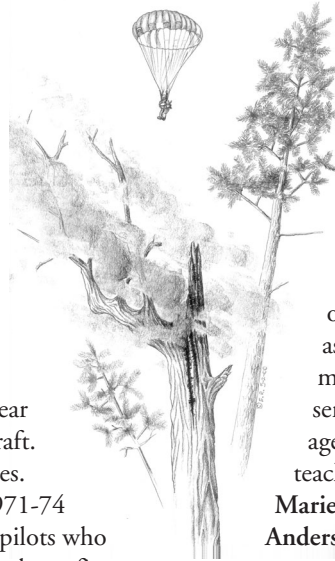
J.R. Wissler (MSO-48): "In August 1998 I was at the airport in the log cabin lookout replica of 'Hornet Peak' when a group of people arrived outside at the memorial for the Mann Gulch guys. The site is adjacent to the cabin, and I listened to a young Forest Service employee talk about Mann Gulch. When her presentation ended, I stepped up and asked if they'd like to see what the men would've looked like if they had survived. Then I pointed to myself and said I had jumped with several of the Mann Gulch crew.

This group consisted of eight young people of high school age and two adults, who turned out to be Bob and Nadine Mackey, who were on their way to hike Mann Gulch. I learned from the Mackeys that they had come back from Colorado in July where, for four years, they have hiked to the spot where their son **Don** (MSO-87) died on the mountain."

Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61) forwarded an article from *Outdoor Life* February 2008 issue. **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77) was featured in an article about the "Most Dangerous Professions In The Outdoors." WW has been jumping for 31 years and is another jumper like **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) who has a tremendous number of jumps and is almost injury free. WW says he sprained his ankle once.

Clayton Berg (MSO-52) and several other readers alerted the editor to a lengthy article in the August 13, 2007, issue of *The New Yorker* having to do with high altitude parachute jumps. If you are interested, this is a great article to reference.

From NSA web site: "My husband was **Roland W. Smith** (CJ-65), also known as 'Tex.' He trained at Cave



Junction and has amazed me with stories of working for the Forest Service since we began dating in 1968. We visited Cave Junction in the 80s, and my children have the group picture shot in front of the plane. He is on crutches because he had just been discharged from the Medford hospital. (*He was injured on his 7th practice jump-Ed.*)

He was a big, strapping man and quite proud of his work for the Forest Service. His experience as a smokejumper gave him a lot of courage that made him a great businessman and community servant. Unfortunately the good Lord called him at age 52 in 1996, but our family is carrying on his teachings."

Marie Bates (NIFC Fire Staff Assistant): "**Scott Anderson** (MYC-84) got home last week and is doing very well."

(Scott has been diagnosed with Myeloid Leukemia and had been undergoing treatment in Seattle.)

The March 2008 edition of *Smithsonian Air & Space* magazine mentions **Shep Johnson** (MYC-56) in an article about wiretap missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The article is titled "Air America's Black Helicopter/How the CIA Tapped The Phones In North Vietnam."

Hal Ward (CJ-62): "I retired last year in May, and we are building a house and hanger at Wolf Lake Airport, north of Anchorage between Wasilla and Palmer. We did the hanger first and have been working on the house for about 18 months and are nearing completion. I was pouring concrete the week of the last CJ reunion and can look forward to the next without that obligation."

Bill Moody (NCSB-57): "Luigi, a 5th grader in Seattle, who's parents have a summer place just above NCSB, contacted me about a smokejumper board game he developed as part of a school project. His project was to read a book, then make a board game based on the book. As a summer resident of the Methow Valley, he had visited the jump base and purchased a copy of our recent history/tales book *Spittin in the Wind*. He read it and developed the game. His parents asked if when they visited the base during winter break if I would like to play the game with Luigi. I said, 'yes.' The game incorporates jumper history facts and jump related pictures. Luigi had a very good grasp of the program and our base history – a great young man!"

At the March Board of Directors meeting in Missoula, **Leo Cromwell** (IDC-66) presented the board with the names of five individuals whom the Boise 2007 Reunion Committee recommended for an honorary Memorial

Life NSA Membership. These memberships were paid with the profits from the 2007 reunion. Jim Larkin, Ken Smith, "Smokey" Stover, Wayne Webb and Ken Salyer are the honorees. An excellent use of the profits from this great event. Again, we all owe thanks to the men and women who did such a great job putting together that event.

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): "As I was walking through the Seattle airport returning from the Missoula board meeting, I was greeted by **Mike August** (LGD-79). Mike was flying for one of the airlines. Since we were in the Alaska terminal, my guess is that the airline is Alaska. Mike was hurrying to work, and it was great to bump into an ex-jumper."

Brian Miller (RDD-85): "I will complete my fellowship in Head, Neck, and Microvascular Reconstructive Surgery at Washington University, St Louis, in June 2008. Accordingly, I have accepted a position as staff surgeon at Mayo Regional Hospital, Dover Foxcroft, Maine. My next enterprise will be the seemingly modest goal of raising Nigerian Dwarf Dairy Goats for fun and profit. Given that I am neither Nigerian nor a dwarf (at least in stature), this endeavor might prove more difficult than some would expect."

Tom Pettigrew (CJ 62) retired in January 2008 as Director of Engineering, Northern Region, in Missoula. He retired after a rich and rewarding career of 36 and a half years at numerous District, Forest, Region and WO locations, including the time spent on the Gobi at Cave Junction. Tom came from a three-generation Forest Service family: Alan "Bud" Pettigrew, father, North Zone Dispatcher, Northern California Service Center, Redding and **Tom Pettigrew** (MYC-87), son. Tom says, "There were many fun things at the retirement roast. However, I value the presentation made by **George Weldon** (MSO-75), Acting Director of Fire, Aviation and Air for the Northern Region. As far as I know, there has never been a CJ buckle and, therefore, I do not have a smokejumper buckle. For my support of FAA, George presented me with a sterling silver Missoula Smokejumpers buckle, serial number 62, to document my rookie year at CJ. I intend to keep my home base in Missoula. I also intend to commit my support to building the National Museum of Forest Service History in Missoula on the site adjoining the Aerial Fire Depot."

Charlie Roos (RAC-97): "I've upgraded to Captain last December with Air Wisconsin and am flying the eastern seaboard, Midwest and Canada. Still living in the Orlando, Florida, area."

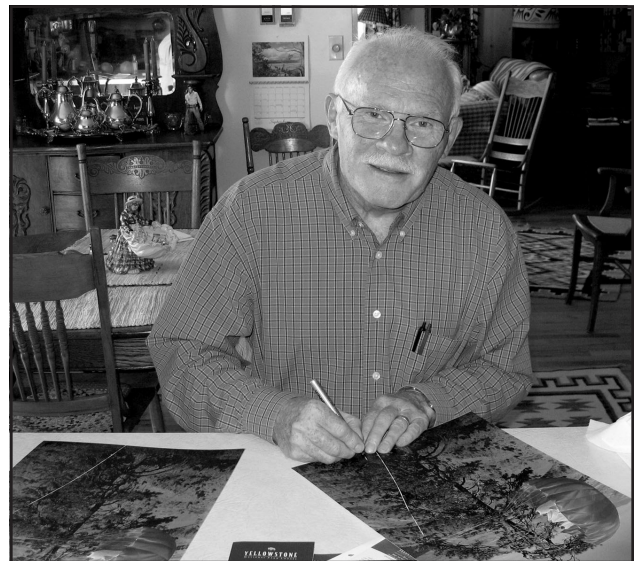
Harvey Versteeg (MSO-53) has written two stories: one about the August 1953, 5-Mile Creek Fire that chased his crew off a ridge twice in one day, and one about training at Camp Menard, the last summer it was used for that purpose. He also has several short stories about incidents on other fires that summer. He would appreciate help with identification of these fires. He would like to hear from anyone at Missoula in 1953 to fill in some blanks and verify details. He would also like to hear from

anyone who can tell him how to ID the crew bosses from the jump rosters or how to access official fire reports from that far back. He will send copies of his stories to anyone who is willing to try to help. Email him at hversteg@yahoo.com or call (207) 623-3793 in Augusta, Maine.

Chuck Reinhardt (MSO-65): "Greetings from Denmark (3/27/08) where I'm visiting friends. After visiting Ireland next week, I'll be driving an old camper van to Italy to see friends. Then to Bosnia to do some teaching workshops."

Jim Pecore (RAC-76) email to editor via NSA website: "I was on the second rappeller squad out of Cave Junction (70s). We had the first 212 Huey from Evergreen Helicopters. The pilots were Dorsey Wingo and Bill Browder. Browder flew for the highway patrol TV show in the 60s. Dorsey was a top of-the-line cobra pilot in Vietnam. We worked with **Mick Swift** (CJ-56) and his 30 jumpers. I should say we supported them. We were never their equals. The CJ jumpers were better trained, the majority being fresh from Vietnam, recon officers, Navy seals, Air America loadmasters, Marines, and schoolteachers. I believe even the seal-team trainees from Coronado were impressed when they were shipped to us in an open flatbed truck for parachute retrieval. In 1975-76 I jumped out of Redmond. Mick Swift, the greatest big-boy jumper of all times, was always working on new parachute designs. When a Russian jumper showed up with all his gear, Mick had it stretched out on the loft table in a matter of minutes and discovered the tapered vent fabric, that had beaten the U.S. military for 20 years in all jump meets."

Scott Anderson (MYC-84): "Last June (2007) I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Seventy-five percent of the cells in my blood were identified as



Jerry Schmidt (CJ-62) signs prints of the "Jumper in the Tree" Photo that he took in 1962. The photo is the cover for the NSA's DVD/Video "Firefighters From The Sky."
(Courtesy Charley Moseley)



New Twin Beech model added to NSA Smokejumper Display at Evergreen Aviation Museum by Tommy Albert (CJ-64). (Courtesy T. Albert)

cancerous. After eight months of treatment, including a stem cell transplant, I am pleased to report there are no signs of Leukemia left in my body. We would like to express our profound gratitude for your generosity while we went through this challenging time.”

Sarah Altemus (MSO-01) is featured in the *Ladies Home Journal* May 2008 issue in an article “Playing With Fire.” Sarah is a NSA member and lives in Oakridge, Oregon, during the off-season. She has jumped at Missoula from 2001 through 2007.

Karl Maerzluft (FBX-67): “Another fine issue of the Smokejumper magazine arrived. The one article that stood out for me was by Jim Cherry.

“He analyzed the question some of us on the Board had wrestled with for some time. What will be our (NSA’s) mark?

“Then it struck me... ‘To Inspire!’ The question is, how? We have already tried to inspire some of the younger jumpers to join the NSA with very limited success. What else can we possibly do? Perhaps we are addressing the wrong group in the wrong phase of life.

“Jim’s connection with the American Camp Association, actually spelled out a possible solution for me. Let’s start with ‘camp.’ Church Camp, Boy Scout Camp, Girl Scout Camp, any camp.

“Let’s explore the Scouts first. Is there a Wildfire Badge? If not, can we help the Scouts create a path for such a badge? Can we help progress the Eagle Scouts with a Smokejumper Badge that perhaps goes as far as requiring a jump from a shock tower?

“The same sort of approach can also be used for any Church camp. Spend an entire day with interested kids going through the spring training stuff from classroom

work on wildfire suppression, to the physical training events ending with some volleyball games. One never knows how some youngster will be inspired to follow through with such information to then become a jumper, a Forester, or whatever in their area of endeavor. Some promise of scholarship funds, and more intermediate prizes will certainly help with tangible evidence to keep the memories alive.”

Is that not what we try to do with all kids? Inspire them to become something greater than what is just in front of them?

That kind of stuff requires vision, understanding, experience, guidance and perseverance.

Paul Ross (Aviation Editor *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*): “*Wildland Firefighter Magazine* will cease publication after the May 08 issue. I wanted to contact you to say a big ‘thanks’ for your correspondence and help during my eight years writing my Fire Aviation News column in the magazine. Founding editor, Brian Ballou, supported me in starting the column in early 2000 and I have written it monthly since, with coverage from coast to coast. I look forward to keeping in touch and am exploring some options for my Fire Aviation News column presently.” (Paul has done a great job with his column and given the smokejumper community excellent coverage-Ed.)

Joe Stevenson (MSO-53): “My twin brother, Cecil, and I worked on a five-man fire truck at Mt. Shasta in 1952. After rookie training in 1953 we were assigned to a 10-man crew at Grangeville. The two summers we jumped provided memories to last a lifetime. From 1954-57 we both were stationed in Germany with the 11th Airborne. In 1999, at age 64, I joined a free-fall club and made a jump. Summer plans for 2008 include making one more jump being the first one in the club over 75 to jump. I truly enjoy the magazine.”

Go to www.davisperkins.com to see original paintings by **Davis Perkins** (NCSB-72).

Monroe “Spud” DeJarnette (MSO-49): “We are happy to announce California’s first NSA sponsored trail project in partnership with the USFS. Needed are eight physically-fit retired jumpers to lead off this signature effort. Among our crew needs are a cook and a jumper who is certified in first aid. Jumpers will be required to fill out a physical fitness form that is standard for NSA partnered projects. The place is on the American River Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest in Picayune Valley on a portion of the Western States Trail that traverses the Sierra from Squaw Valley to Auburn. The project starts at about 6000’. Dates are: Sept. 13 Saturday at 4 P.M. with a get together in Auburn. We would meet again for breakfast on Sunday and then head out to set up camp. Work begins on Monday, September 15, and continues through Friday. Saturday, we break camp.

Crewmembers bring their own duffel, warm sleeping bag and shelter. We provide the camp kitchen, grub, and tools. The weather is virtually beautiful early fall; warm during the day, cool at night.” 🌲

The Goode Olde Days: A True Account

Vernon E. Lattin (Redding '57)

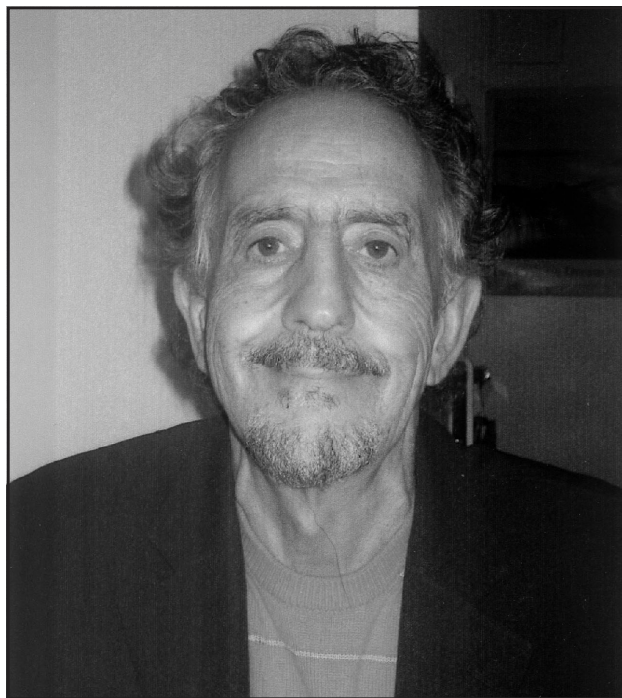
Having read a number of awe-inspiring accounts of smokejumpers (from times past and times present) in this magazine, I think it is time to put Truth to Power (as politicians say), or is it Power to Truth? At any rate, I was there; I saw with my own eyes the terrible agony and the glorious strengths of smokejumping in those good old days. No one can doubt an old smokejumper's tales.

First, let me say that you should never believe any young man telling tales. What has a mere child of 20 or 30 or even 50 experienced; what could he or she know of true life and adventure? Modern smokejumpers of today are weak of mind and body. They were not raised on the hard bread of life; they have fancy chutes with remote control guidance, modern planes with doors that open and close, and cell phones to call their mommies and jump leaders. Nightly, they eat tofu steaks and arugula at base camp, have catered meals delivered to fires, and travel from jumps in luxury copters and four-wheel drive limos. They dig line with a backhoe and cut brush with digital blades.

It was different when, in 1957, we opened the first base at Redding. In those days, the men who rode the winds of fortune were without equal: tall, handsome, muscular. We went to work without the modern pampering of today. We ate what was and were what we ate. The smokejumpers of old were true heroes who performed feats that the youngsters of today would envy and learn from if they would open their eyes and hearts to the truth I am about to reveal.

Though I will probably confuse names, I remember clearly every detail of what jumping was in those long, lost days of old. That first season, there was a severe shortage of parachutes. Not every one got one. We drew straws, flipped coins, did dances, begged and crawled, to see who would jump with a chute and who would jump without one. I remember my first jump with Samson, a big, brawny brute of a man. He could do 100 pushups with one hand and even more if he used his arm. He got the chute, and I got my first opportunity to jump without one. A lesser man would have trembled, have begged off, have called his attorney or the mortician. Not I. Samson knew his role and I knew mine. He would jump first and after his chute opened, I would jump free fall, aiming for the top of his chute, so I could share the ride down. Out the open door went Samson (it is a lot easier with the door open). When I saw his chute open, I went, spread out, wide-armed, like a crucified angel, aiming for the top of his chute. I MISSED! Naturally, our spotter was PISSED and made us do it over.

The second time was perfect; I landed on Samson's chute and began to walk and sing. The singing must have been too much, for Samson yelled gently up to me to "Shut the F— Up." This so undid the strings of my nerves that my resolve faltered and my concentration weakened; I fell through the chute and tangled in knots in the middle of Samson's lines. I



Vernon Lattin (Courtesy V. Lattin)

knew this was not a good time to start singing again, so I looked down at Samson and asked practically, "What do we do? Should you open your spare chute or should we ride down on one chute?"

He again informed me to "Shut the F— Up." I think I mentioned that Samson was a big, brawny guy, but I may not have mentioned that he did not like conversation much. Anyway, I thought it best to be silent. I noticed we were falling toward the ground; I also noticed that we were going at a very rapid pace. Samson had not said another word and we were nearly down. Then he looked up at me as if he had made an important decision. He spoke slowly and deliberately: "Listen Vernon, when we land, you better keep your boots out of my face and body." I nodded, thinking maybe this was a good time to see how firm his stomach muscles were. But, before I could plan more, the ground hit us like a hammer on a nail, like a whirlwind against a sapling, like a cannon ball in the eye of the beholder. Quick as ever, I noticed that Samson rolled to the right upon impact; I had to decide instantly; do I roll left to avoid Samson, right to use the path he created in the jagged rock that he landed on, or aim for his stomach? With a mind fed on pain and practice, I turned rapidly to the left, rolled down the cliff and into a small lake at the bottom of a cliff, just as I had planned. Success again. I climbed back up the cliff to find Samson nursing his pains and bruises with a six-pack of beer which he carried everywhere he went. I decided not to ask for one this time.

We fought the fire and then walked quickly back to our pickup place. I should note, since modern jumpers may not realize this fact that the uniforms, whites, helmet, rope, etc. that you see in pictures of the good old days, are just that. We put them on for the rare photo opportunity. We never jumped with all that clumsy, ridiculous looking weight wrapped around our manly bodies. No, we jumped in our Levi jeans and T-shirts. Real men, with real clothes. Real jumping into real forest fires. Nothing to carry in and nothing to carry out. Only our Pride and our Power.

Then, there was the time of my fifth jump. By then I had jumped at least two times with a chute, and so I was experienced and ready for anything. An arsonist had started a series of fires around Lake Shasta and it was taking up a lot of time and men to stay on top of the recurring fires. Our leader knew I had the ability to land in lakes, so he selected Joe and me to deal with what was becoming a lakefront crisis. No longer were we beginners or even just fire fighters. We were also now detectives and police officers. We were assigned the task of catching the arsonist.

Our plan was to fly 24 hours a day around Lake Shasta, eyes peeled for HIM. When we spotted him, we were to jump, aim directly at him and nab him. Because it was a special assignment, with unusual danger, both Joe and I were assigned SEPARATE CHUTES. The first two days were a bore, flying around and around the lake, playing cards, getting sicker and sicker as the plane went round and round, round and round. Finally, on the third night, I spotted the arsonist, just the flicker of a match. I yelled at Joe to jump, but because he was vomiting, I went first, aiming at that flicker before it went out. Joe followed later, smelling terrible and continuing to vomit. As I honed in on the flicker of light, I was praying Joe would land far from me. My eyes focused, my nerves grew tense, and my hearing became supernatural as I got nearer and nearer, seeing only my target: the beam of light from the lit match. Unfortunately, my laser-like vision failed to see the tree he was under, and I smashed into it face-first, tearing my new T-shirt and creating a mess in my underwear. All I could think of was that I wished I had landed in the lake again. But then I smelled something. Was it the fire below me getting started? Was it the smell of fear as the arsonist looked up and saw me hovering above him in the tree like Saint Michael with his sword of justice? No, it was Joe, who had followed my descent and was now smashing into my tree. He smelled like last month's limburger cheese. I knew by now the arsonist has seen me and also smelled Joe. I had to act (I had given up singing). Joe could see by the dark of my eyes (it was night you know) that I was ready to sacrifice myself and cut loose from the chute, cascading downward on top to the terrible criminal below. (Did I mention we did not wear uniforms or carry drop ropes?). Joe yelled, "Don't do it! It's not worth it; you will break all your bones in the fall to earth." Joe had a really good point and he made it well. I wisely responded: "You go first and I will follow only if I am needed. One of us may survive and thus bring an end to these arson fires." Contemplating what I had said, Joe responded with his own considerable logic: "Maybe you were right in your original plan; you are more experienced in falling; go ahead and I'll stay here as a back-up." Such devo-

tion to duty, such logic, and such sacrifice was more than I could bear. With tears in my eyes, I cut loose from my chute, aiming at the flicker still flickering 100 feet below. I knew I had but one chance to put the flicker out or my light would go out. I must hit him directly so that he would break my fall and save my life. I had to act quickly before the smell from Joe extinguished my life anyway. I went, crashing through one tree limb after another.

The limbs tore at my eyes and cheeks, whipping my body mercilessly, as I careened toward the arsonist below. I could hear Joe above me, yelling encouragement, stressing accuracy, demanding success, waiting patiently for the thump of my body on either the villain or the earth. The arsonist spotted me and blew out his match. Total darkness reigned.

Although the last limb I hit turned me upside down, I remembered my training and quickly did a flip and got back on track, feet down. I hit him in the side of his right shoulder, spinning both of us to the ground. As I hit I rolled to left, down a steep cliff, into Lake Shasta. I could hear the spotter in the plane telling the pilot: "He landed in the lake again." Joe must have heard the spotter also, because he cut loose and within less than a blink was in the lake with me. We both scrambled up. Joe sputtered, "Did you hit him?" "Yes," I answered as I ran up the cliff. At the top, I found the arsonist, lights out, peacefully on the ground. I told Joe to yell to the plane (no cell phones back then) and he yelled at the top of his voice, "PLANE." The plane dipped its wings to acknowledge they had heard Joe's message, and then they flew off toward Redding. Eight days later, Joe and I arrived at camp carrying the injured arsonist. A celebration ensued, and Samson shared his beer with us.

Not all jumps were this easy. I remember my last jump of the 1957 season. A huge fire was raging in Montana. Jumpers from around the country were being called up to try to control it. Crew after crew came and went, gave it their best, but went home without victory, tears in their eyes and a deep, burning pain in the middle of their boots. The fire was getting bigger and bigger, gulping up the landscape. Finally, the Forest Service decided it was time to bring out the big guns, the whole enchilada. They would jump all 16 jumpers from Redding as their last, best hope. They would bring in the experts, the proven heroes, the guys who did it best. Most of us didn't know where Montana was, but we knew we were needed and we answered the call. When we got there, we saw the flames and smoke from the monster fire; we knew our normal hand-to-hand fire fighting methods would not put out this baby. We asked the squad leader to radio back to Redding to send some shovels and Pulaskis. Not waiting for our equipment to arrive, we decided to jump and fight the best we could with our bare knuckles. To test the wind, we held the spotter out the door by his feet. He licked his index finger and held it out. Same result as last time: the wind was blowing from the front of the plane to the back. Still not understanding why the wind always blew in the same direction, we accepted fate and were ready.

I can still see the intense, frozen faces of each jumper. As we looked down into that inferno, we knew that our spotter, Slim, would get us right in the middle of the blaze. He sel-

dom missed. Karl was the first jumper, with a chute; Jack would follow him without a chute. So on down the line. No one spoke. I was last in line, with Samson in front of me. He was rolling his six-pack into the sleeve of his T-shirt, calmly, methodically. Then he rolled his cigarettes into his other T-shirt sleeve. Back in base camp I had tried to convince him that it would be better NOT to take the cigarettes out of the pack before rolling them up, but as was the case when I tried to get him to give up taking bottled beer, he ignored me. Each two jumpers went out perfectly: the chute opened and the second jumper settled on top for the ride down. There was only one small problem: Bob and Bill got mixed up in line and went out without either having a chute. For a moment, it looked like disaster. Lucky, our team leader acted quickly. He threw Samson out with a chute and told me, since I was the last one on the plane, to jump and catch up with the gang as best I could. Samson's chute opened, and the two without a chute turned upward and caught up with him, landing easily on top of his chute. Since I was last, I had to wait my turn, hoping that I would have time to catch up to Samson and his two passengers. After everyone else had jumped, the spotter checked my equipment, T-shirt, jeans, tennis shoes, wished me luck, hooked me to the line (even if I didn't have a chute, he thought it was good practice) and out I went. I looked around; the sky was empty blue, with the red flames of the fire down below. When I spotted a speck in the distance, I headed toward it, hoping it was Samson. After a few seconds, I realized it was a dirt spot on my glasses. After cleaning my glasses on my impeccably white t-shirt, I spotted Samson. Like an eagle diving on his prey, I descended in a flash, catching Samson's crew at about 500 feet and riding down with them. We landed with four happy thuds.

All was going as planned; all 16 of us were in the middle of the fire. The fire had burned out where we landed so we were safe for now and ready to go. I don't know how many of you have had to fight a monster fire from the middle of the blaze without tools. What were we to do next? We needed to stay cool and plan carefully. As I knotted my brows and thought deeply, I saw an amazing sight. Having ridden all the way from Redding to Montana, without a bathroom, everyone was greatly relieving themselves. The fire was going out in a smelly hiss. Hallelujah! It was a miracle of urinic proportions. By literally pissing our way out of this inferno, we had done what the rest of the firefighting world had failed to do. We had put out the great Montana fire of 1957 (you have probably read elsewhere about our heroics). All I could think of amidst the shouts of joy was - damn, I had to go - and I did, contributing to my final drop to the extinguishing of the blaze.

Recognizing our speedy success, the crew leader said, "Let's zip up and head back to our meeting place where a truck may pick us up." However, he turned to me and said, "Vernon, you stay and clean up. Be sure every stump is cold, every ash is dead." WELL, here I am. Some have said I emerged weeks later, carrying 16 shovels and 16 Pulaskis, covered with black ash, nearly dead with thirst and hunger. Some have said that I never emerged, that I met my Maker there in the middle of the smelly ashes. All I can report is that rumors of my survival have been greatly exaggerated!

Dr. Vernon E. Lattin - A brief autobiography

I have been all around the country the last 50 years. I have a PhD in English from University of Colorado and have taught and worked in Tennessee, Illinois, Wisconsin, Arizona and New York. I've been president of two Universities, the last one at City University of New York, Brooklyn College. Currently I teach a course or two at the Graduate Center of City University in New York, but I live the rest of the time at Santa Fe, New Mexico. I expect to retire within the next two years since the travel from NYC to Santa Fe several times a year is getting to me. I'm married and have four children and eight grandchildren. 🍄

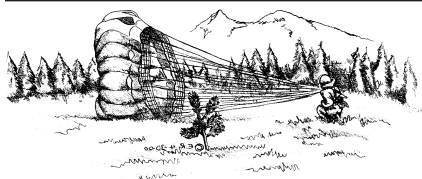
Vernon can be contacted at: VLattin@gc.cuny.edu



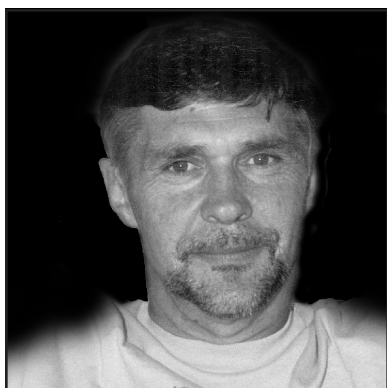
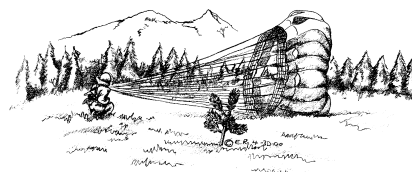
New Red Skies of Montana Display (Courtesy Stan Cohen)

New Display at Museum of Mountain Flying

Stan Cohen of the Museum of Mountain Flying informs us that the new "Red Skies of Montana" display is up and ready for viewing. Money was donated by the Smokejumper Welfare Fund, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, and the Jerry Metcalf Foundation of Helena. The original screenplay was purchased along with a 7'x4' poster. Copies of the six lobby cards are in the showcase. A 4'x4' board gives a short history with photos of the making of the movie around Missoula during 1951-52. A 15-minute tape of a 1963 interview on KGVO Radio with Wag Dodge and others from the Mann Gulch Fire was also added. The display was dedicated on May 1st along with a talk by author Mark Matthews. Stan says, "The Mann Gulch DC-3 is completed back to its 1949 look and hopefully will fly some day." 🍄



Checking the Canopy



Steve Goldammer
(Missoula '66)

A SMALL LESSON in "Twice!" A sage preacher said from the pulpit, "Measure twice, cut once," and I resonated with what he was saying.

When I was a rookie jumper, my first fire was out in Eastern Montana with very few trees, and...we were driven to it. Perhaps in an effort to make up for that anti-climatic beginning to my illustrious, notorious (no wait - innocuous is a better word), career as a jumper, my next fire was a two-manner north of the Seeley Ranger Station in the beauty of the mountains below the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. Another rookie and I were kicked out by none other than **Hal Samsel** (MSO-49) and, as I was the first out, I was the fire boss. We cut down a single tree that was burning, chopped out the embers, mopped it thoroughly, and went to bed in this beautiful country. We awoke, continued our surveillance of the tree, and waited through the burning period. Once sure that the fire was out, we felt we had enough time to begin our pack out. I looked at the map. It showed a trail right down the ridge, and there was one, so we started our hike. We had been told that there would be a pickup at the end of the trail, and that we should take it to the Seeley Ranger Station. We were also told that our hike would only be three or four hours.

The packs were very heavy but it was down hill, and we were happy to have had this "cherry fire." After four hours of hiking, we were still not at the road, and it was getting dark. Now, very tired from carrying very heavy loads, and not even wanting to get out of our packs, we sat down and slept in our packs leaning against a tree.

Early the next morning we started again, refreshed and aware that something might be wrong. However, we were going down hill, the trail was very clear, and it seemed that we were going in the right direction, south (an ominous metaphor). Hours later, we reached the road, found no truck and wondered what to do, and what was wrong. We left our packs and started walking down the road. An hour later a Forest Service truck, (that beautiful green) came driving up the road. We didn't need to hail him as he came right toward us. He stopped and asked if we were the two jumpers up on the ridge, and we said we were. He asked incredulously, "Why didn't you take the pickup," and we replied, "There wasn't one." He smiled and said, "Jump in." We drove up the road, not down, picked up our packs, then traveled up the road a few miles and found another green pickup. I said, "What is IT doing HERE!"

He looked at me and smiled and pointed up the mountain saying, "Your fire is just up there."

(Writer's aside: There is no pleasure in the telling of this story. Upon returning to the base, I was ridiculed, belittled and taunted to a point that my life would never be the same, and that's just what I did to myself. "Wrong way," they called me! My fellow smokejumper on the fire decided to terminate the jumpers, as it was "too hard" based upon our packout. I was exiled to spend the rest of my smokejumper career in Alaska and, worst of all, I would never attain the self-confidence level

I had achieved after I made it through rookie training. It takes a lot of guts just to tell this story again.)

The preacher saying "measure twice, cut once" was the senior pastor with whom I worked early in my ministry. He was a very good sermonizer. When he made that sage comment, the story of my first jump fire flooded into my brain. Had I looked at my map twice, I would have found that there was indeed another trail that went straight down the mountain, it would have taken about three hours and, yes, there would have been that beautiful green pickup there.

This is not some sort of help column. I want to simply pass on an event in my smokejumping years that has aided me since. For humans, doing or looking at something twice seems to be the key to knowledge or understanding of an important truth. For example, I wish I had a nickel for every "read back" I ever gave as a pilot to some controller who was only trying to guide me in my safety of flight. Looking at something twice does give us better perspective and... more accuracy.

So the next time you are trying to insert a password into your computer and are asked to do it twice, the next time you are giving your credit card number and are asked to type it twice, the next time you cross a busy intersection and you look both ways twice, remember that to take a second look at something in life sometimes allows you to see an error that you could and might want to avoid. It's call mental depth perception. I learned it that first summer. Believe me, it has served me well!

Interesting Facts: Did you know that there is a beer brewed by the Firehouse Brewery in Rapid City, South Dakota, called Smokejumper?

There is also a beer brewed by Left Hand Brewing Company in Colorado called Smokejumper. 🍺

Eight-Mile Ridge Fire

by Douglas Baird (North Cascades '58)

The following account of a tragic plane crash is an excerpt from the personal journal of Doug Baird written during his rookie year at NCSB.

JOURNAL ENTRY, JUNE 30, 1958: It was an exciting first week of training, a great beginning! However, we didn't have the opportunity to enjoy the upcoming weekend. The events of the next few days cast a dark cloud over much of the summer. On Monday, June 23rd, a great tragedy occurred. As an on-the-spot witness I will relate the incident to the best of my knowledge.

During the weekend of June 21-22, severe lightning storms were forecast for the Cascade Mt. Range of northern Washington. As a result, all of the personnel on the North Cascade Smokejumper Base were placed on weekend alert. Fire patrol flights regularly took off to spot potential fires. On Sunday night, hundreds of lightning strikes were charted. With the extremely dry conditions, fires were sure to be sighted soon. Monday morning found us going through our regular training routines. After several false alarms, the excitement finally started.

Our Monday afternoon activities were interrupted by several fire alarms. During the course of the next few hours, about ten of the experienced jumpers were sent out on four different fires. It was exciting to see the personnel on the base in real action. All the rookies were impressed! This was the real thing! We wished we had already completed our training so we could go out with them, but we had to be content to watch.

The base received a call from the district fire headquarters between 3:00-3:30 p.m. that all of the rookies were needed on a fire that had blown out of control. This was a fire manned by four jumpers earlier in the day. The fire was on a steep mountain ridge in very dense timber. We quickly loaded up some fire gear and boarded the trucks, and away we went. We all considered this a real insult. Think of it - Junior Smokejumpers being used as "ground-pounders!" It took about three hours before we finally arrived at the fire site. It was around 6:00-6:30 p.m. The fire was located on Eight-Mile Ridge, about 15-20 miles north of Winthrop, Washington. The terrain was very steep and rough. The fire was about three acres, very hot, and quickly spreading. We were organized along the fire line and worked hard to contain the fire by attacking the hot spots.

Within about 30 minutes of our arrival on the fire line, the jumper plane (a twin-engine Beechcraft), piloted by hot shot flying ace **Bob Cavanaugh**, started circling the area and prepared to make a cargo drop. They were in the process of dropping cargo, including meals and other needed supplies, on some of the fires in the area. As the aircraft buzzed within 200 feet of the tree tops, the spotter kicked out some

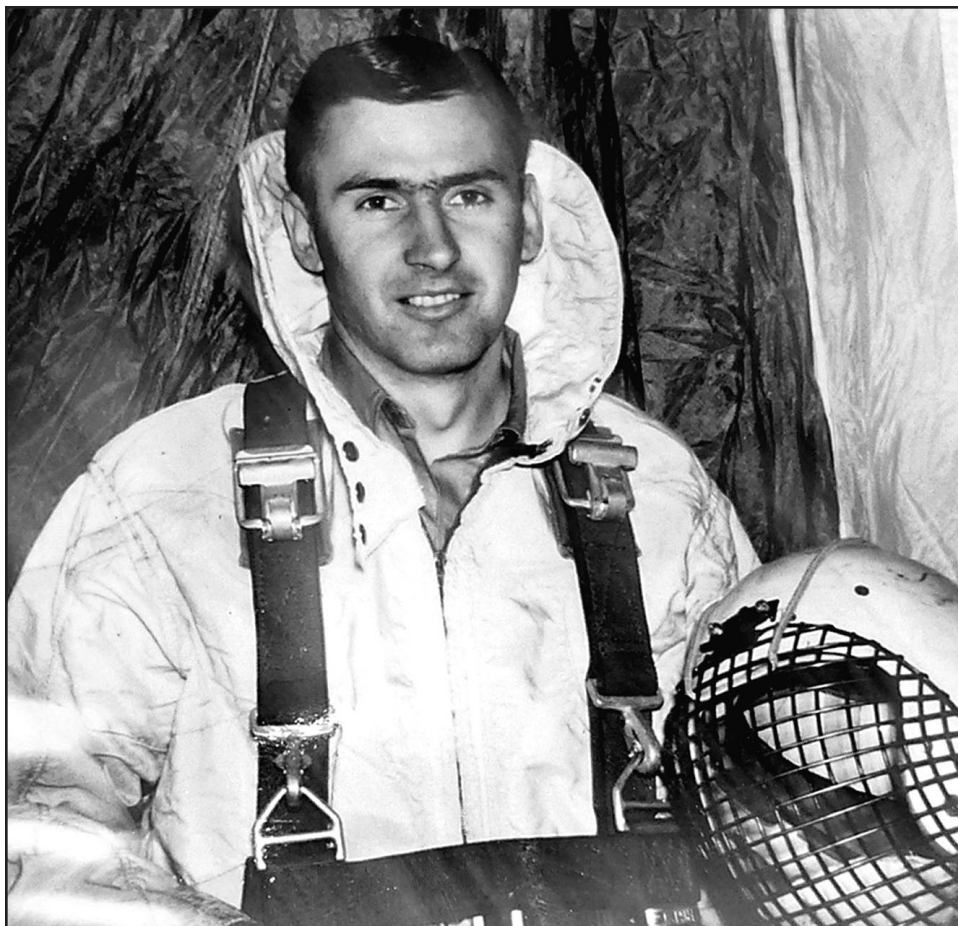
cargo. It was a perfect drop! The cargo chute landed in a small clearing near our base camp. A big cheer went up, mainly because we wouldn't have to cut the cargo chute and our dinner down from a big tree. Cavanaugh was greatly admired as a top-notch pilot. He had more hours flying a Twin Beech than anyone in the Forest Service. He had served in the military during the Korean War as a Navy pilot. He was the best - someone we had learned to admire and trust.

THE CRASH: After making the first cargo drop, the plane disappeared from sight as it went over the ridge and prepared to circle and return for several more drops. One of the jumpers standing near me commented, "Boy, what a life, and us down here on the ground!" A few seconds later, we heard a distant "thud" sound, much like a falling tree hitting the ground. In fact, the guy standing next to me said, "There goes a snag." "Yeah," I replied. At that same time, two jumpers working on the fire near the crest of the ridge starting yelling at **Elmer Neufeld** (CJ-44), "Elmer, we think the plane just crashed!" Within seconds, Elmer received a radio call from a nearby lookout station confirming that, indeed, the plane had gone down.

Elmer immediately organized a search & rescue crew of ten men. We quickly gathered some fire tools and medical supplies and hurried a mile or two through heavy timber and rough terrain to the crash site. It wasn't hard to find. What a scene it was! We could see where the plane had topped-off dozens of trees as it had gone down. The site was heavily timbered and was in flames. It appeared the plane had exploded at impact. It was total destruction. All that was recognizable were two badly burned engines, part of the tail section, and one of the mostly-intact wings lodged against a tree. The main part of the crash site and the burnt area around it was about an acre. The perimeter of the site was still burning hotly, everything inside was either still burning or smothering and very hot. We all stood in dazed silence. Our hopes of a rescue were smashed. The smell of aircraft fuel and burning flesh was strong and repugnant. We quickly searched the area looking for any sign of life.

Then someone said, "Look! There's Cavanaugh." I said, "Where?" Then I saw that his badly burned body laid near part of the wreckage that looked like it may have been the cockpit. Cavanaugh was heavyset, and there was no question that it was him. It appeared he was still harnessed in the pilot's seat. It was a horrible scene - one that I will never forget.

THE SEARCH: As we looked on in shocked disbelief, Elmer had been looking for other bodies and trying to confirm how many people were on the plane. Since we were unsure, and since only one body seemed to be at the crash site, Elmer organized a search for the others. We knew there



Doug Baird (Courtesy D. Baird)

had to be at least two in the plane, the pilot and spotter. Perhaps the spotter had realized what was happening and had time to jump before impact. He may have had time to get his chute open - we didn't know. As we were getting ready to search and discuss these possibilities, a radio message came with horrible news: four men were aboard the plane.

Our emotions were high as we wondered who of our friends were in the plane. All ten of us in the search party quickly spread out in 50-yard intervals and started walking back in the direction of the flight path where the plane first started knocking the tops off the trees. It was dusk and, in the undercover of the tall trees, it was an eerie feeling walking alone through the trees. The silence and loneliness of the search became very individual for me. I prayed for a miracle, but without any real hope. I dreaded the idea of finding a jumper dangling from a tree with an unopened chute or of seeing a crushed body lying on the ground. It was a horrible feeling.

After we had been searching for 10-15 minutes, I heard someone shouting for everyone to return to the crash site. As I walked up the hill and approached the crash site, someone said, "None of them ever knew what hit them." Upon closer examination, Elmer had located all four bodies in the impact area - their bodies burnt beyond recognition. We anxiously inquired as to who was in the plane. The answer was shocking and devastating. We were told that

along with Bob Cavanaugh, our two trainers, **Jerry Helmer** (NCSB-53) and **Gus Hendrickson** (NCSB-47), were on board. We were stunned and struggled with the realization. We also learned that a local forester, Bob Carlman, was on board as an observer. Faced with one shock after another, I found it difficult to talk or even to breathe as the emotions crept up into my throat. Elmer, knowing that there was work to do, quickly ordered us to attack the fire. Even though we were greatly saddened and still in shock, we proceeded to build a fire line and put down the hot spots. Elmer told us not to move, touch or disturb anything at the crash site. An investigation into the whole tragedy would have to be conducted. By 10:00 p.m., we had completed building the fire line and knocking down the hot spots. Elmer kept three of the crew with him and sent the rest of us back to the original fire to assist there. Those that remained at the crash site later helped place the remains of the four dead into

body bags and pack them to the nearest road. Those of us back on the main fire worked through the night until 4:00 a.m., at which time we were relieved by a 15-man ground crew. It was a much welcomed relief. We were emotionally and physically spent. It was a quiet and sad group of rookies that returned to the base early in the morning of June 24th. Our world had changed forever.

WHAT HAPPENED? As the investigation proceeded, it was never really determined what happened. The most likely theory was that the plane may have hit a severe downdraft and was sucked into the mountain. Given the fact that the weather was very hot, with severe thunderstorms all around, that is probable. Another possibility mentioned was that one of the plane's engines stalled, but that was never confirmed. Since the aircraft was at such a low altitude during its cargo drop, either problem could have caused the plane to dip low enough to hit the trees. The other possibility mentioned was pilot error. Perhaps Cavanaugh, in a hurry to finish the cargo drops on our fire and get on to the next fire before dark, tried to make a tight turn up the ridge instead of taking the safer route out over the valley. I suppose it doesn't really matter what happened; the awful thing was - it happened! Nothing could bring them back. Three of our admired and trusted crew had been lost, and we all mourned their deaths.

The impact on all of the rookies was profound. For the first time in our young lives, we all had a strong sense of our

own mortality. Lost forever was that youthful, reckless sense of immortality. Most of us had never lost anyone close to us, let alone those whom we had come to trust and rely on for our very lives. The reality of the scheduled events of the coming days was also discomfiting. Next week all 20 rookies would be expected to face the open door of another plane, piloted by someone we neither knew nor trusted, a stranger. We would be expected to board the aircraft, fly out into mountain terrain and leap out the door at 2000 feet above the valley floor into space. We would do this with less than a firm hope that the plane wouldn't crash and that our chute would open. Given the tragic events on Eight Mile Ridge, the excitement and enthusiasm of that prospect has been greatly diminished. In the days following that tragedy, we were given the option to cancel our contract and relocate, but duty, pride, loyalty, and the necessity of summer earnings are powerful motivators - so likely we all will take our chances and hope that the big first step out the door of the Twin Beech won't be our last.

SOBER REFLECTIONS: Remembering the first day of training (one week ago), I was impressed with a statement Elmer Neufeld made. He reviewed with us the fact that since its organization in 1939, no fatalities had occurred at the Smokejumper Base at Intercity Airport. It was a record they were very proud of. Elmer told us, "We don't believe in the saying that the odds will catch up with us." Needless to say, the whole experience left us all anxious about the future. It was no longer just a game. The odds had won out.

The truth is that life is a gamble. Nobody has any assurance that tomorrow will come. There is often a small line between life and death. Consider the jumpers who were dropped on a nearby fire before the jumper plane crashed. Then there is the forester, who didn't need to be on the plane at all. What moved him to take that ill-fated flight? Small, seemingly insignificant choices can have long-lasting consequences. My hope is that I will be less casual and more thoughtful about the decisions I make and how I try to influence others. I hope I can be more attentive and listen to my inner voice when it warns me of impending danger. I feel a greater necessity of standing up for what I know to be true and maintaining the courage of my convictions. If I am going to survive and live a long and productive life, I'm going to need all the help I can get from wise parents, trusted teachers and friends, and from the Lord. As I review my life so far, I feel sure that my life has already been preserved more than once, both temporary and spiritually. However, at such a time as this, it's not hard to realize that sooner or later my time, too, will come. In the meantime, God willing, it is my desire to live a life that means something and is both useful and joyful.

TRAINING GOES ON: We didn't get back into the regular routine until Thursday. On Friday a plane load of jumpers from Cave Junction, Oregon, arrived to help. They also brought with them two Beechcraft, duplicates of our doomed aircraft. They were discomfiting to look at. Two jumpers were dropped on another fire during the next couple of days, but by the weekend, all the fires were out. In spite of the funerals, memorial services and the continuing

investigation, we are still scheduled to experience our first jump on Monday, June 30th. That's tomorrow. I've been waiting and thinking about tomorrow for some time now. I can't say that the idea isn't stimulating!

I really don't know what to expect, but the dye is cast. I'm as ready as I will ever be. I have received excellent training. I have worked hard. Now is the time to concentrate on the task at hand. The training is geared to drill the routines and procedures into you so it becomes automatic. Fear of the unknown is so strong, and things happen so quickly that it must be automatic. The things I'm thinking about now are my position going out of the airplane and the landing. Those are the two things that can result in injury and about the only two things I can personally control. Everything else that could go wrong is out of my hands. If the plane crashes, if my chute doesn't open, or if my heart stops - there's not much I can do - so why worry? 🙏

Doug Baird can be reached at: bairddouglas@yahoo.com

Pushing Forty

by Mark Walmsley (Associate)

He used to swing with one arm,
Back in his glory days,
He was a real producer,
Two Thousand trees a day!

But now he's pushing forty,
And his swing's not much to see,
And don't forget his tendonitis,
And his ravaged knees.

And then there is the weather,
Cold rain, blowing snow, and the hot sun,
And too much time to think while planting,
"Am I still having fun?"

Well, maybe there's no answer,
Or will summer bring a change?
But my guess is he loves tree planting,
And spring will find him in the mountains -
No matter what his age.

Just an Idea

by Jack Heikkenen (Idaho City '51)

During the Gulf War in '91, the Iraqis set the Kuwait oil fields on fire. How many years it would take to put the fires out was unknown. Many experts were of the opinion it would take several years.

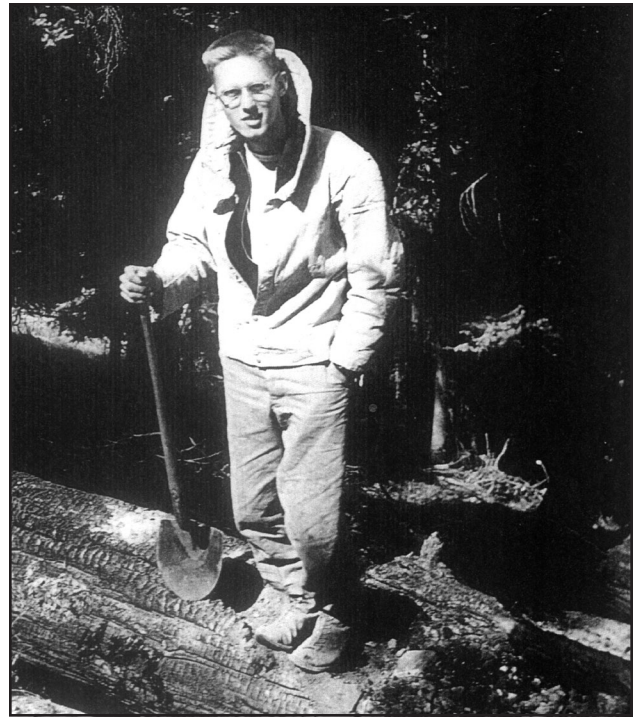
Historically, the accepted method of extinguishing oil fires was to use Red Adair's technique, utilizing explosive charges. Yet a different way was shown on Wolf Blitzer's CNN TV program. Wolf showed a fire crew from the Rumanian oil fields blowing out an oil fire with the windblast from a jet engine mounted on the back of a large flatbed truck. The jet blast blew out the oil fire in a few minutes!

I watched in amazement and thought how well this idea might work on both forest and grass fires in flat or slightly sloping terrain where there was vehicle access. It could be quite effective in residential areas. An oncoming fire could be blasted with a 100-200 M.P.H. wind back into the burned areas, the same as using backfires, the jet blast being similar to the idea of blowing out the candles on a birthday cake.

I wrote to the governors of several western states about this idea and heard back from only one. His staff passed the idea on to a state forester. I also wrote to the U.S. Forest Service and got the reply, "Thanks, but no thanks." They had tried fans a few times and had no success.

It is just an idea, but recently I saw on TV where research is being conducted using big fans to blow the smoke out of buildings and to lower the risk of "flashback" in urban structures. 🦉

Jack has had a long career in forestry and holds BSF, MF and PhD Degrees from the University of Michigan. He trained in McCall



Jack Heikkenen 1951 (Courtesy J. Heikkenen)

in 1951 and jumped out of Idaho City. After a tour of duty in Korea Jack spent four years in U.S.F.S. research, followed by a teaching career at the University of Washington and Virginia Tech. His brother, Ed Heikkenen (IDC-53), deceased, also jumped out of Idaho City. Ed became a Ranger on the Krassel District of the Payette National Forest and later worked at the National Inter-agency Fire Center in Boise.



Items from the Fire Pack



by Bill Fogarty (Missoula '57)

Scary Bear Stories

During the summer of 1943, I was stationed at Seeley Lake. In addition, there were ten U.S. Coast Guard fellows from Alaska. One was a hunting guide in the Ketchikan area. Two were from the Royal Canadian Air Force. They were all in training for jumps into remote areas,

not necessarily fires, and were all full of bear stories. One night about 20 fellows were telling bear stories in the bunkhouse. About nine o'clock, we decided to go over to the mess hall for a bedtime snack. We were almost to the mess hall when we heard a commotion in the kitchen. We thought a bear was in there and we all ran like mad back to the bunkhouse. One of the Canadians was on

crutches because he had broken his ankle on a training jump. He was the first one back. I can still see his excited big eyes. The next morning we found out the cook had made the noise while laying a fire for the cook stove to be ready for the next morning.

Ralph Ziegler (Missoula' 43)

Continued on page 29



Twin Otter, 8-Man Jump Plane



Ralph Wilde (MYC-46) & Wife Gayle



Ken Chase (ANC-67) & Cecil Hicks (NCSB-62)



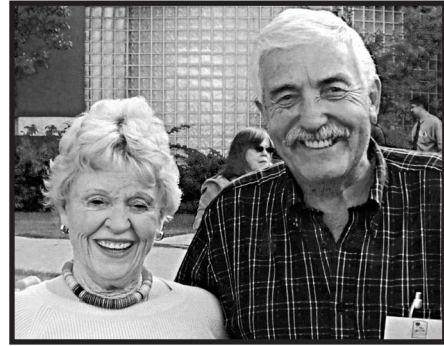
Park Gathering After Exhibition Jump



L-R: Gail Newman, Cecil Hicks (NCSB-62) & Wife Maureen, Greg West (FBX-64) & Wife Norma, Nick Newman (NCSB-60)



BLM Loft Tour

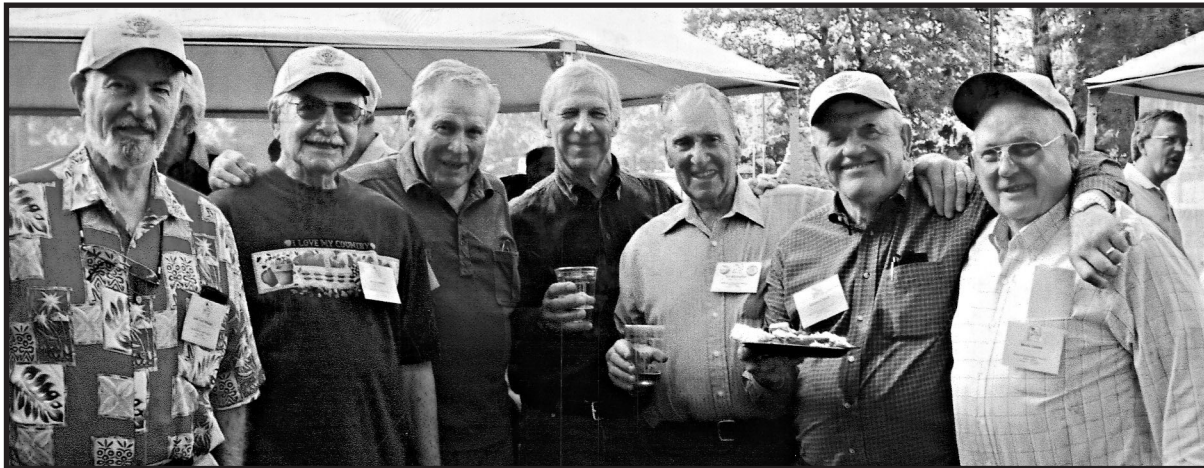


*Marilyn Bertram &
Monte Brooks (MYC-48)*

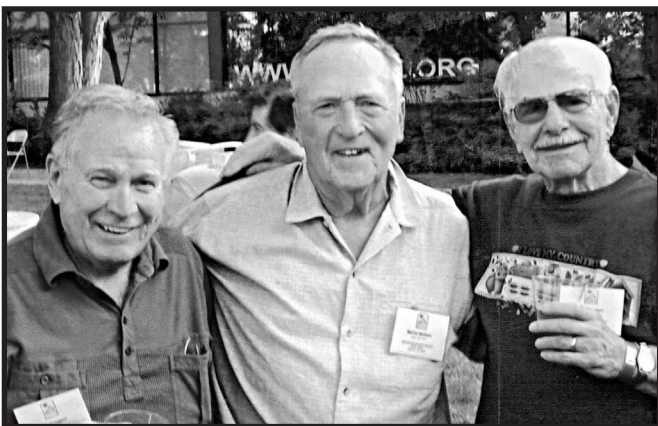


Boise Reunion 2007

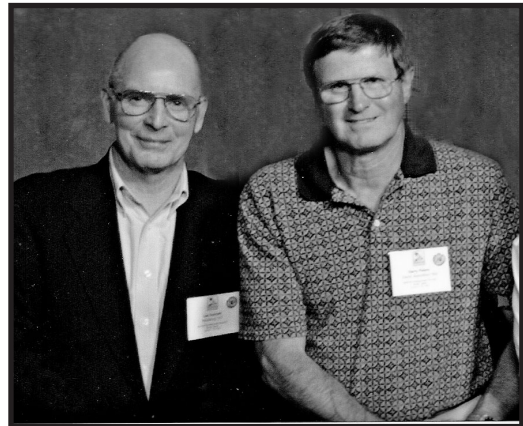
Photo Courtesy Cecil Hicks & Bus Bertram



*L-R: Ace Nielsen (MYC-46), Bernard Nielsen (MYC-47), Leo Compton (MYC-47),
Bud Filler (MYC-52), Ray Mansisidor (MYC-46), Lavon Scott (MYC-48) & Merle Cables (IDC-48)*



*Leo Compton (MYC-47), Bus Bertram (MYC-47),
& Bernard Nielsen (MYC-47)*



Lee Gossett (RDD-57) & Garry Peters (CJ-63)

Layout Design by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

SENATOR MAX BAUCUS (D-MT) announced his Stable Fire Funding Act at the Aerial Fire Depot in January. The act would create a new \$800 million trust fund the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management could draw on during extraordinary fire seasons. The interest generated from the fund would be used to cover 80 percent of firefighting costs exceeding agency budgets, freeing them from always having to “come back for replenishment,” Baucus said. Baucus also explained a provision he included in America’s Climate Security Act, passed by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in early December, that would provide \$1.1 billion every year to fight wildland fires. It’s a start...

In January, the Superintendent of Schools in Choteau, Montana, cancelled a speech by Nobel Laureate Dr. Steven Running of the University of Montana. Dr. Running was scheduled to give a speech to Choteau high school students about why he became a scientist, why science is important today, and the challenges facing the next generation of scientists. “I have to say I’ve never been cancelled by anyone before in

any venue, by any organization,” said Steve Running. “I think there’s a faction of society that is willfully ignorant, that they just don’t want to know the facts about this.” Apparently the Superintendent succumbed to pressure from a few shrill community members worried that Professor Running’s speech was going to promote a climate change agenda and would be anti-agriculture. Choteau was in the area of three of the biggest fires in Montana in 2007: the Ahorn Fire, the Novak Fire and the Hyland Fire.

A tip of the hard hat to the Lewis and Clark National Forest! Students from the alternative high school in Great Falls, Montana, skipped their spring break to undergo basic wildland firefighter training provided by staff from the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The students are now eligible for entry-level federal wildland firefighting positions. I am very excited to see the Lewis and Clark National Forest being proactive in addressing staffing issues. It is going to take some very creative thinking by all agencies involved in wildland firefighting to overcome staffing problems like the one last year that left 20% of the Federal wildland engines go unstaffed.

A coal seam fire that has been burning since the 1984 Hawk Creek Fire may have caused the 600-acre Marsh Assist Fire south of Roundup, Montana, last January. Shortly before he passed away, Denny Lynch told me he was in Lewistown in one of his A-26 Invader Air Tankers when the Hawk Creek Fire broke out. Lewistown BLM dispatch told him to fly over the fire and report back. He flew to the fire and reported it was 2-3 acres at the time and asked permission to drop his load, which would knock down the fire. The dispatcher refused to let him drop retardant on the fire and ordered him to fly to Billings and wait further orders. Deny said he flew to Billings and landed. When he got out of the plane, he looked north and he said, “It looked like Hiroshima.” The Hawk Creek Fire ultimately burned 173,000 acres and 44 homes in a 35-mile swath that almost went as far as the Yellowstone River at Forsyth. I am still amazed at how that area looks every time I drive through there.

“Only one military organization can hold and gain ground in war - a ground army supported by tactical aviation...” - General Omar N. Bradley 1951 🇺🇸

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.

The Cherry Creek Fire, July 1986

by "Wild Bill" Yensen (McCall '53)

This past summer I spent a few months at my cabin in McCall as I do every year. St George is way too hot in summers! It was a very busy fire season, so I tried to help out by leading tours at the jumper base. On my first group tour, going to see a video about smokejumping, I walked in the room and a guy who was working there grabbed me and said, "I was on the Cherry Creek Fire with you back in '86." It was Garry Phillips who, back in '86, was on the Salmon River Ranger District on the Nez Perce. Naturally, we had to see how our memories matched and renew our acquaintance.

Later, I got together with **John Humphries** (MYC-79), who was in charge of the jumpers on that fire, and we decided to write it up for posterity. Here is what we came up with after 21 years.

The fire call came in at 0856 on July 2, 1986. We only had 11 jumpers in McCall, so we loaded them all up and took off in the Doug N46Z with **Stan McGrew** at the controls. We flew north to the Salmon River just beyond the end of the road and spotted the fire in the very steep Salmon River breaks country.

Leo Cromwell (IDC-66) and **Jim Diederich** (RDD-70) were the spotters. They picked an opening at the top and jumped all hands in fair conditions. First out were **Doug Dean** (MYC-85) and **Joe Fox** (MYC-81). Next out were Humphries and myself. I remember our descent was uneventful; I landed in a nice open place, as did John. We bagged our gear as the rest of the guys jumped. The next two were **Dave Theis** (RAC-83) and **Pat Withen** (NIFC-79); then came **Jim Cammon** (MYC-81) and **Greg Beck** (MYC-78); then **Mark Brondum** (MYC-81) and **James "Buck" Buchanan** (NIFC-71). Poor Buck hit a rock, bruising his butt, and was obviously hurting. The last guy down was **Barry Gall** (MYC-81).

Humphries had us stow our gear in a safe place, tool up and head down the hill to the fire. It was steep! We got to the fire and started mopping it up. After an hour we had it all out except one little ball of moss on a place so steep that extreme care had to be taken to get to it. One slip and what was left of you would end up in the Salmon River a 1000 feet below. Hump took a canteen of water and was working his way out to that little ball of moss when the wind came up, and boy-howdy, did it come up! Hump was only inches away from that clump of burning moss when the wind hit it and blew it up the hill into some dry grass and away went the fire! We frantically tried to dig line around it from the bottom, where we were, up the flanks. The fire was starting to go up a pitchy pine tree, and Jim Cammon yelled, "Toss me a shovel so I can cool this off." Hump tossed him a shovel from some 40-feet away. With the steepness of that hillside, poor Jim could hardly move, and the shovel hit his boot and about cut off his little toe.

By this time, the fire was gone. We did what we could for Cammon. Then we all climbed up near the top to a safe place and watched the fire go to project size. In that wind and that amount of dry fuel, there was nothing we could do but stay there. We got a helicopter to come in and take Buck and Jim out, as they were out of action.



Bill Yensen (NSA file)

Gary Phillips and three helicopter guys came to join us at our place of safety. We were sitting there watching that fire blow up, and there was nothing we could do. I looked at Gary, who had a buck knife on his belt. I said, "I'll do your Buck for a buck." He said, "What?" Then I showed him my Buck knife on which I had engraved jumper wings, 1953 (the year I trained), McCall and my name. Anyway, he gave me his buck knife, and I got my tools out of my PG bag (I was never without them) and engraved his name on his knife as the fire raged around us.

As the fire raged on, it burned up to that safe place where we had stowed our gear and we lost all our jump gear. This was the second time in my 30 seasons my gear had burned. To this day, the masks off of my burned helmets hang on the wall of my cabin in McCall.

This fire was a great example of how close you can come to total success and Mother Nature can turn it in to disaster. Hump was only seconds away from putting it out cold when that wind hit. What a wind! I took a movie of Hump and his hair was blown straight out like a flag in a gale.

Our job was initial attack and we just barely failed. As the fire was now project size, we were taken off by helicopter to the end of the road at 2000, trucked to Riggins, where we ate supper in a restaurant, and sent back to McCall, arriving at 0100.

That was the first fire jump of my last year of jumping. Gary was still carrying his Buck knife this last summer so I looked at it. Then I added at the other end of his knife, "Cherry Creek '86."

I learned to engrave from an old man I knew when I was in high school. He had made his living engraving from 1890 until 1910. He knew that no one in his family cared about engraving, and he was afraid that his tools would be thrown

away when he died (he was 85 in 1950). He liked me and asked if I would like to learn and I said, "You bet!" He gave me his tools and showed me how to use them. When I was in the Army in Germany in 1957, I found I had a great place to practice engraving. Nearly all the GI's smoked, and they all had Zippo lighters. I would engrave anything they wanted on a lighter for a quarter. I did enough Zippo lighters at two-bits each to buy a strobe unit for my camera outfit. Back in the States, I started jumping again. The first engraving I ever did for a jumper was for **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), my hero. I put "WRW" on the little pocket knife he used as he sewed. In the late '60s I started engraving jump wings on McCall guys' knives. In 1972, I was in Fairbanks on standby, and I did four knives for guys from MSO. From that day until I retired, ev-

ery place I went knives would stack up in front of me. I have no idea how many I have done. I did one for **Francis Luffkin** (NCSB-39) and two for **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49) at the Boise reunion I must have had over a 100 guys tell me they still had the knife I engraved for them. This means more to me than anything! Any jumper who would like me to do a knife for him or her, just send it to me with enough postage money to get it back (plus one beer), and I will engrave wings, rookie year, base and name, and send it right back.

Your old bro, Wild Bill. 🦉

Yensenw@infowest.com 150 S. Crystal Lakes #37, St George, UT, 84770

FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS— THE NSA AT WORK

National Smokejumper Association:

I would like to thank the National Smokejumper Association for their generous donation of \$500 to help my family restore our home after it was flooded. The flood of the Chehalis River that occurred December 3, 2007, was a catastrophic event for many families in our area of Southwest Washington. We had 14 inches of water in our home. Luckily we have an upstairs where we were able to carry many of our belongings out of harms way. The sadness for many families is that the flood occurred during the holiday season and that it takes many months to get back to normalcy. As of today (January 2007), we are living on CDX plywood in our lower level. The only furniture in our living room, a kitchen range and refrigerator, is a daily reminder of jobs that need to be accomplished. We are so grateful that you and other caring and giving people have come forward to help our community.

There is something to the phrase on the smokejumper home page, "the best job I ever had." I have always felt the closeness of the "brotherhood" of smokejumpers. Last fall at the smokejumper reunion at NCSB, the warmth I felt as I visited with past jumpers

and friends overwhelmed me. I felt so welcomed by my past friends and the phrase, "We were hoping you would come to the reunion," is something that cannot be taken away. There is a bond between smokejumpers that is not always achieved in many of our jobs and careers that we have after our unique experiences of being a smokejumper. Once you are a smokejumper, you are always a part of that family. Thank you for thinking of me, I think of you often.

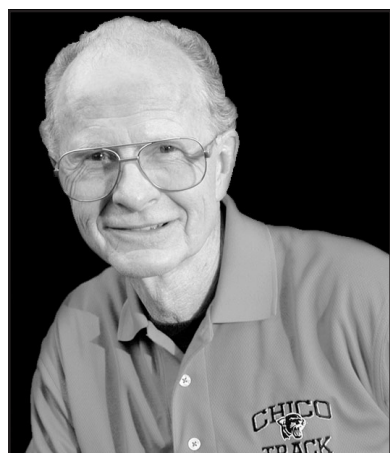
Darryl (Zeke) Christian
(NCSB-74)
peafowl@localaccess.com



L-R: Darryl Christian (NCSB-74) is presented a check for \$500 by Past President Larry Luffkin (CJ-63).



Sounding Off from the Editor



by Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)
MANAGING EDITOR

IT HAS BEEN A FEW ISSUES since I did this column. Producing a column every three months sounds easy, but after eight years there are times when there is nothing to say. Figured that I have articles stacked up for three issues in advance and could use the space in any case.

A couple years ago I met **Bill Fogarty** (MSO-57) over the Internet when he joined the NSA. Bill submitted an article for the magazine, and somehow I got to talking to him about helping me with editing this magazine. My "staff" consisted of my wife, K.G., and myself. I needed some help doing the time-consuming tasks of arranging articles in the proper format, checking sentence structure, and, most of all, cutting words and the length of the article.

Bill had a great smokejumper background, jumping at Missoula, New Mexico, Alaska and Redding. He was a high school and elementary school principal for eleven years and had taught overseas. The submissions to the magazine can really stack up if they are not handled quickly. I would mail an article to Bill; he would work it over and send it back. My wife did the final check-over and

it went into an issue.

He recently moved from Aberdeen, Washington, to Leavenworth, Kansas, and we were getting the editing system up and going again.

On March 31st I got an email from Bill: "Reckon this will be one of the strangest e-mails you have ever received. Certainly, it is one of the strangest I've ever written. Here's where it gets weird. Sometime during our decision to sell our home in WA and move to KS and the move into our new digs, I caught a case of lung cancer. Six doctors, three hospitals, plus many tests. Diagnosis is 'for sure' and prognosis is not good - probably (hopefully) I have a few weeks at most. Tis not all bad. Family has had time to prepare and adjust and I've had time to put things in order. Hospice got evolved last week and everything is going as well as can be expected. I'm not big on 'goodbyes' or the 'sympathy' thing, so don't let this rain on your parade. A simple, 'Sorry about that' will suffice. Moreover, please DON'T POST this on the NSA website. If I received no response, that would make me sad. If I received a number of responses, I'm not up to handling the replies. An appropriate obit will be provided."

Today, just two days later, I got an email from Bill's daughter, Mary: "I'm Bill's daughter. Dad passed away this morning very quickly and calmly. He had a great night last night - played with Ryan (grandson), ate dinner and was feeling really good. Thank you for giving him the opportunity to edit for *Smokejumper* magazine these past few years. I can't tell you how much he enjoyed it."

Well, Bill, the pleasure was all mine. I have had a good friend for the past two years that I never would



have had the opportunity to meet if there was not a National Smokejumper Association. I consider the guys that I jumped with to be among my closest and most respected friends. The connections made through the NSA and this magazine have put me into contact with those individuals again. In addition, I have met many quality people from the other bases.

The obit column is a regular and always has new names. That will not change. Thanks to the NSA for keeping us in touch and expanding our circle of friends.

On the back page of the April issue I put, what to me, was a very touching photo of Bill and his grandson with the caption "Grandpa, I want to be a Smokejumper when I grow up." This magazine was put together two months before Bill sent me the email. Strange how things work out. I would just add "Smokejumper like you" to that caption. 🌲

Mountains

by Steve Culbertson (NCSB-63)

I stand here on my porch,
And scarce can take it in,
The majesty and beauty of your heights.

I am no longer young.
The wooded slopes and rocky crags
Mock my body; challenge my will.

I was your master once.
Striding up on youthful limbs,
I blazed your trails, I fought your fires.

Now I gaze in silence,
Betrayed by my body,
Resenting the warm fire and soft bed
That holds me in a firm embrace.

Uncanny Timing

By Steve Carlson (Idaho City '62)

It had been a wonderful weekend of meeting and greeting acquaintances from long ago, and making some new friends, as well, at the 2004 Smokejumper Reunion in Missoula. Sunday morning, after the Memorial Service, a group of us who had jumped in Idaho City during the early 1960s were sitting around a table reminiscing about the "old days." We got into the classic "Where is he now?" conversation, which seems to happen anytime two or more of us have a quiet moment together at one of these events. In any of these groups someone always knows some recent details about whoever's name has come up. We mentioned and resolved the location and activities of several of the jumpers from that era, as well as the demise of a few, but the one name that stuck with me was **George Smith** (IDC-62).

George had picked up the nickname of "Pappy" since he was the oldest "Ned" (rookie) that year. If I remember correctly, he was 27, which at that time was the upper age limit on first year smokejumpers. Of the fourteen Neds trained in McCall in 1962, George, myself, and five others went to Idaho City. There were only 20 on the whole Idaho City crew that year, so we got to be a pretty tight bunch.

Dick Graham (IDC-58) was at the table and mentioned that he had been in touch with George through the years. He said that George usually made the reunions, but was having some health issues and couldn't make this one. And by the way, he lived on Anderson Island in Washington State. "Note to self," says I, "Keep that in mind," because I live about 20 miles from the island. I mentioned that I would give him a call when I got home and maybe get together with him, since I lived so close.

Well, am I the only one who gets home from these affairs and the phone rings, the lawn needs mowing, the faucet leaks, and the reunion conversations get dim? I hope not. At any rate, that is what happened. Over the next two years, I often thought about Ole Pappy, but didn't do anything. In the fall of 2006, the thought hit me hard that I should get in touch with George, so I got out the phone book. Of course, George Smith isn't an uncommon name, and there were several, as well as some "G. Smith's" listed on Anderson Island. Nuts! I went to the Smokejumper web site, where I got his email address and sent him the following note in the mid afternoon of August 16, 2006:

Hoot George.

I saw Dick Graham at the Missoula reunion, and he said he was in contact with you and told me where you lived. So, I'm in Gig Harbor. I looked in the phone book, and there is room for confusion there, so thought I'd try this route.

I would like to get a chance to share life stories with you, if you are inclined.

Are you considering going to the Boise reunion? I've been to

the last couple and have really enjoyed them.

Drop a note when you get a chance.

Regards,

Steve Carlson

In separate and totally independent incidents, two other things happened that day. First, **Bill Harro** (MYC-68) was planning to attend a wedding a few weeks later in Olympia, WA, a few miles south of Anderson Island. He called George to chat and, perhaps, plan to see him when he was in the area.

Second, Doug Erb, one of George's schoolmates from the second grade on, had had a dream a night or two before about himself and George. In the dream they were walking down a trail. When they came to a fork in the trail, George said "I have to go this way, see you later." He hadn't talked to George for several years, and the dream bothered him somewhat. A mutual friend of Doug and George's called Doug to tell him that George had died (August 16), and he called Judy, George's wife.

The next morning (August 17, 2006) I found the following in my email inbox:

Dear Steve:

How Surreal (sp?)

George died today, 8/16/06 on our 31st Anniversary. It was not so bad.

We both needed "Peace." I will remember this day as a time of joy and not sadness. Ole Pappy fought so hard and long, he just wore himself out. He's gone but I was by his side and helped him leave with dignity and pride.

I must admit to never knowing this guy even after all our time together.

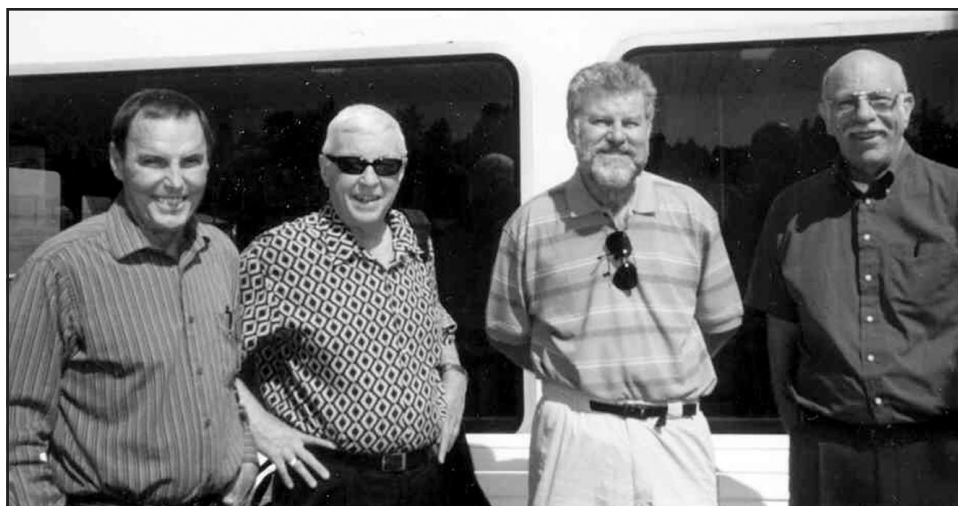
He was full of surprises and his talents were endless. As you may understand, - I'm grieving (Big Time) tonight.

Fondly, Jude

Was that surreal? You bet! I was more than stunned! Try to get in touch with someone more than 40 years after last seeing him and pick the day he dies. I had never met Judy, and of course, she had no idea in the world who I was. However, we traded a few emails in the following weeks. One of her nephews, Kurt Smith, was putting a slide show together for the memorial service and didn't have many pictures of smokejumping, so I sent him some of mine to use in the show. I knew that after the bizarre timing of my initial email and sending the pictures, that I had to go to the memorial service.

It turned out that there were four ex-smokejumpers who attended the service-Bill Harro, **Glenn Hale** (MYC-57), **Jack Cahill** (MSO-58), and myself. Glenn and Jack knew each other prior to this. Neither Bill nor I knew them or each other, although we had seen each other in passing at reunions. Some-

how we found each other in the ferry terminal as we were waiting for the boat to go to the island for George's service. We got acquainted and even shared a jump story or two on the boat. Jack and Glenn knew George in Southeast Asia where they were all working in the mid 1960s



L-R: Glenn Hale, Jack Cahill, Bill Harro and Steve Carlson. (Courtesy S. Carlson)

doing Air America stuff. Bill knew him from smokejumping in Alaska in the 1970s.

The setting for the service was perfect. A small country church, crisp and sunny fall weather, several of George's friends, some from as far back as grade school, four ex-smokejumpers, a Navy color guard, and, of course, lots of relatives. Jon Fox, the husband of George's niece Linda, was at the pulpit to preside over the gathering. Linda's brother, Jack Sand, played the piano. Kurt's slide show of George's life was great. Everyone saw something about George that they related to and also some facet of him they didn't know about.

George had been in Submarines while serving in the Navy before he started smokejumping. The Navy color guard formally folded and then presented a U.S. flag to Judy.

Then it was "open mike" time, which can be a dangerous thing, with or without smokejumpers in the crowd. Stories about George came from all corners, and I'll share a couple. Apparently George was destined to be a smokejumper from his youth. Someone told the story of George, when he was about 6 or 7 years old, wanting to jump off a porch and do a flip on the way down. He asked George if he had ever done either a flip or jumped off the porch, and the answer was, "No, but it looks easy enough!" George jumped, flipped, and landed flat on his back, which knocked the wind (as well as some enthusiasm) out of him.

Another friend, Lee Boulet, spoke about how broke they were as roommates in college. They took turns buying food. When George's turn came, he bought only several boxes of JELL-O! He knew they needed energy, and JELL-O was his idea of the "Best Alternative to Food." He thought it had lots of energy, so he figured it was a great choice! They never forgave him.

Jack Cahill told about an incident in 1964 or 1965 when they were in Laos. George went out on an all day helicopter trip looking for potential helicopter and STOL airplane landing sites. Around noon word came in that a helicopter had crashed, and they thought it was the one George was on. Further investigation confirmed that it was his helicopter. A rescue crew got to the site later that day and found a couple of badly burned survivors, but no George, so they assumed he

had "bought it." Later, with that in mind, Jack and a couple of buddies headed up to George's hooch and started dividing up his stuff, as was the local custom in these situations. In the middle of dividing up his stuff, in walks George! He wanted to

know what they were doing and got pissed when they wouldn't give him his stuff back! Jack figures they really did him a favor, though, because George's stuff was pretty well worn and needed to be replaced, anyway. It turned out that the helicopter had landed, then made an unscheduled delivery, and left George behind, but crashed before it got back to pick him up.

As soon as I had decided to attend George's service, I wondered what I could do or say when I got there. I didn't know anyone, and I didn't have any good tales to tell on George, but I did have strong feelings about missing out on a chance to see him before he died. I know that I don't tend to do well with words at a time like that, but I figured I had to say something, if for no other reason than to explain why I was there. I had recently read a couple of "Cowboy Poetry" books. It seems that there is one of these poems for any situation you can think of, and lots of others for situations you would never imagine. One of these came to mind that had a lot of the right words for the way I felt about this situation that I now found myself in. It related to cowboys, of course, but I believe there is a lot of common ground between smokejumpers and cowboys. At any rate, I found the poem and re-read it a couple of times, then took the liberty of editing it (quite heavily, actually), as the day approached. At the memorial service I introduced myself and explained how I knew George, then read it. Here it is, in the category of "Don't let this happen to you" or "Now would be a good time to call."

Ode to Pappy

Adapted by Stephen Carlson from the poem "Shorty" by Waddie Mitchell. Used by permission, Waddie's Words Publishing.

In my email the other day,
It hurt me when I read
That Pappy Smith had passed away
While laying in his bed.

I got those feelin's that ya get
When a pardner's soul's been freed,
And I knew we'd lost another
Of the last of a special breed.

I'd heard how Pappy had been sick
And wasn't doing well,
And figured I would take some time
And visit him a spell.

But, well, I never made it
Before ol' George died.
Damn, I could have seen him,
But I never really tried.

Then my memories started wanderin'
Back to other pals I've missed,
And it got a little scary
As I made a mental list.

And it made me start to think about
Some things on my back shelf –
Like friends I haven't seen for years,
And how history repeats itself.

How bases that we've jumped from
Have closed down and are no more.
And I'm startin' now to understand
What others get all choked up for.

I suppose it's in the scheme of things,
And we all have our regrets,
And I reckon it's just one more thing
That living life begets.

But when Pappy's name comes up
In a story later on,
I'll prob'ly pause and blink a tear
And say, "I really should have gone." 🕯

Jumper Recounts Mann Gulch Experience

by Eugene "Jake" Dougherty (Missoula'48)

In the spring of 1947 I was discharged from the 82nd Airborne. My cousin, an ex-Marine wounded on Guam, got me a job at the Moose Creek Ranger Station. We cleared the trails and maintained the phone lines to the lookout towers. My boss was a hard-working driver who prepared me for the smokejumper training in the summer of 1948.

In 1948 I trained under **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41) and will never forget what he said about the Army Airborne: "Forget what they taught you. You guys are going to jump in the trees." I loved Fred Brauer. He lived a long and colorful life and commanded respect. We said that he was the "John Wayne" of the smokejumpers.

Myself, **Herb Oertli** (MSO-48), **Francis Anywaush** (MSO-46) and **Ed Ladendorff** (MSO-46) were working at the Moose Creek station under **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) in the helicopter project. Pilot Jack Hughes would fly two jumpers to a mountaintop where we would clear the snags. The idea was to clear the mountaintops so we could rappel to more fires.

When the Mann Gulch Fire oc-

curred Earl had our crew, along with squadleader **Skip Stratton** (MSO-47), fly to the Helena Airport where we were transported to the Hilger Landing and boated to Mann Gulch. The tragedy was on every radio station and was beginning to show on the front pages of newspapers across the nation. Much of the information was wrong. Some stories had the jumpers caught by flames before they could free themselves from their jump gear. Other reports said they were burned alive while hanging in the trees. These reports brought a deluge of phone calls and telegrams from friends, relatives and concerned citizens.

As we started our search, the first jumper I found was **Phil McVey** (MSO-48), and I dropped to my knees and cried. I had stayed at his ranch in St. Ignatius and had fond memories. The only recognizable things left on most of the bodies were the boots and belt buckles. We had trouble locating two bodies. They looked like logs. We were there three days doing the recovery and some of us got very sick.

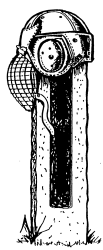
In 1950 I worked for the Johnson Flying Service. They were very tight



Jake Dougherty July 1949 (NSA file)

and only paid me 75 cents an hour. The government added 50 cents to bring me to \$1.25 an hour. We went down to Oregon to spray the Spruce Bud Worm. In the winter they made me a night watchman and paid me with flying lessons. I had a motorcycle and kept my tank full by draining gas out of the helicopter. 🕯

Jake is living in Canton, Georgia (30115) and can be reached at 904 Marabella Ln.



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.

Stuart Nuss (Missoula '79)

Stuart died December 24, 2007, at his home in Columbia Falls, Montana. He was the owner of Nuss Excavating and had worked for the National Park Service for over 20 years. His last NPS assignment was at Glacier N.P., where he was the park's roads supervisor. Stuart jumped at Missoula and West Yellowstone.

Francis L. Polutnik (Missoula '52)

Fran died January 23, 2008, in Helena, Montana. He attended the University of Montana and was in the U.S. Navy on active duty and the reserves, retiring as a Commander in 1983. Fran jumped at Missoula in 1952 and West Yellowstone 1953-55. He joined the Montana State Highway Patrol in 1955 and retired in 1980 as a Captain. He then took over as chief driving examiner for Montana Driver Services, moving to bureau chief for the Montana Department of Justice for Driver Improvement. He retired in 1988 after 33 years of dedicated service to Montana.

Warren J. Ellison (Pilot)

Warren died February 8, 2008. He was a long-time smokejumper pilot, starting his career with the Johnson Flying Service in 1943 and was one of the initial pilots qualified to drop smokejumpers. Warren and Frank Small were in the cockpit of the DC-3 the afternoon that it dropped jumpers on the fateful Mann Gulch Fire in 1949. When the same DC-3 (24230) crash-landed in the Monongahela River in Pennsylvania in 1954, he went to retrieve the aircraft. The aircraft was dried out, minor repairs made, and Warren flew the plane back to Missoula. Warren left Johnson Flying Service in 1956 and began a career in corporate aviation.

Cecil Owen Riffe (Cave Junction '60)

Cecil Owen died February 3, 2008, in Anchorage. He graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in Architecture in 1967 and became a full-time resident of Alaska. Cecil jumped two seasons at Cave Junction, four seasons at Fairbanks, and three seasons in the Anchorage District. He worked as the city administrator for Hooper Bay for six years and, from 2000 to 2007, was the owner of World Planning, Design & Management. In his business he designed and built many buildings throughout Alaska and also served on the school boards in the Iditarod and Lower Yukon Districts.

William H. Mast Jr. (Missoula '68)

Bill died of cancer February 28, 2008, at his home in Missoula. He served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, was stationed at McCord AFB in Washington, and did two tours in South Korea. Bill graduated from the University of Montana in 1976 with a degree in business. He was a NSA member and jumped at Missoula for five seasons.

Stan Nye (Pilot)

Stan died in Tucson on November 28, 2007. He was critically injured several days earlier at the Marana Air Park while working in the nose landing gear compartment of a Boeing 747. For a yet undetermined reason the gear suddenly collapsed, trapping him inside. The cause of the accident is under investigation. Stan was a contract smokejumper pilot for over 20 years. His flying career started with Johnson Flying Service in the early 1960s, and he later flew for Intermountain Aviation and Sierra Pacific Airlines. While he dropped jumpers from almost all the bases, he spent most of his fire seasons in Missoula, McCall, and his proclaimed favorite, Silver City. He was well known for his flying skills and ready wit.

Ralph E. Wilde (McCall '46)

Ralph Edwin Wilde, 86, of McCall, died March 9, 2008. Upon graduation from Cascade High School, Ralph enlisted in the Navy and served in WW II as a CB in the South Pacific area. After an honorable discharge from the Navy, Ralph was a squadleader in McCall during the 1946 season. He jumped from 1946 until 1949 when a back fracture from landing on a rock ended his career. He immensely enjoyed his smokejumping experience and the friends he made while fighting fires, as well as those he has made at Jumper Coffee hours. Ralph's brother Paul (deceased) also rookied at McCall in 1946.

W. Thomas "Tom" McGrath (Missoula '57)

Tom died March 9, 2008. He was a retired professor of forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University. Tom earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Montana and went on to earn his Ph.D. in plant pathology from the University of Wisconsin. He lived abroad in Italy, New Zealand and Australia in his youth, and served as an interim professor for six months in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1991. Tom jumped out of Missoula for twelve different

seasons in a career that spanned a time period from 1957 through 1985. He was a NSA member and active in the Trail Maintenance Program.

Albert R. Bowman (Missoula '49)

Albert died December 1, 2007, in Kernersville, N.C. He was a retired lieutenant colonel U.S. Marine Corps and served in Korea and Vietnam. After serving in the Marine Corps, he was employed by the Department of Education in New Mexico. Al jumped the 1949-50 seasons at Missoula.

Wilmer "Bill" Carlsen (Missoula '43)

Bill, 91, of Polson died March 28, 2008, at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula.

He was a longtime resident of Missoula and Polson. Bill was one of the original CPS-103 jumpers and one of the few who jumped all three seasons of the program's existence. He was an NSA member.

Walter D. Pilkey (Missoula '55)

Walt died Monday, August 27, 2007. He received a B.A. degree from Washington State University, an M.A. degree from Purdue University, and his Ph.D. from Penn State University. Walt was a Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Virginia. He had been on the faculty at University of Virginia since 1969. Before coming to University of Virginia, he taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, and worked at IIT Research Institute. While an undergraduate at Washington State University, Walt was on the varsity wrestling team, and he jumped at Missoula during the 1955-56 seasons.

William R. Fogarty (Missoula '57)

Bill died on April 1, 2008, in Leavenworth, KS. He was born in Akron, Ohio, on September 11, 1938. He graduated from Mogadore High School, received his Bachelors and Masters degrees from Kent State University, and earned his Fifth Year Specialist Degree from the University of Idaho in Moscow. He spent most of his career in education, first as a teacher and then as a primary and secondary school principal. He spent summers in the West during his high school years, traveling from Ohio to work for the Washington State Department of Forestry. He would live and work all over the West for the next 50 years, in Montana, Idaho, Colorado, New Mexico, Alaska and Washington. He instilled his spirit of adventure in his children, who both served in the Army.

Bill treasured his memories of the years he spent smokejumping. He jumped with the first crew in Alaska. He also spent seasons in Silver City and Redding. He became involved in the smokejumping community again after he retired from education, editing for *Smokeyjumper* Magazine for several years.

George A. Wetherell (Pilot)

George died April 23, 2008, at his home in Butte. He earned his private pilot license when he was 16. George worked as a flight instructor and smokejumper pilot in Missoula and West Yellowstone. He served 32 years as corporate pilot for the Montana Power Co., retiring as chief pilot in 2000.

Following his retirement, he worked as a pilot for Coyote Aviation. 🦋

Howling at the Moon

The old smokejumping ranger Monte Barker had a plan
"I'll call for a load of jumpers to pound rock into sand"

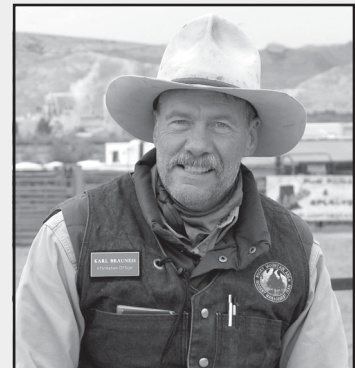
We built new trail, improved a few; we worked to beat the band
Before the winter caught us turning white the forest land

We ended up at Venus; a cabin way on high
Headwaters of the Greybull; wilderness few had tried
Took rest there and washed a bit; relaxed our tired sides
Soon sun went down; a bonfire glowed and whiskey filled our hides
Then Jimmy Lee jumped on the roof; *"your souls I'm going to save"*
We chanted back; coyotes' joined a howling to the blaze
As shadows rose on canyon walls songs echoed twilights gaze
Like demons of the Satan choir our voices we did raise

Now Monte lead his mules by horse to re-supply our camp
Three miles away in blackness he saw the shadows dancing
And heard their mournful praise

*"Now steady mules I do believe that Satan's on the loose
Or else two weeks in wilderness turned jumpers into fools"*

A cheer arose; when the ranger a rode and lifted right on queue
His mules joined in with coyote; a braying at the moon
I am here to say it was '78 with Monte and his mules
The night Missoula Jumpers and the Devil danced a tune



Karl Brauneis (Karl Brauneis)

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Items from the Fire Pack



Continued from page 17

by Bill Fogarty (Missoula '57)

Hubie - The Cook

Our eleventh man at Big Prairie was **Hubert Blackwell** (MSO), who had accepted assignment to be our cook for four months. A jumper like the rest of us, he would be the last man to be tagged for a jump. He had excellent skills derived from years of experience as a woodsman, hunter and fisherman in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. The job helped Hubie fulfill his strong yearning to fish and hunt, as our provided foods were mainly canned and packaged items flown weekly from Missoula - if the plane were not pre-empted for fire fighting missions. Hubie quickly began to supplement our diet from the river and mountains. Two or three mornings a week, he would rise an hour or more early and catch a mess of delicious fresh cutthroat trout for breakfast. In the evening or after breakfast, he periodically hunted and put fresh meat on the dinner table from deer, elk and bear, each well-prepared after he shot, hauled it into camp on one the Forest Service pack horses, dressed the carcass and strung it high on a tree to cure, than finally butchered it. Hubie, without a doubt, was the most admired man in the squad.

Norman Kriebel (Missoula '43)

A Fire Not Put Out

The last cutting of hay was in, and some of the Menard Camp jumpers were baling hay. However, there was the wheat that had just been cut northwest of the remount depot. They could not have picked a hotter day to assign the job of shocking the wheat to **Phil Stanley** (MSO-43), **Ted Lewis** (MSO-43), **Art Geisler** (MSO-43) and myself. As we worked along I just happened to lean on my pitchfork just once,

and looking back east to the remount depot, I saw a heavy dark smoke which appeared to be at the east end of the barn. I yelled, "Fire!" to the guys, and we all dropped our forks and took off for the barn. It wasn't the barn that was on fire, but a farmer's house just across the road. When we arrived, a FS person had pulled the hose cart from the barn and we helped him get the hose over there. When we turned on the water, the old, unused hose spouted water from several leaks. However, with more pressure, a friendly little stream did come to life, and we started dousing the fire. No one was home, so it was just the four of us. The FS man had disappeared somewhere. We could not get into the house or get anything out of it, but we kept on hosing it. I remember standing astride the top of the roof on the barn calling out any spot fires that appeared in the barn lot, on which they sprayed enough water to put them out. The family arrived later, shocked to find their house burned to the ground and the four of us doing them very little good. Eventually we left, and went back to our pitchforks and wheat. It was just one of the variety of fires our camp went on that summer. But it was one we couldn't put out.

Asa Mundell (Missoula '43)

A Bear in the Garbage Pit

I recall when **Phil Thomforde** (MSO-45) tried to kill a bear with a splitting ax. It reminded me of some Disney cartoon. A bear had gotten into our garbage pit. **Raymond Phibbs** (MSO-44) and I were in the cabin. We went to the back door just in time to see Phil poised over the pit with an ax raised in the air. We hollered not to hit the bear, but we were too late. The bear heard us and

came up out of the pit. Phil swung the ax with all he had. He hit a glancing blow to the side of the bear's head. The bear walked off about 20 feet and looked back at Phil as if to say, "What do you think you're doing?" Later, a Forest Service packer said he saw a bear with a sore on the side of its head. Phil was lucky the bear was a pacifist!

Oliver Petty (Missoula '43)

Swan Dive

We were jumping in a high wind; my feet caught in the top of a tree. This partially deflated my chute, and it blew on past me and below, pulling me out of the tree. I then had the unique sensation of making a beautiful 50-foot swan dive, soaring head first toward rocks and downed timber. Always the perfectionist, I was just extending my arms and arching my body to make as little "splat" as possible (perhaps even secretly admiring my diving form), when my chute snagged on a lower tree and caught me up short. It ruined my flawless trajectory by swinging me into the tree's trunk, a few feet off the ground. There are those who report that the tree trunk suffered bruises.

George Robinson (Missoula '44)

Pow Wow Jump

In the fall of 1944, the Forest Service people over at Enterprise, Oregon, asked for a demonstration jump at their Pow Wow at the airport. Again, the Travelaire took with **John Johnson** (MSO-44), **Ed Nafziger** (MSO-43) and I to show our effectiveness at hitting the mark and snuffing out the fire. After about an hour, the Snake River appeared far below and soon Enterprise came into view. After circling the airport and observing the sizable crowd and the "X", which was the target, we

climbed to about 800-1000 feet, dropped the drift chute, made the second circle and at the appropriate spot, fell out the door. Johnnie and I missed the spot by about one-eighth mile. Ed came closest and sprained his ankle so badly that he couldn't walk. By the time we reloaded and took off for McCall, we surely had set smokejumping back at least a decade. We didn't kill the program, but we surely seemed to be trying!

Laurel Sargent (McCall '44)

Let Me Help

The consideration for others seemed to be a natural trait of the smokejumpers. **Oliver "Ollie" Huset** (MSO-44) had a particularly rough landing in Lolo Forest about ten miles from a road. His concussion made it advisable to call in a stretcher crew. It seems that while they were carrying him he took pity on the bearers and suggested, "Why don't one of you get down here and let me help carry this thing awhile?" **Addison Carlson's** (MSO-43) reply was, "Lay down, Ollie, you're rocking the boat".

Earl Schmidt (Missoula '43)

Head For the Creek Boys!

This was a huge fire on Meadow Creek, just off the Salmon River in Idaho. We had a lot of jumpers on the fire, as well as some paratroopers, and I believe that there were some Italian war prisoners too.

It was a big fire that crowned and roared up the hillside. We were at the bottom of the creek, exhausted from working on it, and we stopped for a rest. I was leaning back on one of the 50-foot trees, when all of a sudden the fire just seemed to take off. The tree I was leaning against suddenly exploded and literally blew up. We all headed for the creek at the bottom of the gulch and got into it along with the deer, rabbits, maybe a bear and some other creatures. We would duck under the water and then come up for air, and then get soaking wet again. When the crowning was over,

we climbed out and went back to work on the fire. We had no relief crew to come in and mop up, so we stayed on the fire until it was out cold, and then hiked out to get a ride to Missoula.

Bob Searles (Missoula '45)

"Oh, No, You Don't"

One morning after breakfast, our squad leader, **Jack Allen** (MSO-44), told **Lowell Sharp** (MSO-44) and me to go with **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) and a Paramount cameraman. They were going to make a newsreel about Smokejumpers. We loaded-up the truck and drove to the site. Earl had picked for the fire. Everything was wet from a rain, but we finally got a small fire started at the base of a small pine tree. The cameraman wanted to film the fire going up into the branches. It wouldn't, so he threw some celluloid film on the fire. Finally, it caught and up the tree it went. He waited until the tree was fully involved before he started to film. Lowell and I then dug around the base of the tree to put the fire out. The cameraman was ready to shoot the scene of us leaving the fire with some smoke still coming from the fire. Earl Cooley said, "Oh no, you don't. No pictures of us leaving with smoke still in the fire area." We put the fire completely out, then the cameraman filmed us leaving. We picked up our tools and headed back to camp.

Marlyn Shetler (Missoula '44)

Appearance Is Everything!

In 1943, **Dave Flaccus** (MSO-43) and I were chosen to jump a fire, probably on the Clearwater Forest. I think it was the first fire jump by CPS jumpers. I had patched and darned a denim work outfit with my newly acquired sewing skills learned in rigger school and was pretty proud of the life and service I had added to the jacket and pants. The ranger that picked us up after the fire was very disappointed in my appearance. He had the tact not to mention it to me,

but apparently was very persuasive with the Fire Control officials at Region 1 headquarters. He and my outfit were responsible for getting us a clothing allowance thereafter.

Phil Stanley (Missoula '43)

Who Needs An Emergency Chute?

It was the summer of 1946, while based in Missoula; we were called out and took off in one of the Trimotors. **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) was the spotter and **Clarence Kreider** (MSO-45) was my jump partner. For some reason on leaving the plane, rather than descending feet first, I found myself floating down on my back with a good look at a cloudless blue sky. It was very quiet; I don't even recall hearing the sputter of the plane's engines. It didn't take long to realize that my chute had not opened automatically, so I quickly reached behind me and ripped the chute cover off. I hadn't wanted to use the emergency chute unless necessary. Usually there was a jolt when the chute opened, but this time I really felt it! My glasses might have been lost were it not for the screen on my helmet. By this time I hardly had time to pick a landing spot. I had beaten Clarence down because of my rapid and unexpected descent. Earl had the plane circle again, and after dropping our gear and food they flew off.

Phil Thomforde (Missoula '45)

The First Siskiyou Jump Story

On July 22, 1943, **Frank Derry** (MSO-40), instructor parachute rigger, arrived with our plane and pilot to give us our first practice jump in the Siskiyou National Forest. Instead, lightning on the evening of the same day provided an actual fire for **Winton Stucky** (CJ-43) and myself.

Marvin Graeler (Cave Junction '43) 🌲



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

Mike McMillan (FBX-96)

When the fires of 2008 come calling, the Alaska Smokejumpers will be ready with more of us to love this year. We welcomed six transfers and sixteen rookie candidates in April, and in May we'll train sixteen USFS jumpers in the ways of Alaska smokejumping, before they join our jumplist for fire season.

"We're gearing up for our heaviest training schedule in more than twenty years," reports **Bill Cramer** (NIFC-90), our new base manager. Cramer replaces **Dalan Romero** (FBX-83) after Romero's 11 seasons at the helm. Cramer previously served as lead trainer and lead rookie trainer, revered for his success-oriented approach to teaching old dogs *and* new dogs our not-so-new tricks.

Cramer described the influx of new blood at the base as a response to Alaska's increased need for wildfire protection, particularly in the southern half of the state. "It's part of our smokejumper 'free-trade' policy, and it will also limit handicaps preventing our jumpers from heading to the lower 48."

Our six transfers in 2008 are **Kurt Borcharding** (GAC-95), 41, from Mount Horeb, Wisconsin; **Brett Fairchild** (RAC-05), 24, from Juneau, Alaska; **Isaiah Fischer** (RDD-05), 28, from Spray, Oregon; **JP Knapp** (NCSB-96), 40, from Winthrop, Washington; **Gabe Mason** (NCSB-07), 31, from Prineville, Oregon; and **Lisa St. Clair** (BOI-03), 29, from Topaz, California.

Sixteen rookie candidates began training April 21. Two days later, thirteen remain. We're optimistic that sixteen USFS 'square' jumpers, slated to start training in May, will make a smooth transition to the rectangle-shaped parachute. With their success comes responsibility - imparting their 'Ram-Air' wisdom to their crews, some eager, some wary, still jumping with round-shaped parachutes.

Alaska Fire Service employees applaud the establishment of a physical training facility next to our jump base - intended to help us maintain fitness standards outlined in our job descriptions. For more than a decade, hundreds of firefighters visiting AFS during fire season have shared a weight room the size of an airport bathroom small enough to make Senator Larry Craig blush. Located opposite our smokejumper operations desk, the PT showing in our old weight room was timid at best among our fellow employees here at AFS. That's changed now, thanks to many: notably



Doug Carroll (FBX-94), **Chris Swisher** (FBX-03), **Ty Humphrey** (FBX-97), and especially AFS Manager **John Gould** (FBX-81), whose resolve on the issue has already made AFS stronger. Gould also ran and met the national wildland firefighter fitness standards this spring.

Congratulations to **Dave Whitmer** (FBX-92), recently named Chief of Fire Ops at AFS, replacing **Ed Strong** (RDD-75). "We've got a good understanding of the jump program from the top down at AFS," noted Cramer.

Filling the old weight room these days is a row of cubicles and computers, home to our expanding squadleader and spotter section. New to their ranks are **David Bloemker** (FBX-97), **Matt Corley** (FBX-97), and **Ty Humphrey**. Corley and

Humphrey began spotter training in April.

Corley also supervised our acquisition of a 16-foot Zodiac raft, a gift from the Alaska National Guard/Pararescue Program. Soon we will begin training boat captains to pilot the raft, ready to be delivered by paracargo, along with a 25 horsepower outboard motor, to fire assignments across the state.

The fastest time recorded in our spring refresher training 1.5 mile PT run was also a personal best for **Ben Dobrovolny** (FBX-04), posting 7:28 in 13 degrees, no sweat.

Ben celebrated with the *always* fashionable one-finger exit technique during refresher training, signifying "one people," according to **Ben**, whose spiritual influences include his recent trip to Mongolia, flanked by fellow wild-eyed Alaskans **Matt Oakleaf** (FBX-05) and **John Fremont** (FBX-05).

The trio was remotely sponsored by the wise (and trusting) **Bruce Ford** (MSO-75). Their brief visit quickly ripened and they began drawing a crowd at the now-rapeller base, as the crew's parachutes' service dates are expired. The young Alaskans were the center of attention, conversing through an interpreter with the Mongolians, who suffered the loss of 14 of their comrades in June of 2007 after their Mi-8 Helicopter crashed near Ulan Bator during a fire mission. The Mongolians are a young crew, obviously rebuilding their program. We couldn't pick three better representatives from the Alaska base, and we didn't. Dobrovolny, Fremont and Oakleaf just decided to go to Mongolia on their own dime and eat mutton.

Also in winter journeys, **Gary Baumgartner** (FBX-88) spent February helping his father, Ernie, and brother Roan

drive a bulldozer a hundred miles across frozen tundra to their undeveloped landsite. Gary's first task was to help pull the sunken dozer from the lake that swallowed it just outside of McGrath. That process alone took ten days and another bulldozer, reported Gary. The Baumgartners will first build an airstrip to facilitate future cargo missions.

Jeff Stark (FBX-03) earned his private fixed-wing license this winter, while **Dawson Kelsey** (RDD-95) and **Greg Conaway** (FBX-04) earned their private rotor-wing license. Stark also trapped more wolves than **Marty Meierottto** (FBX-94), but Marty posted personal records, trapping more than one hundred lynx and one hundred marten. Marty recently accepted the assistant paracargo supervisor position, returning to PC after years of squadleading.

In April we congratulated **Bruce "Buck" Nelson** (FBX-81) on his official retirement, enabling him to continue along his adventurous path - inspiring and well documented at www.bucktrack.com.

We'll miss **Rick Thomspson** (FBX-89) on the jump list. He's the new air attack group supervisor for AFS, and it is good to know he'll still be watching over us. Also not returning is **Ryan Ehlers** (FBX-06), who chose love and travel over jumping this season; **TJ Gholson** (FBX-04), who chose hotshot life again; **Jason Jordet** (NCSB-00), who chose world travel; **Dan Klatt** (FBX-05), who chose fatherhood; and **Oded Shalom** (FBX-95), now supervising the North Stars Fire Crew. Congrats to Oded and his lovely wife, Angela, recently married on the shores of New Jersey on a windy spring day.

We welcomed back **Joe Don Morton** (RDD-95) after two seasons of dispatch work in Reno and a stint on "Pirate Master," a CBS reality show cancelled after eight episodes, following Morton's ousting from the ship. He reported winnings of \$28,000 and claims "the ratings tanked and the television audience totally lost interest when I was voted off."

Thank you, Mr. Nielsen.

My wife, Molly, and I welcomed Heidi Lynn McMillan on March 22, all 21 inches of her cute little self. **David Bloemker** (FBX-97) and Lisa welcomed daughter Kaia Patricia and **Ivan Smtih** (MSO-95) and Stephanie were blessed with son Elias Conner in January.

Finally, Bill Cramer wants input from retired jumpers, the NSA, and the jump community at large about how we can make our upcoming 50th anniversary in June of 2009 a hit. Airline ticket discount packages and alternative lodging options are on the menu. We look forward to hosting the celebration in the spirit that makes Alaska great.

Boise Base Report

Quincy Chung (NIFC-03)

For all past and present jumpers out there, another winter season has come, and I can't quite say has gone. Although not as bad as our FS sisters to the north, the Boise weather has been a bit unpredictable. Currently through the sun and snow, Boise has completed two jump refreshers and is anticipating the rush of the third and final refresher of the season.

There is, of course, a rookie class being stressed, strained, and punished by our freakishly-strong rookie trainers. As usual, the first week for the rookies turned out to be very cold and very wet. Whether personal or physical, the punishment seemed to be less than desirable for a select few. Of the original ten, there are five strong candidates who are still remaining and are still enduring the daily punishments. We have all been there; we should take a minute and thank God that we don't have to endure that pain again.

Excluding the potential to gain five new jumpers, we have had a couple of individuals come back from their brief hiatus from the jump world, and we have also lost a handful of talented, smart, and strong individuals. **Chris Boldman** (BOI-01) and **Steve Frugoli** (BOI-06) have both returned after adventures outside of jumping. Chris comes back from a 2-year tour with the Peace Corps and Steve returns after a year at school. Both guys have great stories and would love to share them with you if you ask. So hit them up for a good story and sit down with a cold beer.

As for the individuals that have left us, it is with great privilege to have worked side by side with these folks. With the exception of **German Rodriguez** (BOI-06) going to the Reno Police Department, the remaining six are all still within the Federal agencies. **Michelle Moore** (MSO-99), our previous medical guru, has moved on and taken a job as the Medical Standards Supervisor for the BIA. **Tyler Doggett** and **Eric Ellis**, rookie Bros from the original Boise class (BOI-01), have both taken different jobs within the BLM. Tyler traveled across the NIFC parking lot to go to work for the National Wildfire Coordination Group, while Eric traveled a bit further north to become a Fire Operations Supervisor for the Salmon BLM. I believe I overheard Eric talking about how he plans to call on the McCall jumpers regularly. Make him keep his word.

As for the other individuals that have contributed to the success of the Boise organization, **Zuri Betz** (BOI-02) has traveled to Colorado to become a Park Ranger on the White River National Forrest. Hey, Boo Boo, look at the new Park Ranger. My rookie Sis, **Lisa St. Clair** (BOI-03), has decided to travel very far north to bless the Alaskan Smokejumpers with her mad loft skills. Last, but not least, is **Gabe Donaldson** (BOI-04). Gabe has decided that he didn't get enough line digging with the jumpers and has decided to take a job with the Ruby Mountain Hotshots. I feel sorry for those guys.

I can't begin to explain how these individuals have helped broaden, develop and expand the organization. I do know first-hand that all will be truly missed. Their contributions will not be forgotten, nor will their work ethics and personalities. Thank you all for your hard work.

With the loss of quality folks, the organization has been blessed with many future smokejumpers. If I missed somebody out there, I owe you a beer. A big congratulations to **Paul Hohn** (MYC-00) and Tiesha and their beautiful baby girl, Ella; **Jared Hohn** (NIFC-01) and Jill and their beautiful baby girl, Eva; **Shaylor Sorenson** (NIFC-06) and Jackie and their tough baby boy, Rowdy; **Jerran Flinders** (NIFC-04) and Rebecca and their beautiful girl, Sage, and



Penquin Convention or Return of Happy Feet?

L-R: Steve Wight (NCSB-65), Mike Fort (NCSB-61), Troop Emonds (CJ-66), Gary Buck (CJ-66), Titus Nelson (NCSB-66), Bill Moody (NCSB-57), Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64) and Alan Nelson (MYC-69) at Titus' 25th wedding anniversary in Long Beach. (Courtesy J. Kirkley)

last, but not least, **Derrek Hartman** (RDD-98) and Tahnee and their baby boy, Bridger.

As for the operational aspect of Boise, the chaos has already begun. As mentioned earlier, two jump refreshers are done and one is remaining. Rookie training is in its second week and, to make logistics even trickier, the Forest Service has sent representatives to Boise as participant to try out the Ram-Air and three ring parachute system. Although our Forest Service counterparts have been in Boise for only one week before heading to Alaska for official training, it has been a successful, yet difficult job of logistical coordination by operations and Loft.

Just a side note from operations, **Eric Walker** (BOI-95) has healed from his motorcycle crash (Spring 07) and didn't learn his lesson. Successfully passing his PT test this spring, he decided to purchase a new motorcycle and drive it like he stole it. Hopefully, he will stick with the training wheels till the fall.

As for the RX department, there is not enough time or space to write everything that has happened. All that can be said is if you wanted work, it was available. Work came from all over the U.S. and Resource Orders were constantly being filled. In conclusion, happy managers equal happy working jumpers. More than a single "thank you" is owed to **Rich Zimmerlee** (RDD-95) and **Tim Schaeffer** (MYC-92) for all their hard work in setting up these assignments. More so to the road warrior, heavy-hitting smokejumpers and local district folks that have spent weeks and even months away from their families, who deserve a huge thank you and a cold beer if you cross their paths. Without these individuals' dedication and determination to see a program excel and develop, the field managers would not have been able to achieve and accomplish the total acreage they saw this past fall and winter. A big thanks from Boise to all that traveled

somewhere across the U.S. to burn.

From the Boise Organization, have a safe and productive summer. And one final word, "Nobody ever complains about things they cannot change," Jack Canfield.

McCall Base Report

Rick Hudson (BOI-73)

For many years the McCall first refresher would normally have taken place in mid-May at McCall. But with the last 10 years under drought conditions, that refresher has been bumped up two weeks to the end of April to prepare 30 jumpers for early-season action. This past winter saw a return to a "normal winter," and the McCall base has just finished plowing nearly four feet of snow from the training units and the aircraft ramp. Finding a practice jump spot not under snow by the first week of May will be difficult for the first refresher group this season.

The 65th McCall Smokejumper Reunion will take place June 13-15 at the McCall base. Former jumpers from the McCall, Idaho City and NIFC/Boise jump bases will re-live the glory days, catch up on past friendships and play "heads-out."

McCall just finished participating in the Pilot Workshop, sponsored by Boise with representatives from nearly every base. The "jump-o-rama" allowed spotters to be checked out on mixed-loads and jumper pilots to get proficient with all aspects of smokejumper missions. It was an excellent opportunity to catch up with many of the bros outside a busy fire season environment.

Many upgrades and appointments were handed out this spring. Receiving 13/13 appointments are **Zach Glover** (MYC-03), **Renee Jack**, (GAC-03), **Brian Austin** (MYC-05), **Shawn Denowh** (MYC-98), **Ryan Myers**, **Jeremy Cowie** (MYC-06), **Matt Carroll** (MYC-03), **Mike Krupski**

(MYC-01), **Bob Charley** (MYC-93), **Jon Patton** (MYC-05), **Dan Booth** (MYC-07), **Matt Summerfield** (MYC-01), **Heidi Garrett** (MYC-05), **Tyko Isaacson** (MYC-05), **Nick Caple** (MYC-01), and **Ann Hadlow** (MYC-06). New faces transferring are **Darcy Walsh**, **Elysia Ewing** (MSO-07), **Sam Cox** (MYC-07), and (returning to his rookie home base) **Derek Hoban** (MYC-02). **Jared Schuster** (GAC-06) transferred down from GAC to join the McCall ranks. Detailing into spotter positions will be **Todd Haynes** (MYC-02), **Jason Miller** (MYC-98), **Matt Galyardt** (MYC-02), and **Jake Class** (MYC-04).

The NED class started training May 27 when 10 rookies begin training their hearts out to be “one of the chosen ones.”

The New Mexico detail consisting of **Kai Friedrichs** (GAC-99), **Brian Austin** and **Garrett Hudson** (MYC-07), **Tyko Isaacson** (MYC-05) and **Renee Jack** (GAC-03) will join the R-1 contingent in early May for action on a very dry Gila NF. One of McCall’s Twin Otters, J-43, will be the jump ship in Silver until mid-July.

Turbine DC-3, J-42, and Twin Otter J-41 will be the jump ships in McCall, crewed by Aaron Knobloch, Buster Demonte, Gracie Moore and Scott Miller. Two pilots were recruited to fly the smokejumper way for this season: Jesse Jenks and Alan Baum.

At the end of April, **Rick Hudson** will be retiring from his career with the Forest Service with 36 consecutive years as a smokejumper: 240 fire jumps, 609 total jumps and no serious injuries. “I’ve been digging line and breathing smoke every year since I was 18...it’s time to take a summer off. Every jumper is a hero in their own mind, and if you wait too long, Alzheimer’s will fade those jump story memories. Just look at Dale and Wally and you’ll see.”

Grangeville Base Report

Nate Hesse (RDD-01)

Old Man Winter visited Grangeville on a number of occasions recently, sometimes sticking around a while sleeping on your couch and eating all your food. Old Man Wind stopped by also and blew a few shingles off of some jumper’s homes. Some jumpers escaped unscathed by traveling about or attending winter S-courses and other training.

Some changes have taken place to the jump base this winter. A slight remodel has left us with more elbow room to give training, loft, and ops more capabilities. In addition to the new square-footage, the Supervisor’s Office loves the GAC jumpers so much that they moved across the street, literally. Now dispatch can do a head count for available jumpers just by looking at the PT area.

Aside from the work property, a few jumpers took advantage of the housing market and bought up living space here in Grangeville. **Dan Vanderpool** (GAC-01) bought acreage on the Camas prairie to build a custom dream home and **Matt Smith** (GAC-01) bought a home for him and his new bride Jennifer. Congrats to them. **Nate Hesse** now has an address in Grangeville and just welcomed a baby girl to the family. Sofie Grace was born April 17, weighing in at

6lb 10oz. **Audrey Banfill** (RAC-06) is a new homeowner and will accompany the GAC contingent to Silver City along with **Gabe Cortez** (GAC-02) and **Cameron Chambers** (NCSB-04). Cameron also accepted a GS-7 Squadleader position here at GAC. This year had a few folks tying the ole Surgeon’s Knot. **Joe Forthofer** (RDD-04) was wed this winter to Kim. Previously mentioned, **Matt Smith** to Jen, and Training Foreman extraordinaire, **Brett Rogers** (GAC-92), will wed Melissa Lane this summer.

There will be seven rookie prospects with a few detailers in the bunch. **Brett Rogers**, **Chris Hertel** (GAC-91), and **Mike Dunn** (GAC-04) will head to Missoula as rookie trainers. **Dan Mooney** (WYS-07) will join the roster as a transfer from West. The new folks will have a hard time filling behind some tough losses to the base. **Ted McClanahan** (MSO-95) accepted a job with West Yellowstone Jumpers. **Clem Pope** (GAC-03), will be attending Paramedic school in Oregon and spending time with his newborn, Clem Jr. (congrats to **Clem** and Sara), and **Mike Nelson** (WYS-04) will stay in Alaska this summer. Thanks for the good work here in Grangeville, you three will be missed.

In other news, **Chris Hertel** (GAC-91) has explored some country around the Snake River with his pack mules. **Russ Frei** (GAC-05) is working with Ford Motor Company to design a new “snorkel-type” intake for their F-350 model. **Jason Junes** (GAC-04) and **Dan Vanderpool** are cross training the Ram-Air system with the BLM this season.

We will have the Twin Otter (J-14) back on contract in late May, with pilots Rick Tidwell as primary, and **Nels Jensen** (MSO-62) and Bill flying relief. Additional aircraft in GAC will be GAC Helitack plus crew and an Air attack platform with **Tom Bates** (GAC-95) at the helm. We all expect another successful season here in Grangeville.

Redding Base Report

Dylan Reeves (RDD-03)

Spring is in the air here in the R double D. The pollen is flying, rookie candidates are sweating and whimpering, and most of our early-refreshed jumpers are, or have been, back east burning. It’s unclear at this time whether **Brian Pontes** (RDD-03) will ever leave Arkansas. At present, six eager young jumper hopefuls are being trained by **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03), **Luis Gomez** (RDD-94) and **Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03), under the watchful eye of training foreman **Bob Bente** (RDD-88). Our second refresher will start April 28th and we’re looking forward to seeing most of the crew return.

A few of our bros, however, will not be returning to Redding this year. **Isaiah Fischer** (RDD-05) accepted a permanent job in Alaska and is currently undergoing Ram-Air training. **Brad Moschetti** (RDD-06) is rumored to have accepted a squadleader job with the Silver State Hotshots and can now look forward to a long summer of pounding good deal 20-manners. Congratulations to those two rapscallions, who we didn’t like anyway.

We’re hoping to get **Mark Urbani** (RDD-06) back on the jump list as soon as possible, but he has to first get his back healed up. A few words of advice, Mark: wait at least two

days after back surgery before you climb on your roof.

Derek Wheeler (RDD-05) and his lovely wife, Frances, are expecting a baby boy to arrive August 3rd. Already quite the soccer fan, **Derek** at long last has an excuse to purchase a mini van. That's the only baby news that I'm aware of, although **Brian Pontes** (RDD-03) has been in Arkansas for like six weeks. I can't testify to the veracity of this assumption, but I imagine **Donvan Lee** (RDD-03) to be the de facto leader of a motley collection of dirtbike riders, terrorizing the streets of Bakersfield all winter, sporting Metal Mullisha paraphernalia, and 'fronting' disrespectful attitudes at innocent passersby. He may be taking college courses, too.

Meanwhile, back at the base, the open-air operations terrarium has been completed and is facilitating our efforts to bring to life our new, official, motto, "Jumping into the 21st century with accountability and transparency." Speaking of operations, congratulations to **Josh Mathiesen** (RDD-94) for becoming our GS-9 assistant operations guy, and for successfully moving the ice cream freezer into the ops office.

For those of us who were looking forward to finally going to Silver City this year, the news that Redding would no longer be participating in that detail came as a hard blow. Never one to harbor bitter feelings, I wish those who will be going a most pleasant three to four months of steady rain and base 8s. Those in the know are well aware that all the action will be up here in the northern Pacific Southwest Region, where we will break all fire and jump related records known to man. You can quote me on this. If I'm wrong, your NSA dues will be refunded to you in full. Contact **Steve Murphy** (RDD-88) in the fall for payment.

The moment of truth is upon us. Fire season is here. You've been training all winter for this, and the time is now; so strap on your cankle bracelets, zip up that jumpsuit, if you can still fit into it, get in the door and show the world what you're made of!

Redmond Base Report

Jim Hansen (RDD-87)

Hello, everyone. Finally on the back end of what seems like the longest winter since the Little Ice Age; the folks at RAC are starting to trickle back, save for those hardy souls who remain anchored to the joint all year. The loft guys, notably **Tony Loughton** (RDD-83) and **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91), built some new stuff. The training guys, Training Manager **Tony Johnson** (RAC-95) and his assistant **Mark Gibbons** (RAC-87), rode herd on the IQCS stuff, hired a class of 14 rookies, juggled the Albuquerque human resources minefield (For the uninitiated, the Forest Service has centralized its personnel operations in Albuquerque and has attempted to streamline service by hiring a raft of well-intentioned but as yet unseasoned, lackeys that know little of Forest Service operations. When fully ramped up, however, the outfit should function at least as well as the Soviet steel industry under Stalin), and assisted base manager **Bill Selby** (RAC-91) with his budget wrangling, while the operations

section saw to it that no sudoku puzzle went unchallenged.

The RAC baby boom continues unabated with Marie and **Rob Rosetti** (RAC-01), Heather and **Ryan Koch** (RAC-01), and Anne Marie and **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC-01) all expecting soon – **Ralph** and **Ryan** in September, **Rob** any day now. Those of us approaching geezerdom look forward to the contribution of these new citizens in propping up social security, so we can continue being paid to bitch even after we retire. In a related note, those of us yearning for a civilizing influence amidst the philistines that usually populate the ranks of natural resource management look forward to the return of **Heidi Bunkers** (RAC-04), who has spent some of her knee injury rehab time as a volunteer with the elderly of the Methow Valley. Surely time spent with surly, cantankerous and absent-minded relics, still stubbornly clinging to youthful pipe dreams, will serve her in good stead around here, especially since late word suggests that **Steve Dickenson** (LGD-78) will detail this summer as Redmond Air Center Manager.

An obscure addendum to the Redmond operations plan dictates that either **Mark Gibbons** or **Tony Loughton** must remain injured at any given time. So since **Mark** managed to screw his shoulder up doing God knows what, **Tony** was compelled to rally from recent knee surgery, grind out yet another PT test and don laughter's silvered wings for another campaign as the current Redmond leader in number of fire jumps among active bros, as well as maintaining leadership in kicking ass generally.

By the time you read this, **Aaron Skillings** (RAC-05) will have run the Boston Marathon, having made a fine showing no doubt. **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92) is back, the welfare fund freezer is full, and all is right with the world. **Aaron Olmos** (RAC-05) will detail as a foreman on the Redmond IHC this year, since you can never really appreciate how good you have it until you spend a few months getting up at some ridiculous hour to stand around in the cold waiting for a stultifying briefing under the diesel inversion of a fire camp in some gravel pit.

I've had occasion to wax nostalgic recently as I, Jim Hansen, wheezed through my 22nd (!) PT test and hauled my gear down to the units for another refresher. Back when I was a rookie, smokejumping was in its infancy. In those days, smokejumpers wore bulky, padded suits, flew around in boxy, propeller-driven airplanes, and jumped static line operated round canopies! So I was overcome with a flood of memories as I rigged up my simulated letdown with my trusty 3/4" nylon tape. Who needs fancy, new-fangled fibers stronger than steel and prissy easy-to-use rappel devices? As I ground the butt of my Bull Durham rollie into the dirt with my hobnailed boot, I thought pshaw! Hell, if I don't shave for a few days and squint just right, I can flatter myself that I look like Peter Fonda (okay, Jack Nicholson) in *Easy Rider* wearing my 60s-era Bell jump helmet (Thanks to **Phil Gerhardson** (RAC-88) for this image). Who needs egg-headed *ideas* and upstart *innovation*? Apparently **Ray Rubio** (RAC-95) and **Dave Keller** (RAC-04), who will ship off to Alaska soon to train with BLM gear. Personally, I think they're

sailing off the edge of the world. Take care, everybody. See you on the small one.

Missoula Base Report

Dan Cottrell (MSO-01)

Missoula got its long-awaited first taste of spring last weekend with temperatures grazing 70 degrees for the first time this year. This "heat wave" was short-lived, and more snow is currently accumulating on our significant mountain snow pack. Despite the best winter snow pack we've had in years in western Montana, the eastern half of the state was not as lucky, and already several large grass fires have kicked up in Southeast Montana. I guess only Big Ernie truly knows what fire season 2008 will hold.

One of the most exciting developments in Missoula this spring has been Missoula's participation in the BLM Ram-Air parachute training. Starting in April, Missoula squadleader **Rocky Ahshapanek** (GAC-90), assistant base manager **Mike Fritsen** (MSO-95), and training foreman **Mike Goicoechea** (MSO-99) and loft foreman **Keith Wolferman** (MSO-91) attended Ram-Air parachute training in Fairbanks. Upon completion of training, this group will jump fires in Alaska and the lower 48 as fire season progresses. These individuals will also be used to evaluate Ram-Air canopies for possible future use as a Forest Service system. Stay tuned for future updates!

Missoula Smokejumpers stayed busy over the winter doing a wide variety of projects. Between October and March, 40 Missoula jumpers headed "down south" to staff prescribed fire burn modules throughout Region 8. Missoula also trained 16 FAA inspectors during three FAA senior rigger classes. Jumpers participated in a winter practice jump and search and rescue exercise with ski patrollers from Montana Snowbowl and the Missoula county search and rescue team. Finally, jumpers also provided critical support to training needs as instructors at the Northern Rockies and SW Montana Zone Training Centers and the Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Academy in Sacramento.

Missoula is also gearing up to train one of the largest rookie classes in several years. We are currently expecting 27 rookie candidates to begin training on May 19, of which 18 will be stationed in Missoula, eight in Grangeville, and one in West Yellowstone. We will again be including a week of training at the old Condon Work Center as well as a much-anticipated water jump into nearby Seeley Lake.

2008 also brings significant personnel changes to the Missoula Smokejumper base. **Kevin Lee** (MSO-79) retired in January and **Andy Hayes** (MSO-79) is planning to retire on August 2. This date seems to be set in stone, as he has thrown out all the base calendars that extend beyond that date. I would also suggest a quick demobe for anyone who staffs a fire with Andy in late July or early August. We are anxiously awaiting hiring decisions from Albuquerque to replace these positions as well as four slots each at the GS-8 spotter and GS-7 squadleader level.

Finally, several smokejumpers have decided to move on from jumping. **Jon Marshall** (MSO-04) has taken time off

to pursue a career in real estate and photography. **Jon Veale** (RDD-01) and **Justin Walsh** (MSO-02) have joined the migration to the Missoula city fire department. **Sarah Altemus** (MSO-01) has taken a year off to focus on graduate school and has also welcomed a second child, Clem Owen Pope, born on March 3. We will sorely miss these great firefighters and top-notch people.

NCSB Base Report

Michael Noe (NCSB-99)

Spring is finally here in the Methow Valley! Winthrop saw one of the snowiest winters in the past decade, with over five feet of snowfall on the valley floor. The mountains saw even more snow and there were plenty of powder turns in the backcountry. Around the base the biggest activity has been in the messhall/sewing room where **Charlie McCarthy** (NCSB-02) and **Michael Noe** (NCSB-99) have been busy manufacturing jumpsuits, packout bags, and PG bags. Along with the sewing, we have also sent a handful of folks back to Region-8 with some Redmond jumpers as a burn module.

Jumpers on the move include **JP Knapp** (NCSB-96) and **Gabe Mason** (NCSB-07), transferred to Alaska. **Tommy Parker** (NCSB-07) has transferred to RAC and **Scott Wicklund** (NCSB-91) has taken the BLM Ram-Air cross-training detail. We wish all these guys much luck in their future endeavors.

Jump 09er is headed back to the ramp on May 28th and the crew is eager to "Get in the Door!" NCSB wishes all a safe summer and in the words of **Dale Longanecker** (RAC-74), "KEEP ON JUMPIN!"

West Yellowstone Base Report

Ernie Walker (RDD-01)

Well it was a good winter in West with a lot of snow. The base has gotten a make-over. The ready room was expanded with more full-size lockers, the car port was enclosed, and the training tower room was remodeled to install more computer work stations.

There has been a lot of promotions and transfers. **Mark Belitz** (WYS-01), **Hans Smith** (MSO-00) and **Brian Wilson** (WYS-98) all got Assistant Foreman. **Mark Duffy** (WYS-98) and **Ted McClannahan** (GAC-95) recieved Spotter/Squad leader. **Cindy Champion** (MSO-99), **Kevin Ames** (WYS-06), **Justin Horn** (RDD-04), **Pete Lannin** (WYS-07), and **Ernie Walker** (RDD-01) all accepted Squadleader positions. Congratulations to **JT Gilman** (WYS-06) and **Eric Held** (WYS-06) who finally got temporary GS-6s. Welcome to **Kyle Dornburger** (RDD-01), transferring from Redding. **Jen** and **Mark Belitz** (WYS-01) are expecting another baby anyday now, but the West baby machine has slowed quite a bit to give other bases like GAC and MYC a chance to catch up.

West has already started up with the first refresher completed. We will send jumpers to Michigan (burning) and three to Silver City: **Justin Horn** (RDD-04,) **Nick Stanzak** (WYS-05) and **Bobby Sutton** (MSO-91). West is also sending **Mark Duffy** (MSO-98) and **Ernie Walker** to participate in the Ram-Air training in Alaska. 🐾