

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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OCTOBER 2008

SMOKEJUMPER

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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

WHAT A SHOCK AND WHAT A time of the year. I am writing this on my 60th birthday, so now I am officially one of the "ooooold" guys on the board of directors. There has been lots going on and more to come. My wife, Paige, and I had the opportunity recently to go to France and Germany for an international firefighting symposium sponsored by Iveco Magirus, a large German-based company that makes fire trucks, ambulances, and large off-road vehicles for fighting fires. I put on a presentation about smokejumping in the United States that was well received. With all of the volunteer firefighters in Europe, smokejumping in most European countries isn't necessary, with the possible exception of up north in Finland and Sweden. It was a great trip, and this gave us the added bonus of being on Omaha and Utah beaches on June 6th, the anniversary of D-Day, 1944. We talked to some of the survivors who were there and gave away a smoke-jumper patch or two. I still cannot imagine what it must have been like on that day and the days after that. Smokejumping has its challenges and risks, but that day and some of the other battles are just in another league all to their own. It was quite an

emotional day with visits to bunkers, beaches, museums, and cemeteries.

As I write this there are over 800 fires going in California, started by a lightning storm. The smokejumper situation report shows that Redding is extremely busy, with boosters from four or five different bases. Rookie training has been completed at all of the bases, other than McCall which should finish soon, so many rookies probably got their indoctrination to smokejumping on the Shasta Trinity or Six Rivers. My first fire jump was on the Shasta Trinity and my parachute might have found a tree. It's always good to try out some of your training on letdowns. Anyway, it sounds like a great crop of rookies throughout the system. We offer the rookies a free one-year membership to the NSA with hopes of getting them hooked as a member.

Another event that is happening this week is the opening of the National Smokejumper Center in West Yellowstone. It will offer youth classes daily with a smokejumper-merchandising store for those 1.3 million visitors to purchase some smokejumper memorabilia. **Barry Hicks** (MSO-64) is leading the NSC effort and is staffing with volunteers from the smokejumper-experienced crew. This is the beginning of a very long endeavor for the National Smokejumper Center.

I know there is lots more going on, and we do have the first ever reunion coming up in Redmond this September, but should sign off and pack for a fire assignment on the Lassen National Forest. It looks like Bill Moody (NCSB-57) and I will be sharing Air Attack duties on this complex.

Until next time, the door is yours. Your static line is hooked and your arm is clear. There is a 100 yards of drift and the whole world is a jump spot, so get out there and have a great ride. Thanks to you all. 🪂

Too many secrets: Family wants answers to CIA agent's mysterious 1982 death

by Kim Briggeman

Originally published in the Sunday, February 17, 2008 issue of the "Missoulian." Reprinted with permission of the author.

Part I

Jerry Daniels (MSO-58) sightings pop up all around the globe. He's been seen in London and Spain, in a bar in Whitefish and in Akron, Ohio. Most often he's spotted in Southeast Asia, where the man known as "Hog" and "Mr. Jerry" worked for the Central Intelligence Agency during and after the Vietnam War. His love for and allegiance to the Hmong of northern Laos is woven like golden thread throughout that people's history of the past five decades. "Basically, wherever Hmong

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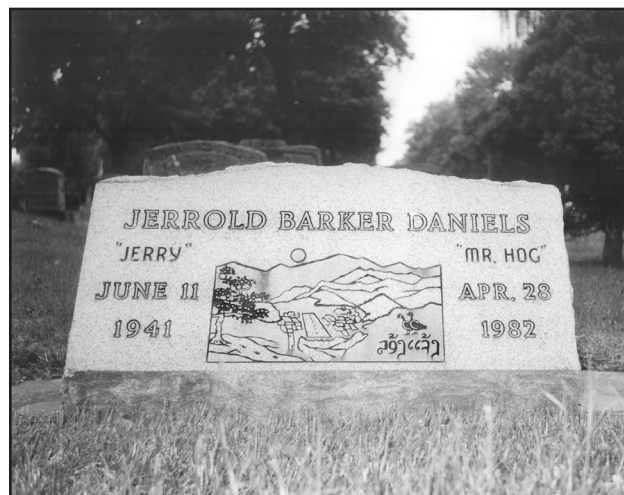
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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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



Jerry Daniel's Gravesite in Missoula (Courtesy Fred Donner)

are living, someone will say, 'So-and-so saw Jerry,'" said Gayle Morrison, a California author who's writing a book on Daniels' life. "But no one I've talked to actually saw him." That could be because Daniels has been officially dead and buried in the Missoula Cemetery for more than 25 years now.

According to records, he died on April 28, 1982, of carbon monoxide poisoning from a leaky propane water heater at his apartment in Bangkok, Thailand, where he worked as an ethnic affairs officer for the U.S. State Department. The body wasn't found for three days, which sets off the first alarm for Jerry's brothers. "He doesn't show up for work for three days and no one comes looking for him?" wonders Kent (Dan) Daniels of Florence. Because of decomposition issues, Daniels' casket was ordered sealed after transport home to Missoula for burial. Speculation about his "accidental" death has whirled ever since the chilly Saturday in May of 1982 when the plane carrying his casket taxied into the Missoula airport. "Inside the terminal, Hmong eyes watched the proceedings on the tarmac," wrote Jane Hamilton-Merritt in her 1993 book "Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992." "Many did not want to believe Jerry Daniels was dead. They wanted to believe he was needed on another intelligence assignment and his 'death' in Bangkok was only a cover." The Hmong whispered among themselves that the coffin was too small to hold Daniels, Hamilton-Merritt reported. "Maybe he was not dead after all." The Hmong, most of whom had been approved by Daniels to resettle in Montana from Thai refugee camps, weren't the only ones with suspicions.

State Department officials accompanied the body off the

plane, and later the CIA helped guard the coffin. "They stayed with it, under orders, until it was placed in the ground, so we never saw the body," recalled Ted Lympus, a close friend of Daniels since high school. "There was some real question." Lympus, now a district judge in Kalispell, said he and others still doubt the official version of Daniels' death. "We were never satisfied that we'd been told the real cause, because no one was ever allowed to look at the remains," he said. This much is certain: Jerry Daniels lives on as a hero to many who knew him or know his story. In the eyes of his Hmong friends, he toes the line between legend and deity. But there were plenty of people in Southeast Asia in 1982 who would have just as soon seen Daniels dead.

And so the questions surrounding his death buzz on among friends, family, old smokejumper colleagues and Hmong. "I look at things scientifically," his brother **Jack Daniels** (MSO-54) said on the phone last week from Flagstaff, Ariz. "There's either a body in that casket or there isn't. If there's a body, it's his or it's not. If it's his, how did he die? Is there a bullet hole in the skull?" Like Jack, Dan Daniels is ready for some answers. "It would be great to see inside that coffin," he said at his home in Florence recently. A long-haul truck driver, state champion skeet shooter, and former high school wrestler for Jug Beck's Missoula Spartans in the 1950s, Dan was two years older and at least 50 pounds heavier than Jerry, who went on "health kicks" when he edged up close to 160 pounds. That's why Dan's radar went up when he heard the description of his little brother's body. "Jerry was supposed to look like a 300-pound black gentleman," he said. "Jerry was only about 5-8, or something." Jack Daniels said the faulty water heater that caused Jerry's demise was in the bathroom, which separated Jerry's bedroom from another. The American embassy official who described the circumstances to Jack said Jerry was found dead on his bed, his blood either 93 percent or 97 percent saturated with carbon monoxide. "That's really high," said Jack, 74, a University of Montana graduate who is recognized as one of the world's top distance running coaches. "My Ph.D. is in physiology, and I've done some work in lung function, and gases and things like that. I tell you what, if you get carbon monoxide in your system, you're not in good shape." So he finds it strange, he said, that an unidentified male who was found in the other bedroom was unconscious but still breathing. When he was taken to the hospital, Jack said, the man bolted and was never found. "To this day, I have a real bad time dealing with that," he said. Jack visited Jerry in Bangkok a couple of years before his death, and his mother, Louise, was there just a couple of months prior. Lympus, who was the Flathead County attorney at the time, said he had them describe the layout of the apartment to the state medical examiner. "There was something about the apartments of Bangkok that there was a space under the door that was open four or five inches," Lympus said. "Jerry was found dead on the bed, on the second floor, and from where the water heater was, (the examiner) said there's no way the gas would have got that high in the room. It would have gone under the door and down the stairs, because it's heavier than air."

The idea of taking a look inside Jerry Daniels' casket has been kicked around for years by family, friends and former



L-R: Jack Daniels, Jerry Daniels 1974 (NSA file)

colleagues who knew what Daniels had gotten himself into in Laos. He was the CIA's personal case officer for Gen. Vang Pao, and the two of them helped direct Hmong troops in their resistance against communist forces both inside the country and from neighboring North Vietnam. The "secret war" ended disastrously for the Hmong, many of whom fled the country after it fell in May of 1975, weeks after Saigon collapsed in South Vietnam. Daniels orchestrated the evacuation of 2,500 people from Long Cheng, their base of operations in the hills of northern Laos. Once the refugees were in Thailand, it fell upon Daniels to screen them for resettlement to the United States, based in part on their loyalty to Vang Pao's anti-communist cause. Many of the Hmong, including Vang Pao for a time, wound up in the Missoula area, and to this day the region has a vibrant Hmong community. Vang Pao subsequently moved to Southern California, where he was arrested last June and charged in federal court with plotting to overthrow the Laotian government. The 78-year-old general is currently under relaxed house arrest while awaiting trial in Sacramento.

Any number of alternate scenarios have been posed to explain Daniels' death. They range from suicide to murder (by an array of suspects) to death by yellow rain to no death at all. Hamilton-Merritt wrote in "Tragic Mountain" that when Daniels and friend **Randolph "Toby" Scott** (MYC-57) were in their 20s, they made a pact to jump from the Higgins Avenue Bridge in Missoula when they reached 40. It was not a suicide pact, she explained, "but rather a 'marker' on the lives and achievements of two young men determined to live life to the fullest." Ten years or so later, Daniels wrote to Scott and recommended they move the jump date to age 50. He was six weeks from his 41st birthday when he died in Thailand, but few who knew Daniels give credence to the suicide theory. There's no doubt he was in danger from those who took control of governments in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, to whom the Hmong and the U.S. were the enemy. "I know VP and Jerry both had \$10,000 rewards on their melons from the communists," brother Dan said.

His fluency in the Hmong language and intimate knowledge of the people and their loyalties made Daniels uniquely qualified for his post-war job in Thailand. He spent his last seven years deciding who qualified for resettlement and who

didn't. On occasional trips home, and in frequent letters to Louise and Jack, Daniels characterized the job as rewarding and challenging. It was also extremely dangerous. "I remember him saying, 'I'm pissing off about 1,000 people a day or a week, I don't know which, making these decisions,'" Lympus said.

Meanwhile, the explosive issue of the United States' use of chemical agents in Southeast Asia was becoming front-page news. "Jerry was a well-known disbeliever of 'yellow rain' and was outspoken about it, according to several jumpers," wrote Fred Donner, a retired Defense Intelligence Agency officer who knew Daniels when both were young smokejumpers based out of Missoula in the late 1950s. Perhaps, some speculate, that got him into trouble with his own government. Mary Ellen Stubb, sextant at the Missoula Cemetery, rustled through the files to find the Jerry Daniels folder a couple of weeks ago. She produced one piece of paper. Under the letterhead of the now defunct Mountain View Cemetery, 3035 Russell St., are scribbled heavily underlined words: "Sealed casket - hermetically sealed - sealed Forever - not to be opened." An accompanying fax from the American Embassy in Bangkok notes, "Thai mortuary officials have informed us that the embalment of the remains are (sic) not expected to be completely satisfactory. Remains are in an advanced state of decomposition. Container seals should be carefully examined." It was not uncommon for caskets in the Vietnam area to be accompanied by a "sealed forever" command due to decomposition issues. Sealed "order" or not, the next of kin have a legal right to open the lid. Louise Daniels, who died in 1996, worked with the Hmong in Montana for years as part of the International Rescue Committee. She was not interested in an exhumation, her sons say. Out of respect for her wishes, the idea wasn't seriously discussed while she was alive. Even today, the youngest of her three surviving sons doesn't like the idea. "I don't believe in doing it, no," said Alan Daniels, a military veteran and custodian at the University of Montana. "My mother wouldn't want it done, so that's my deal. I'm one of these people who abide by his mother's wishes." Stubb said there is perhaps one exhumation a year at the Missoula Cemetery. It requires a \$5 to \$10 permit from the health department and another \$1,260 cemetery fee. A more prohibitive expense, however, is the forensics testing, DNA or otherwise. Though the state crime lab is less than a mile from the Missoula Cemetery, it can't conduct forensics testing unless submitted by law enforcement. Lympus looked into hiring a private lab a few years back. He was told the cost of disinterment and DNA testing could climb as high as \$10,000. "That's not cheap," Jack Daniels said. "That's kind of been the one thing that's prevented us from really getting serious about it in the past."

At one time, both Jack and Louise were in touch with H. Ross Perot, the Texas billionaire and former presidential candidate. "He called my mother two or three times, and I ended up talking to him for a half-hour about this one time," Jack said. "We thought maybe he'd pay for the whole thing. But Louise was still alive at that time, and we just kind of dropped it." Not long ago, Dan looked into selling a conservation easement on the 160 acres he owns in the mountains near Ovando. Though he could have reaped \$80,000, he said, he shied away after seeing the pages of restrictions he would face. So the casket of Jerry Daniels will remain underground for now. The

questions still buzz above. "It would be fun to put some closure on this thing," said Jack. "If there were a way to exhume the body, get it tested and prove that it's Jerry, and prove he died of carbon monoxide poisoning, there's nothing more I can do. That would kind of end it as far as I'm concerned. "The older I get, the more I worry about it getting done."

Part II

Hmong allies considered Jerry Daniels a hero

The image smacks of Montana: Jerry Daniels is astride a leaping bull in the hot summer sun. Cheering onlookers are dwarfed by jagged mountains. But this is December and those spectators wear battle gear. The bull is a Lao buffalo, and the mountains look down on a military stronghold in northern Laos. As the story goes, it wasn't Daniels' finest moment. The man who came of age in Helmsville and Missoula was unseated in a buck or two at the impromptu rodeo in the early 1970s. Another American named **Thomas "Shep" Johnson** (MYC-56), who like Daniels had done some rodeoing back in the States, stayed on for three or four jumps. Daniels was devastated he'd been bettered.

Jerry Daniels was nuts. He made irreverence into an artform. He was a hard drinker who delighted in showing his Hmong friends how to have a good time. Daniels, say those who knew him, was also as honest as the Vietnam War was long, unbelievably dedicated to his mother, Louise, and the Hmong he fought alongside, and perfect for the CIA. "I would say he was a hero. He accomplished a whole lot more than I ever did," said his brother Jack, who has been called the world's top distance running coach. Jack Daniels won medals at both the 1956 and 1960 Olympic Games in the modern pentathlon. "But that's nothing compared to what Jerry did, I don't think," he said. "And he did it for such a long time. He was so committed to it."

They called it Sky, the American base of operations for the secret war in Laos in the 1960s and 1970s. "You ask what is Sky? Well, Jerry Daniels was Sky," a Hmong officer says in the opening lines of the book, "Sky Is Falling." "He was raised in Montana, 'Big Sky Country.' Jerry was the adviser for the secret operation based in Long Cheng, Laos. So he named the American headquarters the Sky compound," Nhia Vang (code name "Judy") told author Gayle Morrison. Daniels worked hand in hand with Gen. Vang Pao and his guerrilla army of Hmong against the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao. Morrison, who published "Sky Is Falling" in 1999 and dedicated it to the memory of Jerry "Hog" Daniels, has since been working on a biography of Daniels. "I'm now marching into year 11 on it. I have 41 chapters that I'm looking at scattered across the floor," Morrison sighed last week from her home in Santa Ana, Calif. "Sky Is Falling" told the stories of dozens of people who were in Laos the two weeks before it fell to the communists in May of 1975. Daniels and Vang Pao orchestrated the air evacuations of some 2,500 Hmong officers and their families from Long Cheng. "Long Cheng," wrote Morrison, "is a secluded, impossibly distant, wild and beautiful valley cut deeply into the rugged karst mountains of northern Laos." It was in that setting, as well as refugee camps in Thailand, that the man from Montana helped shape history. It's a story Montana should know.



L-R: Unknown, Shep Johnson and Jerry Daniels at the Hmong Rodeo. (NSA file)

After Jerry Daniels died, his family was beckoned to CIA headquarters in Washington, D.C. There they accepted three of the four top medals the CIA has to give. Jack Daniels, Jerry's oldest brother, has a photo of the family and CIA director William Casey, who has an arm hooked in Jack's. He said it was the only recognition that Jerry ever existed, let alone worked for the U.S. government for more than half his life. The date on one of the awards, Jack said, was "quite a few years before Jerry died. I don't even think he knew about it." The family left with the request not to display the plaques for "a certain number of years. I can't remember how many," Jack said. "Jerry Daniels has never been given the credit he deserves," said Mary Ellen Stubb of Missoula. "He saved hundreds of lives and, because of the situation, he was shoved under the carpet. It was a story not to be spoken of. I think he needs some recognition for his accomplishments." As sextant of the Missoula Cemetery, Stubb first heard of Daniels' heroics in 2004. One of his former smokejumper colleagues visited Daniels' grave and talked about his life. Stubb coordinates the cemetery's annual Stories and Stones tour, when live folks tell tales of dead ones at Halloween time. She wanted to learn more. She located Todd Brandoff, a Vietnam veteran from Lolo who has forged friendships with some of the Hmong elders in Missoula and became acquainted with Daniels' work through them. Brandoff and Lue Yang of Missoula, the interpretative liaison between Vang Pao and Daniels in Laos, presented the story at the cemetery in 2006. Daniels, said Brandoff, "was there when history was made - a very, very important player in a war. Then he was a very im-

portant player in saving probably over a thousand lives after the evacuation by helping people establish their identities and flee from (Southeast Asia)."

Jerry Daniels was born in Palo Alto, Calif., in 1941, the fourth son of Bob and Louise Daniels. He was about 10 when the family moved from California to Helmville, where his parents ran a restaurant for a time and Bob had the Blackfoot telephone exchange. The family moved to Missoula in the mid-1950s, though they've always maintained connections with the upper Blackfoot Valley, where Louise inherited a piece of land at Tupper Lake near Ovando. Jerry embraced the outdoors, spending hours tromping the hills and fishing the rivers of his home state with his brothers and pals. At barely 17, he fudged his age on an application and became one of the youngest smokejumpers on record in Missoula. Daniels graduated from Missoula County High School in 1959, and within a year was launched on his spectacular career, starting out as a "cargo kicker" for the CIA in Southeast Asia.

Bob Daniels died in 1971 and his oldest son, Ron (known as Dan), was killed in a car wreck a few years later near Missoula. Louise visited Jerry several times in Southeast Asia. She became involved locally with the refugee settlement program and was a warm friend to the displaced Hmong whom Jerry helped relocate here in the 1970s and 1980s. Louise passed away in 1996, leaving three surviving sons - Jack, Kent (Dan) and Alan. Jack heads the running program at the Center for High Altitude Training at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. Kent and Alan both live in the Missoula area.

"Jerry just did weird, funny things. He'd come up with

oddball names,” Kent recalled. A cat in Helmville, for no discernible reason, was instantly “Roseliff.” A bad odor smelled “like karap.” Anything big was “elephant.” As boys, Kent and Jerry were in a crawlspace under their military strip home in Kennewick, Wash., when Kent picked up something that turned out to be a light switch for an automobile. “Give me that truckgutt,” Jerry demanded. “I’m like, ‘Where’d that come from?’” Kent said, chuckling at the memory. At Missoula County High School in the 1950s, you didn’t curse, he said. But Jerry had a way around that. He changed a pet nickname, Farthog, to Farretthoag. The abbreviated form, Hoag, turned back into Hog when Jerry got to Laos. “Hog” was his code name at Sky.

Jack Daniels and his wife visited his brother in Thailand a few years before Jerry’s death. Jerry took them into a holding camp, where there were hundreds of Hmong who had already been cleared to immigrate to the United States. “The moment we sat foot inside that place, he was just mobbed,” Daniels said. “They thought so highly of him and assumed there was nothing he couldn’t do for them.” Alas, that wasn’t true. Potential refugees to America had to be screened for health reasons and for political reasons, Jack said. “He was the guy who took care of them in the political arena.” The Hmong’s complex family

structure recognized children when the United States government didn’t. “When we went into that holding camp,” said Jack, “the main concern of the Hmong who came up to him was, ‘I’ve got children out there, please get them. They’re out there. I’m already in the camp.’” Jerry was offered chickens and trinkets and money. “He was constantly being confronted with requests to get relatives into the United States with them,” said Jack.

Though Daniels was born in California, “he was an exemplary Montanan,” Morrison said. “The unique set of skills that he had learned as a smokejumper and as an avid woodsman were exactly what the CIA was looking for so they could send him and others into a really ugly, hostile terrain and environment and know they were going to survive.”

He was, said Morrison, “the right guy in the right place at the right time - and he recognized it. He was a unique guy, really dedicated to what he was doing. He felt it was right.” Daniels had planned to retire to Montana any number of times before his death. “But he was just continually tapped on the shoulder to stay another six months, stay another year,” said Morrison. He had less than a year to go when he died. “I know he was very, very, very much looking forward to it,” Morrison said. “He was so close to retiring and coming back home to Missoula. To end up coming home in a box, that’s the saddest thing of all.” 🐼

Derry Keeps Going, and Going, and Going ...

by Rick Steigmeyer

Originally posted February 15, 2008 on Wenatcheeworld.com, online edition of the Wenatchee World newspaper. Reprinted with permission of the author.

At age 82, **Bob Derry** (MSO-43) says he’s slowing down. Not slowing down to the level of most human beings, and certainly not most octogenarians. Not by a long shot.

Bob Derry, 82, tromps through the snow with his friend, Jerry Rappe, 64. Derry has competed in all 27 Ridge to River Relay Races and does a variety of activities - including snowshoeing - to keep in shape. The pair were breaking trail on a service road off Mission Ridge Road. After competing in all 27 Ridge to River Relays, 24 of them as an ironman doing the 35-mile race solo, Derry, aka Bob the Burner, says he’s looking for a partner to do the race as a tandem team this year. “I’ve really slowed down. It’s awfully hard to keep up in the skiing and running. It can’t be my age,” Derry said with a wry smile.

Sitting in his easy chair, his possessive dog Critter curled in his lap and the sunlight streaming through the window of his East Wenatchee home overlooking the Columbia River, Derry looks as fit as most 60-year-olds wish they were. His hair has thinned and receded, but the tendons stretching from his T-shirt up his neck are steel cords, the muscles in his forearms

are hard as lathe-turned piano legs. He’s as lean as smoked jerky and still takes part in a variety of physical activities to keep in shape. Derry has always been an active sort, but he didn’t take



Bob Derry (World photo/Kelly Gillin)

up competitive sports until he was in his 40s when his son got him interested in dirt bike motorcycle racing. He later took up running marathons, bicycle racing and long distance riding and multi-leg ironman competitions. Anymore, he said he doesn't view Ridge to River - or any athletic participation for that matter - as a competition as much as a challenge.

"I just like the feeling that I've done my best. I get a great sense of accomplishment just in doing it," he said. His athletic challenges have obviously helped him stay fit and feeling younger than his years, he said. More importantly, they offer him a way to stay busy and outdoors. "I just like to stay active in as many ways as possible. I just keep doing it and I've been so, so lucky."

Colleen, his wife of 61 years, isn't so sure about that. "She's followed me everywhere I go to pick up the pieces," he said about the slight woman in long pigtailed sitting on the couch as he spun tales of his many adventures.

Derry has broken bones and collected a wide assortment of scrapes, bruises and emergency room visits over the years. Two years ago, at age 80, he broke his hip in a fall from his bike. It wasn't your typical bike ride. He was on a 14-day bicycle ride across the 16,000-foot passes of the Andes Mountains in Peru when he and another rider crashed into the back of a three-wheeled taxi that had made a sudden stop. Doctors told him the break would require months of rest and therapy. No way would he be able to compete in Ridge to River four months away. Of course, he did tandem that year with his granddaughter doing the first two ski and running legs. He made the Peru trip with a bicycle group he met while riding 3,400 miles in 25 days across the United States in 1997. He had health problems on that trip, but just kept on going. While competing in off-road motorcycle rallies, he broke numerous bones. But they never kept him still for long.

There was rarely a lack of challenge in Derry's life even before he turned to individual sports. He was born in Wenatchee in 1925. His father, Norman, had an orchard on Maple Street, but lost most of his land to the bank during the Great Depression in the 1930s. So instead of becoming an orchardist, Derry got a job as a smokejumper for the U.S. Forest Service while he was still at Wenatchee High School. When World War II broke out, he tried to enlist with the U.S. Coast Guard. They didn't want him because he was colorblind, so Derry joined the Seabees, the U.S. Navy's construction battalions. He worked as a crane operator during construction of an airbase in the Marshall Islands. Derry never saw battle action, but he did have to put up with 120 degree temperatures and insects that ate him alive. "We suffered. But it was the best thing I ever did. It was mostly older guys. I was just a young grunt with a lot of great teachers," he said.

His Seabee experience got him a job as a crane operator at Hanford. He attended the University of Montana under the GI Bill briefly. It was long enough to meet Colleen Fahy, who became his bride in 1946. Derry returned to smokejumping for a while and then in 1949 went into the restaurant business. He and a friend bought a sweet shop in East Wenatchee and turned it into a steak house. "I put up a sign saying 'Bob's Toughest Steaks in Town.' And they were, too. It was only the pinball machines and punchboards that kept us going," he said

with a laugh. A couple of years later, he opened the Steak Pit, a much nicer place that competed with The Windmill across the river in Wenatchee.

Derry said he didn't really care for the restaurant business. Its long hours didn't always fit well with his work as a volunteer fireman. There were only three volunteers for the rural fire station outside of East Wenatchee then and when it organized as Douglas County Fire District No. 2 in 1954, Derry was hired as its chief. "They thought because I was a restaurant owner I must have some administrative abilities. I kept them fooled for 30 years," said Derry. "I loved that job."

Finally a paid employee in what he considered his dream job, Derry closed down the Steak Pit and got out of the restaurant business. But he later started another private business. While fire chief, he trained as a diver for underwater body recovery. He started his own company and has performed hundreds of dives over the years for police recovery missions all over the Northwest. "We were very good. We found bodies that there was thought to be no chance of finding," he said. The work, he said, was challenging and very satisfying when successful because it would help bring a sense of closure to the victim's family. The company did many other types of underwater work ranging from pipeline repairs to dam inspections. One job in Colorado required him to dive 180 feet deep at a 10,000-foot elevation to find a leak in a dam. He contacted doctors to help him develop a dive table because he knew of no one who had dived that deep at an elevation that high. It took 28 minutes to surface from that depth to avoid getting



Bob Derry, 82, straps on his snowshoes for a trip through the deep snow along Mission Ridge Road. (World photo/Kelly Gillin)

the bends, leaving him seven minutes of air supply to explore the bottom. He did find the leak, but the owners of the dam decided it would be too expensive to repair.

The diving business - which he still operates part time - didn't make him rich, he said, but it was great fun and it paid for his expensive toys: sporting goods like carbon fiber bicycles, the latest kayaks, a racing scull, skis, snowshoes and gear for whatever new sport he was attracted to. He said his favorite activity today is bicycling because it's easier on his body. "Sure,

staying fit has probably had a positive effect on my longevity. But personally, I just like to stay active in as many ways as possible. I'm a jack of all trades, master of none," Derry said, getting up to look out the window and see sunshine beaming off the snow. "It's a beautiful day. I've got to get out and do something." 🌲

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My Introduction to Smokejumping

by Michael E. Steppe (Idaho City '61)

When I read the story about **Thomas "Shep" Johnson** (MYC-56) and America's Hush-Hush Helicopter in the March 2008 issue of *Air and Space Smithsonian* magazine, it started me thinking about my first contact with smokejumpers and the first time I met Shep Johnson. It was the starting of many changes in my life ... a good and exciting time.

I first met Shep when I was in high school. It was 1957 or 1958 and I was with my friend, **Phil Robertson** (MSO-62), also a teenager, who was the lookout on Reeds Peak lookout, located in the Black Range of southern New Mexico. Late one summer afternoon four jumpers jumped a fire north of Reeds, off the trail to Diamond Peak. We sat in awe from our perch in the tower watching them float down with their candy-striped chutes and land just as it started to rain. The Silver City dispatcher called and said they needed the jumpers back ASAP, as there was a fire bust starting up. By the time we saddled up and got the mules caught, it was dark and raining hard. We knew about where the jumpers landed, so when we got to the area we hooted our way down to them. It was only a mile or so off the trail, but very rough going with the mules in the dark. When we got down to the fire, we found Shep, **Richard "Paperlegs" Peterson** (MYC-46), **Kenn Smith** (IDC-55), and another very quiet jumper, who I think was **Jeff Davis** (MSO-57). We ran into Shep first and I still recall the euphoric look on his

and the others' faces when they realized they did not have to spend a rainy night on some unknown ridge.

The rain had put the fire completely out, so we stared packing the mules; Dorothy, a tough one to deal with, and Liza who was patient and kind. The jumpers were impressed at how fast we packed all the jump gear and tools on only two mules and were ready to depart after about an hour. We started up the mountainside for the trail, one of us leading the horses, the other leading the mules. The four jumpers followed behind. It was raining hard and it was very difficult picking our way back up the slick slope with wet rocks and heavy mud continuously giving way. We also had the constant problem of the mule packs getting hung up in timber, which didn't help the skittish Dorothy. When we reached the trail, we were spent. Phil and I mounted up and started for the cabin at Reeds Peak about five miles away with the jumpers following on foot.

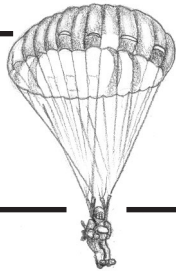
At the time Reeds Peak cabin was a small one-room cabin about 20 feet by 20 feet, with a wood stove in the corner. We were all frozen by the time we arrived, so while we tended to the stock, saddles and jump gear, the jumpers made a big fire in the stove and grouched about not having anything in the cabin to drink except coffee. All four huddled dangerously close to the stove trying to warm up. I don't know how they avoided being burned. Phil and I warmed up in our dry bedrolls.

We talked with the jumpers for a

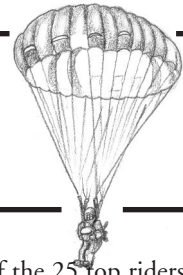
long time in a quiet, serious conversation about anything and everything: smokejumping, what they did after fire season, where they all came from. Shep was very patient with Phil and me and thoroughly answered all our questions in a way that stimulated my interest in learning more about smokejumping. Kenn Smith further stimulated our interest when he told us we needed to get out of groundpounding and into the jumpers. Tonight we were all cold, wet and isolated. Tomorrow night Phil and I would still be isolated and the jumpers would all be social butterflies back in Silver City. It was an exciting night for the two of us. We had four smokejumpers to pepper with questions and listen to ... four very impressive men.

The next day we got them all safely back to Silver City in the Alouette chopper the Forest Service had leased from a French company. The pilot was Bob Trimble. I worked two more years for the Forest Service as a packer/firefighter: one summer on the Gila NF and the next on Back Bone Ridge Lookout in the Shasta-Trinity Wilderness Area, west of Redding, California. I didn't see any of the jumpers again for two years when I applied for smokejumper training at McCall and was a NED in 1961. I was sent to Idaho City where Kenn Smith was the assistant to foreman **James "Smokey" Stover** (MYC-46). 🌲

Dr. Michael Steppe can be reached at 350 N, Loraine Ave, Glendora, CA 91741.



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to Dave Stephens (FBX-76), John "Doc" Lammers (MSO-71) and Jere Seguin (LGD-77), who just became our latest **Life Members**

Charlie Roos (RAC-97): "Chuck, for future reference and if anything comes up in Southeast Asia regarding smokejumpers and/or POW / MIA issues, I have a friend in the Thai Ministry of Interior who specializes in rural areas (especially the Laos / Cambodia border). He is just now finishing his PHD so presumably he will be moving up the ladder further and he thinks smokejumpers are great. I know he would be an asset in any way. While it's possible that we may go our whole lives without ever hearing another word from that corner of the world, I was thinking it would be beneficial to have a formal network in place if the day ever comes we could use it.

Charlie can be contacted at: 3825 Grand Ave., DeLand, FL 32720, (386) 748-7822 or c.j.roos7@gmail.com

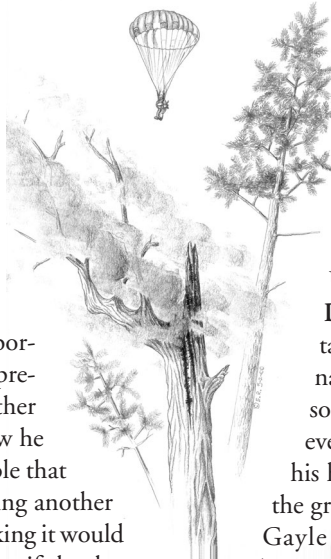
Doug Gochnour (NIFC-74) has been promoted to Forest Supervisor of the Malheur National Forest, headquartered in John Day, Oregon.

NSA web site in response to article from *Smokejumper* magazine "Smokejumper Awarded Medal of Honor" by **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59):

Joel W. Wyatt, joelwyatt22@hotmail.com, submitted the following:

"I met **Ken Sisler** (NCSB-57) around 1962 or 1963, when I was about 10 or 11 years old. My dad had recently retired from the Navy and was attending Arkansas State. I used to hang out around the campus, and one day I saw skydivers jumping over the football stadium. I ran to see them land on the field. One of them landed very near, and he instantly started up a conversation. I was thrilled beyond words that this daring man who didn't know me from Adam was so friendly, and we talked for about 10 minutes as he folded his chute. He told me he was in the ROTC program and he would soon be in the Army. I saw him a few times later that year while I sold newspapers and he always called me by name to say hello. The memory of that meeting and the thrill of watching the jumpers stayed with me until the day I read of his death in combat. Mr. Sisler was a true southern gentleman and his loss is still felt to this day."

Tara Rothwell (RAC-92): "I am working now at the VA in Boise doing Internal Medicine. My horse was 9th in a field of international riders finishing the 100 miles in 10 hrs. 33 min. (Arabian endurance racing). I am now on the National ranking list. The next step is to move onto the na-



tional training riders list of the 25 top riders. We're "young" and not ready for that this year but caught the eye of the chef D'equipe and have been invited to the national training riders clinic. We could be on the national team at this rate next year. Maybe even get a shot at going to the World Equestrian Games in KY 2010 (the first time they have been held in the US in many years, if ever)."

Dan Hensley (MSO-57) did an evaluation of a portable electric "Bear Fence" during a Trail Maintenance Project in 2005. It worked well but there were some problems in turning the switch off. Seems like even though Dan was nearly bald, what remained of his hair was "real curly" after he picked himself up off the ground.

Gayle Thomas, daughter of **George H. Robinson** (MSO-44): "Dad recently died in May and was 87 years young. He always remembered his smokejumping days, and my mother had sent in a lot of excerpts from his letters to her that were published in your *Smokejumper* magazine or *CPS Smoke Jumpers*. He was very proud of his parachuting days and the people he met fighting fires and, on a number of occasions, told the stories that he had so fresh in his mind. One was the incident with **Wag Dodge** (MSO-41). He cried every time. **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) was also one of the men Dad talked about. After the smokejumping days, Dad went on to become Ocean View's Fire Chief for 44 years. He was a builder by trade, dug graves since he was 16 years old at the Calvary Baptist Church. He also drove a school bus in between building. I remember two weeks before he died, he had offered to jump out of an airplane and show people how to fold parachutes to raise money for the church. I kiddingly said to him, 'Dad, you may only make one jump,' and he said, 'That's Ok, I'll make my mark straight, feet first into my grave!' Then he laughed. That was our Dad."

Hob Bonnett (CJ-49): "I enjoy reading *Smokejumper* magazine and hearing about the jumpers I've known. Two items in the July issue that caught my eye and triggered this e-mail are **Tom Pettigrew's** (CJ-62) comment that 'As far as I know there has never been a CJ buckle.' I've attached a picture of the buckle I've had for about 58 years and still wear. The words on the front are 'SISKIYOU Smokejumpers' and on the back 'Experienced and Professional.'"

"The other item that caught my eye was the footnote to **Jack Heikkinen's** (IDC-51) article. His brother **Ed Heikkinen** (IDC-53) took my place as Ranger on the

Krassel District of the Payette NF when I moved to the Boise NF in 1962. I retired from the Washington Office in 1985 after working for the FS for 34 years and now live in New Bern, NC.”

Joe Rumble (MSO-49): “I really enjoyed the article by Penn Stohr Jr. about his father Penn Stohr Sr. He was a great pilot, highly regarded by the smokejumpers he flew to fires. He understood jumpers and how to get them safely on the ground.

In 1949 Penn Stohr Sr. flew to a fire where he circled several times because he recognized that the wind coming over the ridge was making rotor effect. That’s no fun to wrestle with, so he came down the canyon, and we jumped from a lower elevation. His analysis was fine—we all got down close to the fire and safely.

I was on a two-man jump in the old Kaniksu National Forest shortly after the August 5 Mann Gulch tragedy. We got the fire out in about 24 hours and came out to Sandpoint, Idaho, for transport to Missoula. Penn had dropped some jumpers in the vicinity and landed the Travelair to pick us up. Heading home, we ran into a very hot electrical storm. I was sleeping on the floor and woke up when I started sliding toward the pilot seats. Wow! We sideslip landed in a postage stamp-sized pasture with superb skill from Penn. He said he had experienced lightning in fabric-covered planes, and it was not something he wanted to do again. The storm passed and he had me wind up the inertia starter. We taxied to the fence line, wound up the Pratt-Whitney motor to the max with brakes on, and we bobbled and bounced across the pasture with both jumpers as close to the pilot seat as possible so he could get the tail up quickly. We cleared the opposite side of the pasture fence and Penn was back in his element—air space.

The word around the Missoula base was that Penn was the first person to do an outside loop with a Ford Trimotor. I believed it, but did not worry about its confirmation.

On another jump the spotter was a prankster and reached out the door and gave the external elevator control cable a small yank. Penn looked back, said something and smiled. The spotter smiled back and we journeyed on without any more pranks. Both knew the limits of what was permissible.

Penn would use the joystick wheel brake control on takeoff and landing with the Ford Trimotor. This looked like a gearshift, and he used to joke about shifting gears on takeoff with us novice passengers.

Except for Mann Gulch, what a magical summer 1949 was, flying with the smokejumper legends like Bob Johnson, Penn Stohr and others, and working for Earl Cooley, Fred Brauer, Art Cochran, Jack Nash, Ken Roth, Wag Dodge and all the other jumpers and staff!”

Jill Leger (Associate): “Dear Coach, your column in the latest newsletter (Sounding Off From the Editor-July 2007) was so touching. It made me cry. What a dear man (**Bill Fogarty** (MSO-57)), and how awful to get news like that so suddenly. And I loved your addition to the caption. How amazing indeed that you had printed it before any of that happened.”

Jill has just been nominated for an Emmy by the National Academy of Television Arts & Science in the “Research” category for her work on the National Geographic Special “Incredible Human Machine.” The awards were presented September 22nd in the Time Warner Center in New York. Although I do not know the results at this time, congratulations are in order to one of the best students, runners and individuals that I had the opportunity to teach, coach and have as a friend. (Ed.)

Roy Wagoner (NCSB-62) in response to **Doug Baird’s** (NCSB-58) article in the July 2008 issue *Eight-Mile Ridge Fire*: “I remember that (event) well.

The Carlman family (**Bob Carlman**/NCSB-57) lived next door to my parents. His wife and kids were crushed and so was the neighborhood. I was about 16 at the time and was saddened. Never thought about jumping until I got out of high school. My parents would never watch the practice jumps.

They had too good of a memory of the Carlman tragedy. The only jump they saw me make was at Conconully, and they were at a picnic. They didn’t know it was me until we came off the fire. Sad days seem to follow us around.”

Stan Tate (MYC-53): “At the June McCall Reunion, **Leo Cromwell** (IDC-66) made a presentation recognizing me as National Smokejumper Chaplain (Emeritus). He gave me a beautiful plaque, which is now on my office wall. Leo told the group that I had served them as chaplain for over 50 years with perhaps 35 marriages and 50 burials for jumpers, pilots and families. I officiated **John “Tex” Lewis’** (MYC-53) memorial service while I was still in seminary and, just last summer, officiated for a smokejumper marriage at Redfish Lake. Smokejumping has been my most important ministry in life. When I was a Minister of Youth at a large, wealthy church in Philadelphia, I received a call to go to an estate and talk to an important person. It turned out to be no less than Eleanor Roosevelt. She wanted to hear all about smokejumping and how it worked. I will always be proud to have been a smokejumper.”

Brian Miller (RDD-85): “I’m relocating (Maine) and wanted to notify the NSA. It’s a long way from Redding where I cut my teeth. Maine has a strong logging presence. When I was interviewing, I saw the first log deck since my time with the FS. I want you to know I will always support the NSA. It is important work.”

Larry Peters (CJ-63) recently retired from his position as Chief Pilot with the Bechtel Corporation. Got this info in a questionnaire that I sent out to members in 2000. You can see that Larry has been really busy.

Scott Anderson’s (MYC-84) artwork was featured in the *McCall Magazine* Summer/Fall 2007 edition. The extensive article had several examples of his work.

Bruce Egger (MYC-46) has recently moved from Prineville, where he and his wife lived since 1980, to Portland. Bruce is the author of *G Company’s War*, an excellent recounting of his days in a WWII rifle company in Patton’s Third Army.

President Bush visited the Redding Smokejumper Base on July 18. From the Redding *Record Searchlight*:

Meanwhile, reporters were ushered off into the Redding Smokejumper Base. Inside, smokejumpers sewed tears in their parachutes and packed them in preparation for their next jump. After about 20 minutes, the president arrived. He walked up to **John Casey** (RDD-99), a 38-year-old jumper who has done almost 200 jumps in his 10-year career at the Redding base.

"I couldn't handle it," he said to Casey. Bush asked him how many jumps Casey had done. His eyes got wide at the number.

"I appreciate your service," Bush said, before patting Casey on the back and moving on to joke and laugh with the rest of the room. One smokejumper was so fixed on his work that he apparently missed the president's approach from behind. "I don't want to interrupt," Bush said, drawing laughter from reporters and firefighters alike. After getting off the plane, Bush was quick to praise firefighter's

work, particularly the smokejumpers.

"These are unusual people who are very courageous, determined and dedicated, and I had this special sense there, when I was with them, of the esprit de corps and we want to thank them for their courage," he said.

Jerry Dixon (MYC-71): " 'Doc' Sam Houston was a smoke-jumper of merit. We first met during Ned training in McCall in 1971. I was impressed that he had been a Green Beret and had fought in Vietnam. We trained together and jumped many fires. Sam and I did not get to jump the first training jump with the other Neds. He had trained with the Special Forces and had learned another roll. I showed up 10 days late and **Del Catlin** (MYC-47) gave me a chance to train. Sam and I went out and watched the first jump the Neds made. The next day we got to jump together. Sam recently died of cancer and left behind his wife, Susan, and sons, John (24) and Matt (21). I got to talk with Susan and told her how much I enjoyed jumping with a decorated Green Beret." 🇺🇸



L-R: Brian Cresto, Scott Logan, Steven Stroud and Alex Abols. (Courtesy Karen Wong)

Smokejumpers Take Top Prize at Outdoor Adventure Race in Scotland

In April 2008, **Brian Cresto** (NIFC-04), **Steven Stroud** (NIFC-03) and **Alex Abols** (MYC-02) teamed with TV host Scott Logan to take first place in The Drambuie Pursuit. The event is an outdoor adventure race, in its third year, that retraces the path of Bonnie Prince Charlie as he escaped across the Scottish Highlands after a defeated attempt to regain the British throne in 1745. This year's race saw ten teams of four adults trek through 100 miles of punishing terrain across the Scottish Highlands.

The competition involved various events: including speedboat and dirt buggy racing, hill climbing, kayaking, white-water rafting and biking. Prior to this year, only UK-based teams were allowed in the competition. April saw the first American teams permitted to take part in this event.

Fellow smokejumpers who would like to compete in next year's Drambuie Pursuit can apply at: www.pursuitof1745.com. 🇺🇸

Boise Reunion Committee Honors Jumpers and Pilot

The Boise Reunion Committee used some of the profits from the 2007 reunion and purchased NSA Life Memberships for some historically significant jumpers and smokejumper pilot Jim Larkin. This was an excellent way to invest their hard-earned monies into the NSA and, at the same time, honor some outstanding individuals in smokejumper history. Here are bios for the honorees, courtesy of Leo Cromwell (IDC-66):

James C. Larkin (Smokejumper Pilot)

For 35 years, Jim Larkin flew smokejumpers and said he had enough memories to last three lifetimes. He remembered things like the Ford rolling on its back on a hot afternoon, looking back in the DC-3 and wondering if Catlin was still aboard or why he was crawling around the ceiling. Jim's first "two-man stick" from Johnson's Travelair on a fire in 1949 were jumpers **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) and **Del Catlin** (MYC-48). Jim became the Chief Pilot for Region 4 and flew jumpers throughout the United States, including the Region 6 jumpers in the Region 8 project.

Jim, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, moved to Idaho in 1928 with his family. Before moving from Colorado Springs, Jim received a ride from a barnstormer that gave him the urge to learn to fly. Jim first learned to fly in 1939, and with the rising conflict in Europe, entered a Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program in Boise in 1941. After graduating top in his class, he went on to do various jobs in the service, such as flight instructor, a pilot in the Ferry Command, and eventually finishing out the remainder of the war flying C-46s over the "Hump" to Western China and Burma in WWII. After the war, Jim and his brother, **Rusty** (MYC-51), converted the Larkin family land in Donnelly, Idaho, into the Donnelly Airport.

In 1949, when not flying planes off of his back porch in Donnelly, he was working for his boss, Bob Fogg, at the McCall branch of Johnson Flying Service. While working for Johnson's, Jim flew Forest Service contracts. He flew every type of cargo imaginable into the backcountry, from tractors to pigs. Jim's main job in the summer months was carrying smokejumpers in both the Ford Tri-Motor and the Travelair. After working eight years for Johnson, Jim started his own aviation business, flying contract for the Forest Service with his Cunningham-Hall in Idaho City before becoming a full-time Forest Service pilot in 1958. Every year from 1949 until his retirement in 1978, Jim flew smokejumpers and did some type of contract work for the Forest Service. After retirement, he flew Joe Albertson's King Air 200, but still continued to stay active by helping with the Mountain Flying Seminars held each summer in McCall. In 1991 Jim returned to McCall to fly for the

Forest Service as an AD Pilot and flew the DC-3 with its new turbine engines. He passed away May 9, 2007.

James "Smokey" Bennett Stover (McCall '46)

James "Smokey" Bennett Stover was born on July 26, 1921 in Weiser, Idaho. Smokey fought in World War II with the U.S. Army in the Pacific Theater in Guam, New Guinea, and Australia. In 1946, after the conclusion of the war, he returned to Idaho and became part of the first class of U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers from the McCall Smokejumper Base. In 1948, squad leaders **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) and Smokey had one of the firsts in the history of "Big Flips" out of the smokejumper base. The loser of the flip was to become the Smokejumper Foreman out of the satellite base at Idaho City, fondly referred to as the "Rock Pile." Smokey lost, but he and his wife, Lois, fell in love with Idaho City. He headed up that base from 1948 until the base was forced to close after the 1969 fire season. During the time of the Idaho City Smokejumper Base Operation, Smokey was its only foreman. Smokey retired in 1972 as Smokejumper Foreman at the Boise Base and was able to pursue his love of fishing in Waldport, Oregon, until his death on May 20, 2004.

Smokey and his small crew worked on several Idaho City community projects that included the Idaho City Museum and Park. His crew built the hangar at the airport and made many improvements to the runway and the jump base. Always conscious of the risks associated with jumping, Smokey worked to make smokejumping safe from parachute deployment malfunctions by filming jumpers' exits from aircraft.

For their entire 22 years in Idaho City, Smokey and his wife, Lois, made the Idaho City Base a celebrated and important part of the History of the Boise Basin. Not only did Smokey oversee 2,294 fire jumps—without losing a single jumper—but he also took care of his people and lent their presence to the good of the community. They celebrated every smokejumper's birthday during the summer with a party, and because the jumpers were never able to be together for traditional holidays, Smokey instituted a July 25th "Christmas Party." Prior to the jumper's departure at the end of the fire season, Smokey annually hosted the "Idaho City Smokejumper 'Tea Party.'" "Tea" being a play on words for "Termination." Idaho City residents and USFS personnel alike appreciated these events and the rich camaraderie that they instilled in the community.

Smokey's historical records of the Idaho City Jumpers were extensive and helped preserve the history of smokejumping. His historical notes/pictures have been donated to the Idaho City Historical Foundation.

Kenneth Roy Smith (Idaho City '55)

Kenneth Roy Smith grew up on the family farm near Caldwell, Idaho. After graduation from high school in 1950, Kenn joined the United States Air Force. He served four years and became a survival instructor in the mountains of Colorado. Throughout his adult life, he served his country in a multitude of ways.

After the Air Force, his close friend, **Elmer Huston** (IDC-52), encouraged Kenn to apply to the smokejumpers, and he became a smokejumper in 1955. He jumped all over the Western United States and particularly enjoyed jumping in Idaho and the Gila National Forest in New Mexico. He became the Smokejumper Training Foreman at the McCall Smokejumper Base and Squadleader and Training Foreman in Idaho City, training hundreds of young men to parachute into wildfires of the West. He motivated his "Neds," a pet term he had for first year jumpers, to take pride in a job well done, to give 110 percent, and to love the environment they were hired to protect. He showed these young men you could work hard and play hard. He motivated them to give to their community, too, and led them in building the City Park in Idaho City, renovating boardwalks and joining in a "Christmas in July" celebration each summer. He made 199 jumps in his career, which ended in a helicopter crash in 1969 that forced him to take medical retirement.

Kenn spent some winters working in the off-season at Intermountain Aviation at Marana, Arizona, beginning in 1960. He was involved in some projects that supported the policies of the U.S. Government. During this time he helped train people in parachuting activities. He spent time in Central America, Colorado, Arizona, and Vietnam during these off-seasons.

Kenn continued to give to the Idaho City community, although he lived with chronic pain. He was instrumental in the renovation of the Boise Basin Museum building in Idaho City, as well as the Miner's Exchange Building conversion into Boise County Offices. He also served as President of the Idaho City Historical Foundation. Kenn moved and restored one historical building in which he lived until his death in 1997 and donated this building to the Idaho City Historical Foundation.

Kenn never married, but was "Uncle Kenn" to many children of jumpers and Idaho City townspeople. He was an avid Caldwell and BSU football fan, a hunter of note, and a skilled fisherman. Kenn loved Idaho and always made an extra effort to introduce jumpers from elsewhere to Idaho so that they would love Idaho like he did.

Wayne R. Webb (McCall '46)

Wayne Webb was a smokejumper who, in addition to a long career fighting fires, developed many innovations in parachutes and smokejumping equipment. He was born in Weiser, Idaho, on July 21, 1925. At the age of 18 he joined the U.S. Army and went through paratrooper training at Ft. Benning, Georgia. As a member of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 17th Airborne Division, he saw action on the European Front and

fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

In 1946 Wayne became a smokejumper in McCall, Idaho. In 1965 Wayne was forced to quit jumping by an age regulation at the age of 40, but continued to be the loft foreman repairing and packing parachutes and spotting other jumpers on fires. In the 1960s Wayne was requested to join Intermountain Aviation, and he served a detail to Guatemala to help train Cuban exiles for the invasion of Cuba in a failed attempt to oust Fidel Castro and his communist regime from that country. In 1972 the age limit was lifted and Wayne began smokejumping again until his retirement in 1975 with 300 total jumps, of which 175 were on fires. Wayne designed the XP-1,-2 and -3 parachutes. In 1990 he was honored when the new McCall Parachute Loft was designated the "Wayne R. Webb Parachute Loft." In the 90s he spent much time at the McCall Base, organizing and maintaining the smoke-jumper archives, photos, and records that are available to all jumpers, past and present.

Wayne possessed an intimate knowledge of the rugged Idaho back country. He was an honored smokejumper, a master rigger and instructor of sewing, equipment and parachute repair. In 2007 he was inducted into the Idaho Aviation Hall of Fame. Wayne was recognized nationwide for his expertise and innovations in parachutes, smoke-jumper equipment, but most of all for his love of smokejumping and those smokejumpers he met throughout his life. Wayne passed away November 7, 1999, but will always be remembered for what he did for smokejumping.

Ken N. "Moose" Salyer (McCall '55)

Ken jumped in McCall for 12 seasons, achieving a total of 101 career jumps before his death in 1965. Ken was killed when a Twin Beech crashed during a cargo run after safely dropping four jumpers on a fire on Norton Creek in central Idaho. He became a squadleader, trainer and spotter in 1962 and was especially known for effective training and mentoring of Neds with an emphasis on physical fitness and a relentless focus on overall jumper safety. He acquired the nickname of "Moose" because of his great physical strength combined with outstanding athletic ability and a willingness to shoulder more than his fair share of any work assignment.

After serving on active duty in the Army in 1957, Ken continued jumping in McCall. At the age of 27, he returned to college on a wrestling scholarship at Central Washington State College, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in education in 1964. Ken returned to Boise with his wife, Mary K., and young son Mike, where he pursued a teaching career at Fairmont Junior High. Because of his keen interest in young people and athletics, he also coached wrestling and football. In addition, he was a high school wrestling referee for schools in the Treasure Valley.

As a statement of Ken's strong positive effect on those people who knew and worked with him, two books were written about smokejumping with him as a central figure. In his book *Jumping Skyward*, the Reverend **Stan Tate** (MYC-53) modeled the main character after Ken as a testament to his spiritual strength and fundamental concern for other

people. Dale Schmaljohn's (MYC-60) book, *Smokejumper*, also referenced Ken's skill in training Neds and in demonstrating a tremendous work ethic. The last chapter tells about the overpowering sadness and profound sense of loss felt by the McCall smokejumpers upon hearing about his

death. Ken was a unique individual who made a major impact on every jumper who knew him. This was all the more remarkable considering the condensed time frame of summer work associations and his prematurely shortened jumping career. 🕯

Jump Story

by Ralph Bowyer (McCall '56)

An old grey snag stood high,
Beneath a western sky
And a storm front was rumblin' through.
Then a sudden bolt of light
Lit up the darkened night,
And split the Ponderosa half in two.

And the hot sparks that fell,
Gave birth to a burning hell
That tomorrow would consume the land.
And the lookout stationed near,
Saw the strike and felt a fear
For he knew dry conditions were on hand.

And the prayer he said was meant
For the men who would be sent
To do battle with the blaze he saw below.
The dispatcher faced the fact
There was little time to act,
Before dawn, he'd need men all set to go.

So he called the jumper base
'Cause he had to win this race,
Tough men for a tight spot, was his need.
They're the force considered best,
They'll outfight all the rest,
"Fastest in and fastest out" is their creed.

But their ranks were a little thin
When that urgent call came in,
Other fires left the camp with just a few.
"Send out eight," was the call
They had four, and that was all,
But four jumpers can be one hell of a crew!

So, at dawn the four took flight
To a fire that had burned all night,
And they knew that it would be a long hard day.
For the forest was very dry
And the wind, a little too high
And on that hot, steep hill they'd earn their pay.

Well, they left the plane real quick
In a screaming, four-man stick
A thrill only they could ever know.
This early morning jump
Made their hearts begin to pump
As they fell toward the trees far below.

"Hit the spot, bend the knees!"
"Keep the chute out of the trees."
Then the four begin to make their stand.
Facing danger and the heat,
Undermanned, but never beat,
Side by side they fought fire, hand-to-hand.

They dug line until they hurt,
Cut down snags, threw tons of dirt,
And slowly, they gained a little ground.
Eating ash and breathing smoke,
They sweat blood, cough and choke.
But that night, fire's out ... and they bed down.

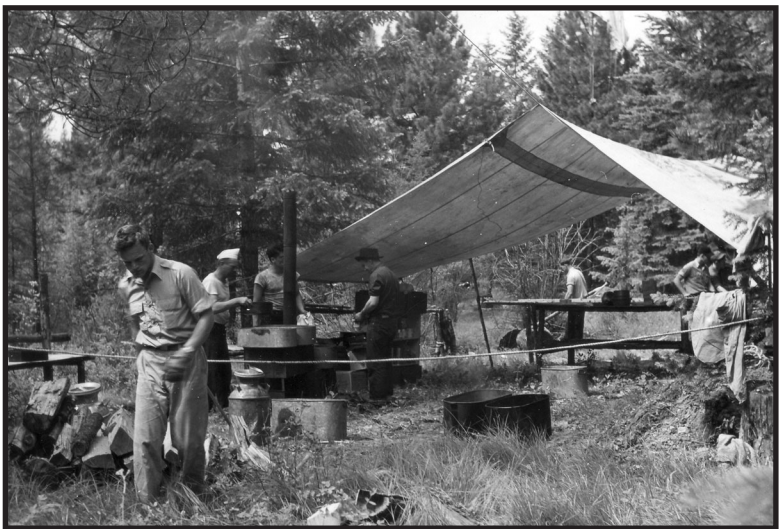
This smokejumper tale of four
Is just one of a million or more,
And a part of the history it traces.
The tradition they must uphold,
Makes them fierce, brave and bold,
For smokejumpers must go down in hairy places!



L-R: Ted Dethlefs & Roland Fisher



L-R: James Jackson & Lee Davis



L-R: Jim Barr, Jack Nash, Gene Little, Unknown, Ted Dethlefs, Unknown & Dave Ratigan



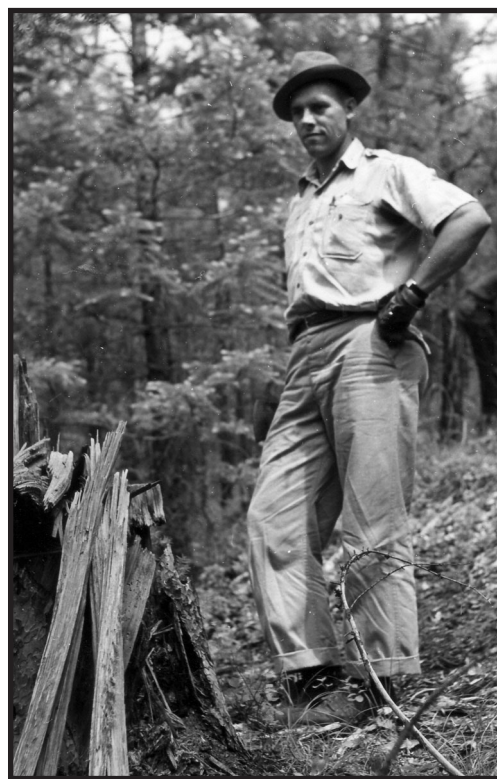
L-R: Marvin Amundson, Unknown, Robert Morgan, Charles Hatcher & James Harrison



Robert Collins



Albert Ayling & A Buddy

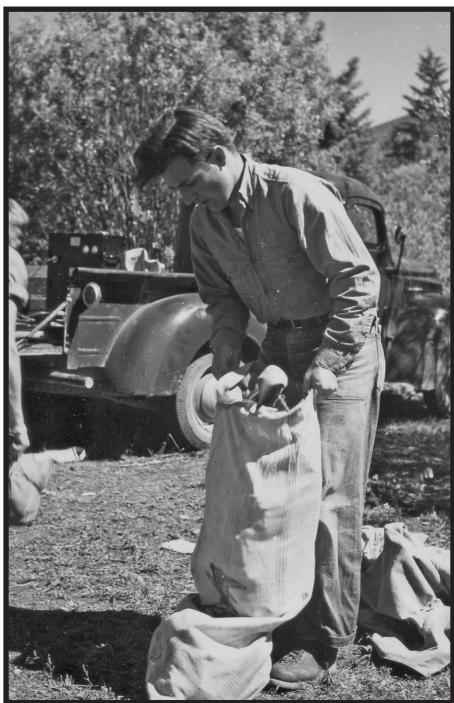


Fred Brauer

Nine Mile Camp Montana

Summer 1947 - #2

Photos Courtesy Ted Dethlefs Collection

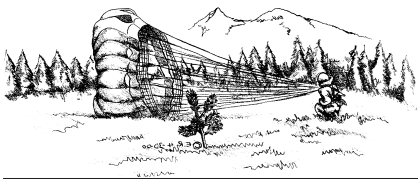


Chuck Burk

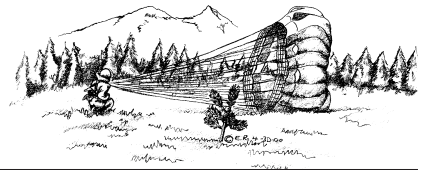


John Higgins

Layout Design by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



Checking the Canopy



Tom Decker
(Idaho City '64)

The King's Note In the Elevator

OUR CONDOMINIUM complex has an elevator to service three levels of condos and provide access to the parking garage. Once in a while, someone drips kitchen grease onto the elevator floor. There's no way of knowing who the culprit is, so the building coordinator leaves a note in the elevator to remind all residents to be considerate of the neighbors and pick up after themselves.

Seems reasonable to me!

Well, somebody recently took the note, wadded it up, and threw it on the windshield of the building coordinator's car!

No good deed goes unpunished!

Our world needs more than a note to keep things tidy, operational, and safe! And true enough, not everybody appreciates everybody's efforts to police up their part of the playground.

I am always impressed by the stories in this journal that report the work of current and former jumpers to take care of the world. From fire suppression and business management to government diplomacy; from military service to educational and environmental concerns and agronomics on a world level—and a whole lot more—jumpers distinguish themselves to bring order to the confusion of the world. Their list of

accomplishments is most impressive, and sometimes quite costly in terms of personal sacrifice.

In the biblical sense, I hope these jumpers realize their investment in the work of peace!

I read the Book of Psalms on a somewhat regular basis as a platform for personal prayer. Psalm 122 makes the plea for peace. You may have seen it: *...peace be within Jerusalem...peace within her walls, and security within her citadels.* This prayer, attributed to King David, is much more than a plea for resolution to political problems. It elevates the earnest hope that the work of peace proceeds so that all people will be able to live and prosper without fear.

What a hope!

You realize, of course, that in some respects this prayer is nothing more than a king's note stuck in an elevator with the hope that someone sees it and heeds it.

I can only say, keep it up,

jumpers! Our world depends on people of peace doing the hard work that commends and builds an environment where peace and prosperity moves forward, not just for a few, but for the nations. Somehow this fits into God's scheme of things.

Whatever your work is, whatever it has been, pray for peace! Work for it! Plant seeds of peace and nourish their growth! Bless its endeavors wherever your work—or leisure—takes you! The world will continue to be a better place because of it. 🙏

Tom Decker retired from the Army Chaplaincy in 2002. Early in 2008 he will retire from an urban Lutheran parish after almost 40 years of combined parish and military service. From their condominium in Signal Hill, California, Tom and Jan see the DC-3 that takes off daily from the Long Beach Airport, sans jumpers, to fly cargo to the Island of Catalina.

NSA Offers Gift Membership

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Since you're a member of the NSA, you undoubtedly enjoy the benefits of membership in our association. Those include our quarterly magazine that provides you the latest news on issues of current interest to active and veteran smokejumpers plus a plethora of historic features.

NSA membership also gives you the chance to connect with old buddies at national and regional gatherings and to work with fellow jumpers on projects that benefit the national forests.

Now, through gift memberships, there's a way to share those benefits with *non-member jumpers*. As a result of an action by the NSA board, current members can now purchase one-year half-price memberships for fellow jumpers. This is **\$15.00 for a 1-year membership**.

Gift memberships *are non-renewable at the half-price rate*.

They may be purchased by mailing a check to NSA membership coordinator John McDaniel, P.O. Box 105, Falun, KS 67442-0105.

The purchaser must provide the NSA with the new member's correct address. And, he said, the purchaser is also responsible for notifying the new member that he or she is making the gift.

Is Hector Alive?

by Leo Cromwell (Idaho City '66)

There we were ... flying over the north end of the Payette in the Twin Otter admiring the vast size of the French Creek Fire, where in 1985 “Catfish” Bates (MYC-83) and John Olson (FBX-77) were unable to hold the fire when the snag they were falling started rolling down towards the Salmon River. The snag rolled from the top to bottom, spreading fire as it went.

Now seven years later in August of 1992, the devastation was still obvious, but in the last few days we kept picking up one fire after another in the patchwork of unburned fuel. Two days earlier Rick Hudson (NIFC-73) and I had dropped our last ten jumpers on the West Bear Fire in this same area. Dan Felt (MYC-77) was the fire boss, and this fire was moving when the pilot, Andy Anderson, skillfully maneuvered the DC-3 through the rough air into position to make the drops. The eight McCall and the two BLM jumpers got quite a ride before thumping into the jump spot with dust visible from the aircraft. Felt and Barry Koncinsky (MYC-74) were both complaining a lot as we finished dropping their cargo.

This time our pilots were Mary LaMoy and Terry Small with Clark Noble (MYC-70) in the rear with us, resting in the spotter's position. At times Clark was smiling and listening to Mary telling him how her jumping skunk Pepe, had completed his required number of jumps from the McCall jump tower and was now jumping fires with the boys. The stuffed skunk with a small chute attached would go out the door in a jumper's leg pocket, but part way down he would be released and be on his own. She was hoping that Pepe would someday receive his 50th jump pin at the T-party at the end of the season.

Clark said, “Carey Dome Lookout is turning in a fire for you, and the PB4Y will be available to give you a little help.”

“How Big?” I wanted to know.

Clark said it was one that the lookout had seen a couple of days ago when J-42 dropped the 10 jumpers. Now it was just showing a little, so it should just be a two-manner.

Great, I thought, a chance to get away from the Operations Desk and relax for a couple of days on a fire in one of the areas I wanted to scout out for elk.

My jump partner would be Hector Madrid (MYC-89). It was Hector's fourth year of jumping, and he was very popular with all the other jumpers because of his hard work and great personality. I was hoping that McCall would never



Hector Madrid and Frankie Romero 1992 (Courtesy L. Cromwell)

lose him to the BLM, but I knew he had a great future. Maybe someday he would be a Base Manager.

Mary brought the plane down and we did a fly-by to check out the fire and the jump spot. Very little smoke was left now as the retardant plane headed back for McCall. The jump spot looked very small and was tucked away between the small ponderosa pines. I remember looking for alternate spots, but most of the area was very rocky with downed logs and old burnt snags.

“Got the spot?” Clark asked as we circled the small opening.

“Got it!” I replied and waited for Clark to say “One-man sticks!”

I looked at Clark but the words never came. I knew that it was a waste of energy to try to get Clark to agree on one-man sticks, so I proceeded to put on my helmet and checked my PG bag. I looked at Hector and told him that he had better get out in a hurry, but I already knew that he was thinking the same thing.

“On final! Get ready! Go!”

I felt my chute open smoothly after a clean exit and looked around for Hector.

“Hector, are you okay?” I shouted. I will always

remember his response.

"I think I have a problem!" he cried out.

Pulling down on my guideline, I turned toward his voice to see what had happened. "I think you're right," was my response to the terrifying sight.

It looked like Hector had a half hitch around his right ankle and his head was the lowest part of his body. Hector was kicking and flailing in an attempt to free himself. He was very strong, and I could see him reach for his ankle and try to pull his leg down so he could free himself. Every time he tried this maneuver, the chute would collapse as the air spilled out. It would drop quite rapidly as the chute made a violent turn to the left.

I knew that he only had a couple of tries left before he would go crashing head first into the rocks and downed logs below. If Hector could survive the impact that awaited him he would be too injured to respond, so I tried to follow his erratic flight.

At the last possible second I made another decision. I would make it to the small opening and then back track to Hector's location. There didn't seem to be a reason for both of us to get busted up. I wanted to be able to help Hector, and the last thing we needed was for both of us to be lying injured miles from the nearest road. It was late in the afternoon and there was little chance of being rescued that day.

I took one last look at Hector, tried to line up his location with the jump spot, and then made a run for the small opening. Hector would need an angel to look after him now, and I was praying that he could somehow survive the impact of this terrible landing.

I was running with the wind, but I had no choice, and the spot seemed too far away to make it there. Trying to sneak into a spot between the trees, I felt my chute catch the last tree and I was swinging about 20 feet off the ground. I made the fastest letdown possible without using the safety knot, which I could never remember how to do anyway.

Hitting the ground, I hooted for Hector as I hurried to free myself of the jumpsuit. No answer. Lining up with the general area where Hector would come down, I ran into the woods, hollering and fearing the worst.

The trees, like usual, were a lot taller than they appeared from the air. I can always remember how scared I was as I flew through the brush and screamed his name. Stopping, I heard something. It was Hector. I changed directions and continued to run but could not find him.

"I'm up here." I looked up into the tall trees. Hector was still trying to free his leg, but this time he had more success with the help of all the branches of the ponderosa. He was soon back on the ground and talking about "a hundred miles an hour."

"That was one hell of a ride," Hector said. I think I hugged him and thought the good Lord had been looking over him that day.

It was hard to believe, but we heard voices as we made our way back to the fire. Dan Felt and part of his crew had been making their way over to our fire location and had witnessed the unbelievable show.

Dan took out his pint of Jack Daniels and offered it to us. Hector and I passed the whiskey back and forth until it was consumed. Finally we started to relax.

"There's your fire," Dan said. The fire had received half a load of retardant before we arrived and was now almost out with only a small campfire-size fire remaining. Dan's crew had just finished lining the fire for us.

Someone must have been watching over Hector that day. It seemed like a miracle that Hector had escaped a terrible injury. Had an angel been watching over Hector? I am not sure, but much to our surprise Karin appeared. Hector's girlfriend was there with Dan and the other jumpers. Karin was on the Krassel Helitack crew and only jumpers were on the other fire. 🙏

Hector Madrid (MYC-89) and his cousin Frankie Romero (MYC-89) both came to McCall in 1989 from the Gila National Forest in New Mexico. Frankie is now the McCall Smokejumper Base Manager. Hector became a BLM jumper in Boise in 1995 and worked his way up the BLM as a Smokejumper Spotter and Training Specialist. After the 2005 fire season, Hector and his wife, Karin, left Boise and returned to New Mexico, where Hector is currently the BLM State Fire Management Officer.

Worst-Ever Copter Crash Hits Firefighter Community Hard

The crash of a Sikorsky S-61N helicopter on the evening of August 5, 2008, was the nation's worst-ever helicopter accidents involving firefighters. Nine people were killed in the 7:45 p.m. crash, including seven firefighters from Grayback Forestry of Merlin, Oregon. Grayback President, **Mike Wheelock** (CJ-76), said, "Ten firefighters from our company were part of a 20-person organized crew that was working in the steep/remote terrain on the Shasta Trinity N.F. on the Iron/Alps complex."

Also killed in the accident were one of the two helicopter pilots and Jim Ramage, who was working as a USFS check pilot. Ramage was the first forestry pilot to be hired by the California Dept. of Forestry in 1984 and had badge No. 1. He worked for Cal Fire for 20 years before retiring. Ramage was a U.S. Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam and also flew for Air America from 1970-74.

The Sikorsky had already made two water drops and two crew pickups before the accident. Ten members of Grayback's 20-person crew had already been transported back to base camp before the crash. 🙏



NSA Trail Crew



Saving A Forest Gem: Glade Guard Station Renovated In Southwest Colorado

by Karen Boush

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Glade Project Crew Standing L-R: Jimmie Dollard (CJ-52), John McDaniel (CJ-57), Chris Sorensen (Associate), Joe Lord (MSO-56), John Payne (MSO-66), Denis Symes (MYC-63), Doug Wamsley (MSO-65), Warren Pierce (CJ-64), Ron Siple (MYC-53). Kneel L-R: Ray Carter (MSO-54), Rich Hilderbrand (MSO-66), Bill Ruskin (CJ-58), Jim Cherry (MSO-57), Chuck Sheley (CJ-59). (Courtesy John McDaniel)

Call it Extreme Makeover: Boondocks Edition

Last week, renovation began on the historical Glade Guard Station, located more than 20 miles from the nearest paved road in Dolores County in southwest

Colorado. Volunteers came from around the United States to help the San Juan National Forest restore the main structure on the site – a circa 1916 residence – to its original condition.

Faced with a long to-do list and only five days to do it, they rose to the challenge.

They scraped, sanded and primed the exterior then painted it to its original bright white color. They tore off the deteriorating cedar-shingle roof and put on a new one. They

replaced an exterior side door and its frame, as well as the porch railing and balusters. They installed a flagpole, donated from the Mancos chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and made repairs to the chimney and sandstone foundation. If that weren't enough, they improved the site drainage and removed the windows so they could be professionally restored.

"Those guys are the hardest-working guys you'd ever meet," said Julie Coleman, heritage team leader for the San Juan Public Lands.

A smokin' crew

"Those guys" are 14 retired smokejumpers from the National Smokejumper Association, which – through its trail-maintenance program – restores historical structures on Forest Service land across the country. Averaging 68 years of age, the smokejumpers paid their own way to get to the guard station where they camped, ate catered fare, and enjoyed the chance to look back on their shared experiences as smokejumpers.

"It's a rare opportunity for guys our age to come back together and relive our youth," said **Bill Ruskin** (CJ-58), a Colorado Springs, Colo., resident who oversees the program.

Also dedicated to the task at hand were Coleman and her husband, David Singer, with Silverton Restoration Consulting, Lloyd McNeil, a crew foreman for the Forest Service and Elaine Sherman, archaeologist for the Dolores Public Lands Office. Together, they got the job done, with time left over for a flag-raising ceremony and barbecue Friday afternoon.

"Without proper maintenance, everything just deteriorates. The paint goes away; animals chew on things; the porch railing rots out," said **Rich Hilderbrand** (MSO-66), the smokejumpers' squad leader from Colorado Springs.

"(The house) is being restored to look very much like it did 50 years ago."

One hundred years of service

At an elevation of about 8,300 feet, the guard station is located about 10 miles north of McPhee Reservoir on a remote hillside overlooking a large open area, known as The Glade. As one of the oldest U.S. Forest Service administrative sites in Colorado, it has a well-documented history.

The guard station was first established in 1906 when a log cabin, long since decayed and removed, was built as shelter for the "guardian" assigned to watch over the Glade District of the Montezuma National Forest, now part of the Dolores Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest. In 1916, both the 600-square-foot house and a barn were constructed to serve as the ranger's seasonal headquarters. In the mid-1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps set up a camp next to the guard station and built a woodshed, garage and outhouse, all of which stand today.

The Forest Service used the station well into the 1970s, primarily for storage, but dwindling budgets and a lack of need for the facility resulted in its being left largely unattended. Neglected but not forgotten, the station remained

under the watchful eye of McNeil, who checked on the station whenever his work took him into "the boondocks." He said he continued to pester district officials about the station.

"I've kept fanning the flames or blowing on the coals to get the fire going because it's meant a lot to me, and I didn't want to see it disappear," he said.

In the nick of time

The guard station was listed in 2001 on the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, and efforts continue to have it added to the National Register of Historic Places. Still, even a year ago, the historical guard station remained at risk of being lost to history.

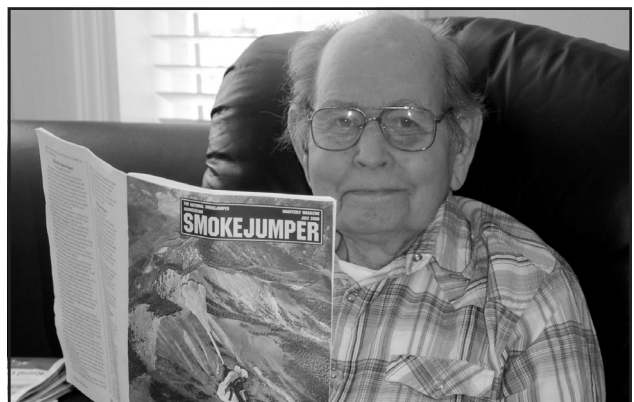
The house was showing its age with a rapidly deteriorating roof, a crumbling sandstone foundation, an infestation of rodents, and myriad other problems. Yet, the San Juan National Forest lacked the funds and manpower to do anything about it.

Last summer, however, things started looking up for the station after archaeologist Sherman told Ruskin, with the National Smokejumper Association, about its dire situation. When Ruskin jumped at the chance to provide free labor to help save the forest gem, Coleman started rounding up money. She secured a \$10,000 grant from the Bacon Family Foundation and a \$1,000 grant from the Ballantine Family Fund, in addition to \$16,000 from the San Juan Public Lands. The money covered last week's renovation activities, including the construction materials, a historical structural assessment provided by Silverton Restoration Consulting, and catering services provided by Elevated Fine Foods of Silverton.

A new chapter

Coleman said the next major stage of the renovation, slated for next summer, will include painting the interior and reinstalling the windows. She expects the renovation to be fully complete by 2010. The house will then be available to the public as a recreational rental, operating under permit by the Jersey Jim Foundation.

"I think (the station) really is a connection to the past," Coleman said. "We're giving it a new life and a new chapter." 📖



NSA member George Anderson (MYC-44) will turn 97 in November. (Courtesy David Anderson)

Doctor Made House Calls—by parachute

by Curt Synness

Reprinted with permission from the "Independent Record" (Helena, MT) and the author.

More than 60 years ago, before helicopters were used for mountain and wilderness rescues, Helena's Dr. Amos "Bud" Little was making rescues from the sky.

In 1944, Little, then 27 and serving as an Air Force "paradoctor," gained national recognition for one of the most daring parachute rescues in U.S. history in a remote region of the Colorado Rockies known as Hell's Half Acre.

"Shortly after midnight on June 14, 1944, a B-17 Flying Fortress out of Rapid City, S.D., bound for Greeley, Colo., crashed on the north side of Crown Peak in the Roosevelt National Forest, just below the snow and timberline at 10,800 feet," according to a July 1999 *Wildland Firefighter* magazine article titled "The Savior Who Fell From The Sky" by Mark Matthews.

Three of the bomber's 10 crewmembers were killed instantly. Another died the next morning. Two survivors were able to walk down from the mountain. The other four were injured too badly to leave the site, including one with a broken back. Little's heroics were reported in three national magazines—*Time*, *Coronet* and *Reader's Digest*.

"Soon, a bomber, with an Army doctor aboard, was on its way to the rocky ledge where the four injured men lay," stated the *Time* article of July 10, 1944. "The doctor first dropped a parachute-load of supplies from the circling (UC-54), then jumped himself. When the main rescue party arrived by land, nearly four hours later, the patients had been fed, bandaged and drugged to ease their pain. The doctor is small, husky Lt. Amos Little of Marlboro, Mass. He is one of six paradoctors attached to the Search and Rescue section of the Second Air Force."

Little had been contacted in Casper, Wyo., at 2 a.m. on June 15. "As soon as we spied the crashed bomber, I dropped the 85-pound kit containing equipment for treatment of shock, burns, fractures, lacerations and other injuries," Little told the *Great Falls Tribune* in 1945. "It landed within 25 yards of the mangled B-17, but my landing was not quite as good. I bailed out at 12,500 feet, a thousand feet above the craggy mountaintop where the wreckage was. The wind carried me (about 600 feet) from the crash, and I thought I was a goner for a minute. As I approached the ground, my chute snagged (the top of) an old dead tree, and I fell about 20 feet with that tree right after me. It landed with a hell of a thud a few inches from my head."

At the time, Little's rescue was unofficially the highest altitude for a parachute landing. He was recognized as the only physician to make a rescue jump in the U.S. during

World War II.

In 1994, one of the survivors of the bomber crash of 50 years earlier penned a tribute to his rescuer.

"How do you say 'thank you' to someone who risked his life to

save you and your comrades by jumping from that altitude?" wrote David Phillips from his home in Chandler, Ariz. "It was an incredible effort, for which I and the others are forever grateful."

After graduating from Dartmouth in 1939 and Johns Hopkins University in 1942, Little enlisted in the U.S. Army. It was while stationed at Great Falls that he volunteered for jump school. "They gave us a choice to work on a tractor motor or learn how to jump out of airplanes, and I chose the latter," said the 91-year-old Little, who currently resides at The Waterford in Helena. He attended jump school in 1943 with the smokejumpers at the U.S. Forest Service Parachute School at Seeley Lake and then finished his training at Fort Benning, Ga.

Little made 52 parachute jumps between 1943 and 1946—45 practice and seven rescue jumps. In the summer of 1944, he bailed out over a raging fire in the Lolo National Forest to rescue a smokejumper who had broken his back.

In October of 1945 in western Montana, Creek Morgan of Kellogg, Idaho, was accidentally shot in the arm by a high-powered hunting rifle by a hunting companion who was aiming for a bear. "Capt. Amos Little parachuted to the spot where Morgan lay in the rugged timberlands of the Bitterroot National Forest to perform the operation," reported the *Missoulian*. "Little said Morgan was 'darned near dead when we landed.'"

Little and nine smokejumpers made the dangerous 2,000-foot leap to aid the wounded hunter. They administered three quarts of blood plasma during the all-day trek from the thickly wooded area to an awaiting plane, which flew him to a hospital in Missoula.

"Dr. H. M. Blegen said Morgan's condition was serious, but 'the emergency work done by Capt. Little undoubtedly



Dr. Amos Little (NSA file)

saved his life,” according to the *Missoulian*.

Bud Little relocated to Helena in 1947, where he operated a private medical practice for many years. He and his family—wife Mary and children Jim, Sue and Rogers—became key members of the Belmont Ski Club. The day after the Mann Gulch Fire in 1949, Little helped identify the bodies of the 12 smokejumpers who perished in the fire.

In 1958, he made the 24th documented ascent of Granite Peak. He was appointed the director of the 1960 U.S. Alpine Ski Team and served as the vice president of the International Ski Federation from 1970-88. In 1955, Little

received the A. Leo Stevens Medal for his para-rescue work, and in 1965 he was enshrined into the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame.

An appropriate quote from an article on Little's profession six-and-a-half decades ago from the newsletter *The Slip Stream* reads, “There are times when they parachute rather blindly, floating down the hillside into the unknown. ‘I am a doctor,’ he utters. Words that have never sounded more sweeter in all your life.” 🐼

Reporter Curt Synness: 449-2150 or curt52s@bresnan.net

Walt Pilkey

by Don Mathis (Missoula '55)

Every issue of *Smokejumper* brings back memories, most of them exciting and fond. However, recent issues contain “Off The List” names of that generation of men who jumped to finance an education, then lived their lives as professionals making significant contributions to their families and communities. These are men I worked with. Reading about them elicits recollections of grand adventures in the forests. It saddens me to read of their passing, but also points out the mortality of us all. It is better to live well than to live otherwise. When I recently returned from a 31-day crossing of the Pacific from Australia to Los Angeles and read about the passing of **Tom McGrath** (MSO-57) and **Walt Pilkey** (MSO-55), I smiled thinking of time spent with them.

Walt was part of a project at Pierce, Idaho, that I worked on. We had completed our rookie training and were assigned to cool our heels building a phone line out of Pierce, east along a newly constructed road. We spent the days clearing right-of-way for the wire, then climbing and hanging the line. It was good physical conditioning, but we longed for the call from Missoula that would get us into, and out of, an airplane over a smoke. It seemed that the day would never come. We became fixtures in Pierce as we waited. When the town burned, we were there to fight that fire. When we walked the streets, we were followed by a group of children waiting to see what the jumpers were up to that evening. The name-drawing contest at the Pierce Hotel attracted a lot of attention. Muss won that one. And it only cost each jumper a dollar.

When August came and we were still on project, we became testy wondering if we would ever see another airplane. We needed the money to further our education, and we could see the season passing, along with our aspirations. The Pierce Ranger decided we could earn some overtime piling brush on Saturdays. After five weeks we knew one another well. Before breakfast every day we packed a personal lunch to take with us in a little cloth bag. We then put it outside on the step until we had finished our breakfast. We pretty much knew what each man would fix. Sandwiches, fruit, hard-boiled eggs, cookies. . . each man had his preferences. Walt Pilkey always packed two hard-boiled eggs in his bag. When we took our lunch



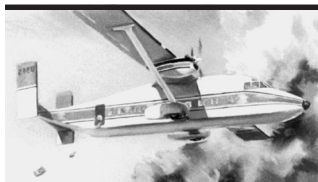
Don Mathis (Courtesy D. Mathis)

break, we lined up on a fallen log. Walt always took off his hard hat, grabbed the two eggs, and simultaneously smacked them against his head to break the shells. We all observed this behavior, and mischief was born.

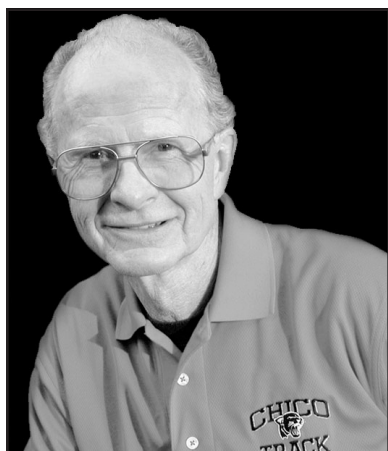
Well, you can guess what happened to Walt. While he was finishing his breakfast, two regular eggs were exchanged for the hard-boiled ones in his lunch sack on the step. We worked that morning piling brush, eagerly waiting for the fun of lunchtime. When it came, Walt took his usual place at the middle of the log. He had no clue what was going to happen even though everyone on both sides of him was paying close attention to his lunch ritual. Off came the hard hat. Out came the eggs. All eyes to the center. Splat went the eggs. And the forest was treated to loud laughter that echoed through the trees. The look on Walt's face was priceless.

Even these memories are part of the smokejumper experience. Forgive us for our levity, Walt. We miss you! 🐼

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Sounding Off from the Editor



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

JUST BEFORE LEAVING for the NSA Board Meeting in McCall, a couple fires started in the Chico area. We've had 100 degree temps and 35 mph winds, which almost guaranteed a major fire if things got started. Sure enough one started and went to 6,000 acres before dark.

As I was driving to the Sacramento airport for the flight to Boise, I noted that the fire was still burning hot at 3:00 a.m. I knew that when the winds came up the next day, it would really take off again. In McCall I saw we had made CNN News as the Humboldt Fire went to 23,000 acres and burned 74 homes.

Driving back to Chico from the airport on Saturday, I saw many strike teams of engines returning south as the winds finally stopped and they contained the fire.

Our city, like many others in the state, faces a budget deficit of \$6 million next year. The predicted deficit for California is \$16 BILLION. I say this just to set the picture.

Today you can see many banners and signs hanging from buildings saying "Thank You

Firefighters." At the morning service at church a young lady got up and told how she and her friends went from business to business asking for food donations. She told how they went to the staging area and gave food to the engine crews who were standing by at the fairgrounds. Some of the firefighters said they had not eaten in three days. I wanted to leap up and shout "Bull Shit," but thought that the audience would not appreciate that as almost everyone was taken in by the presentation.

My oldest son, a Butte County Deputy Sheriff, stopped by the house today. He had been working evacuation and security for the past three days on the fire. From my 34 years in fire, I knew that most fire camps had enough food to feed the third world and asked if things had changed in light of the "not eaten in three days" comment. He assured me that there was a 24-hour kitchen running at the fairgrounds.

Eighty-five percent of our city budget is made up in employee salaries, and I'm sure there is a similar percentage at the state level. Things have really changed from the days of limited overtime, straight time for overtime, and non-paid standby. That is good as, under these conditions, the employee was definitely being screwed.

Now the pendulum has swung to the other side and gotten stuck. City firefighters work and are paid for 24-hour shifts. This means that they work their shift but are also paid for eating, sleeping, working out, grocery shopping and doing the same things the rest of us do when off the clock. The engine crews that came to Chico were paid



straight 24-hour days from the time they left until they returned home to their station. Many engines came the 500 miles from Southern California to standby at the fairgrounds. There was an article in the local newspaper saying that there were no hotel/motel rooms available with the influx of firefighters.

I checked the web for salaries paid to local firefighters last year. An individual Firefighter II working locally for Cal Fire made \$93,000. That was a high, but it was amazing that a low-level firefighter could even get to that amount. Captains ranged from \$100,000 to \$112,000 and Battalion Chiefs went from \$120,000 to \$151,000.

I went to the City of Chico records and saw a Firefighter who made \$95,000 and Fire Apparatus Engineers in the \$120,000 range. All of this in a community that has the average worker in the \$40,000 area.

I walked out of church that morning thinking about the 400 people who should have worn coats and jackets to ward off the snow job they received. Is anyone ever going to speak up and say enough? Communities are going to continue to pay what the unions negotiate for their workers. Firefighters can do no wrong. After all, they are brave, work under dangerous conditions and drive around in a truck with the American Flag flying.

However, there might be change in the future. One of these days the firefighters might be bringing food to us destitute taxpayers who are collecting aluminum cans and haven't eaten in three days. 🙏

HISTORIC DOCUMENT—#1

Ron Stoleson (MSO-56) forwarded a copy of the "Static Line," the newsletter of the Civilian Public Service group 103 (smoke-jumpers). These men were religious conscientious objectors during WWII and, over a three-year period, supplied the manpower that kept the infant smokejumper program alive. The following issue was the last of the "Static Line" and chronicles a key part of smokejumper history.

STATIC LINE • CPS 103 Closes • No. 30 January 26, 1946

CPS 103 is closed. On January 15, 1946, one month to a day after the Forest Service hoped to terminate the camp, the last man transferred out. Wiebe left for Camino, and nothing remains but some bookkeeping and the SSS records. Thus ends one of history's more exclusive experiences.

Less than 240 men can ever say, "I was a member of the CPS Smokejumper Unit." Already there is talk that parachuting men to fires will soon be obsolete. Chemical bombs, helicopters, flying water-tanks are receiving more or less serious appraisal. Though undoubtedly it will be years before newer techniques can replace smokejumping, it seems fairly safe to predict that there will not be another CPS Smokejumping Unit.

If anything, CPS 103 was a unit of contrasts. Men raced to fires at eighty miles per hour, and walked away at three. Having one of CPS's most stimulating projects, 103 also had some of the dullest. Some men lived in steam-heated homes in Missoula, while others shivered in snow-covered tents. A few men worked at office desks, while the majority, wielding hand tools, sweated or shivered—depending on the season.

Some of the Forest Service personnel were whole-hearted, fine-spirited people, a credit to any group, while there were also little bureaucrats. With food the Forest Service was generous to a fault, and petty, even mean, about allowances. Jumping equipment was of the best, while work tools were usually in poor condition.

The contrasts extended to the men themselves. Extremely hard-working and conscientious as a group, yet they were also as a group perhaps the most oblivious in CPS to social issues. Smokejumpers could erect a barracks in record time, then shatter all records for making it messy. The ranges extended from scholars to lumbermen, from artists to plumbers, from young and impulsive to relatively old and stable.

Yet there was a common thread woven throughout. Each man admitted a flair for the romantic, a taste for thrills. Air-mindedness was a standard. In general the men liked to do or make things, in preference to philosophizing, or bandying ideologies. Yet there was a depth of conviction. Most had a rather highly developed sense of responsibility. Most men combined a desire to do really significant work with a perhaps unexpressed desire to prove to his critics that the C.O. can have courage.

CPS 103 is closed, and as the softening balm of time dissolves away some of the irritating aspects of the last days, real perspective will bring into relief the more important things. Here was a comradeship, a gathering of men which memory will fondly recall. Here was a big job well done—the protection

of the Northwest's forests. Here was a demonstration that pacifists can do as well as preach. Here were a thousand little events, each forever a part of an individual.

Conscription is evil, and conscripted serfdom infinitely more so. Yet, paradoxically, within their framework existed the CPS 103 experience, which will stand out in each man's life.

The thrills, the sweat, the kneeling at the door waiting for the slap, the tension of suiting-up, the exhaustion on the fire lines, volleyball, the horseplay, weekends in Missoula, calihootics on a May morning, the vertebra-snapping tower, the congestion in the loft, the sessions in the dorms, the amateur camp programs, the cathedral-like silence of the deep forests: these and many more elements blended to compose 103, the CPS Smokejumper Unit. And so we say goodbye to beautiful 103, camp of enchantment and dreams. And as the dying rays of the sun tint with ethereal scarlet hue the majesty of old Squaw Peak, we hear the throbbing, rhythmic, gentle (?) chant of the Seepeeeyessmen, as they repeat, again and again, "HOUI HOUAHNT HOUT!" which when roughly translated signifies: "We want out."

A Word of Appreciation

This letter came in several weeks ago: December 11, 1945

Arthur J. Wiebe, Camp Director
Civilian Public Service Camp 103
Haugen, Montana

Dear Mr. Wiebe,

The CPS camp in Region One is being disbanded. Before its members become too widely scattered, I would like to express to them the appreciation of the Forest Service for the fine assistance they gave throughout this emergency and the contribution they have made to forest conservation.

That the fire season of 1945 was severe is brought out by incontestable statistics and measurements. High temperature and low humidity reached all-time danger records at many points in our forests. Lightning and the carelessness of man combined to start 1200 forest fires. The region's fire crew was depleted to a mere shadow of its normal strength. These circumstances could well have resulted in disaster to one of our nation's most vital resources.

Despite these conditions, Region One came through with a record of which every participant may justly be proud. We had dangerous fires and a great number of them. Even so, our total area of burned forest at the close of the season was small. Such an accomplishment was made possible by the splendid action of our airborne firemen, the smokejumpers. Many of the 181 fires our jumpers suppressed in the nation's most remote wilderness could have become catastrophic had the jumpers not performed expertly and efficiently. To them goes a large share of the credit for a nationally important job well done.

I would like to thank each jumper individually but since that is not possible, I wish to convey this message to all the boys as opportunity permits.

Very sincerely yours,

P.D. Hanson, Regional Forester 📧

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

IN APRIL THE 9TH U.S Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling by Federal Judge Donald Malloy of Missoula affirming that the Forest Service has the discretion to determine the best way to fight fires and cannot be sued for setting a backfire in the Bitterroot on August 6, 2000. Over 100 Bitterroot residents sued the Forest Service claiming a backfire was negligently set and resulted in dozens of homes being destroyed. The homeowners had sued for 54 million. Judge Malloy ruled that the Forest Service could not be sued because the federal Tort Claims Act grants immunity to federal employees who exercise discretion within the scope of their employment. According to the Appeals court opinion, "The Forest Service's decision to set backfires was a policy judgment in that it involved a balance of considerations including cost, public safety, firefighter safety, and resource damage. Employees making such policy judgments are exempt from being sued under the federal Tort Claims Act."

I was deeply saddened by the passing of **Bill Fogarty** (MSO-57). I met Bill at the Boise reunion. Bill, **Gayle Morrison** (Associate)

and I had several hour-long visits on Saturday afternoon, and I immediately took a liking to him. Like many smokejumpers, Bill had been a teacher and administrator. Also, like many of my friends, he had tried to survive in Montana on the starvation wages school boards were paying before leaving the state for better paying teaching jobs elsewhere. I appreciated his sense of humor and his outlook on life. Gayle Morrison said, "Our time at the table in Boise was the highlight of the reunion for me. Bill and I had a lively email correspondence for quite a few months after that. He suggested a book I should read about Silver City. I finally got around to reading the book in February and it was a hoot. The long and the short of it is that I hardly knew the man, but I miss him." So do I, Gayle...So do I...

I had the privilege of being on the NSA Trail Crew that did restoration on the Glade Guard Station on the San Juan National Forest in Southwestern Colorado in June. Some very talented members of this organization cranked out a tremendous amount of work during 12-hour

days. The amount of talent in this organization never ceases to amaze me. I would consider several of the men who worked on the projects to be master carpenters. A couple of members were working on multiple NSA trail projects this summer. **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) worked on five. Our meals were catered by Elevated Fine Foods of Silverton, Colorado. The food they served was some of the best I have ever eaten. We did not have a bad meal. Their web site is: <http://www.elevatedfinefoods.com>. If you need a caterer or an outfitter in Southern Colorado, give them a try. You won't be disappointed.

On the trip to the Glade Guard Station project, **Jim Dollard** (CJ-52), **Denis Symes** (MYC-63) and I stopped and paid our respects at the Storm King Mountain Memorial in Glenwood Springs. At the memorial there is a metal plaque that shows visitors where Storm King Mountain is located. Unfortunately two small trees have grown up and blocked the view of Storm King Mountain when you are standing at the plaque. Perhaps a surviving family member or someone else can contact the City of Glenwood Springs and have those two trees removed. 🌲

Please Tell Us When You Change Your Address

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

Tribute to Smokey Stover

This is a transcript of a tribute to James “Smokey” Stover (MYC-46) given by Francis Mohr (IDC-63) at the memorial service in McCall in June.

I rolled into Idaho City in my 1959 Chevy Impala convertible, naturally with the top down. I had just finished NED training in McCall. This was June 1963.

As I parked behind the barracks, I was met by a slow-walking man in a blue baseball cap. “Hi. I’m Smokey,” he said. “Quite a fancy car you got there. Those trees you parked under are a favorite roosting area for pigeons.”

I put the top up and parked in a different location. Smokey showed me the barracks. “Here’s your sheets. Pick a bunk; get your bed made,” Smokey said. “We’re all meeting over there at our house, cranking some homemade ice cream. Come over.”

I had briefly met James “Smokey” Stover the year before when I worked in the Lowman Ranger District, just over the summit from Idaho City. I had stopped by to see Dick Estes (IDC-59), an Idaho City smokejumper and fellow forestry student at Utah State.

It was no secret how Smokey became foreman of the Idaho City unit. He lost the coin toss.

Evidently, no one wanted to go to this “satellite base” nicknamed the “Idaho City Rock Pile.” As we cranked ice cream that evening, I met the rest of the Stover family, including his wife, Lois, and four daughters: Kathy, Pattie, Pamela and Sherrie, and that little dog named Trixie.

Someone commented once to Smokey that it appeared he lived in a girls’ dormitory. Smokey’s reply: “What you talking about? I live with a wife, four daughters, and 20 sons.”

As I look back on my smokejumper years, I’m glad Smokey lost the coin toss and I ended up being one of his 20 sons and that whole Idaho City smokejumper family!

Smokey and Lois were concerned how their “big family” presented themselves and the image of the smokejumper

unit during off-hours, within Idaho City. The parental guidance we received was: “Act like responsible adults. We live here too, you know!”

The phrase “you know” was usually quite strong, and sometimes uttered twice. He and Lois and their children were our surrogate parents and family.

If Smokey had been a candidate because of his skills in writing, typing, or being some eloquent speaker, I doubt he would have been selected. He was the quiet, gentle person in charge, earning the respect as the unit foreman without demanding it.

“Way too gentle” was what Bobby Montoya (IDC-62) told me. “Way too gentle.”

Yes, there was pride, but it wasn’t pride for himself. It was pride of that satellite smokejumper unit.

Another comment I received was that “he was extremely fair.” Smokey let you do your own thing. This also meant there were a couple trips down to the supervisor’s office in Boise on behalf of one of his sons. His style was not to make a show of you in front of others. Instead, he sought to brush up beside you someday and give his words of wisdom. If you were listening, you got the word; that’s all you needed to know. It was a father-son meeting.

I cherished the pre-fire season assignments in Bear Valley and Indian Creek along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. After a day’s work on a phone line project, he would stop the truck about a mile from the station.

“Get out and run,” he’d say.

Back at the ranger station, his comment was, “Hurry up and eat – we’re going out to spot some elk.” He knew which meadow to visit, to watch the elk as they came out from the trees.

He seemed to have a sense of where to cast the line to catch a fish from the Salmon River, or the best spot if you cared to go duck hunting in the fall. He had knowledge of wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, he wasn’t a college professor ... but probably would have been an excellent guest lecturer.

The project on Indian Creek involved cutting poles, peeling them, and installing a fence around this wilderness airstrip. It was one of those 10-day, fly-in/fly-out projects. Everyone chipped in with cooking and dishwashing. Smokey was just another worker on the crew.

We felt like family. We were together in the wilderness, with no place to go. We shared opinions and also learned about his unwritten “policy” for our unit. It was during this assignment that he brought along a jar of his family’s longtime sourdough starter. During cleanup, one of our jumpers didn’t recognize that this starter was something you’d save to make more.

So Guy Hurlbutt (IDC-62) tossed it into the garbage can! It must have been a natural instinct that something had just happened that needed an immediate response, because



Do we need traffic control here? (Courtesy Doug Houston)

Smokey threw down the paper and dashed for the garbage can. He was able to rescue most of the family's starter!

Smokey had a body language – for some of us, it clearly let us know he was nervous. If he walked about the compound, constantly having a cigarette, or if he hid out in his attic office in the loft most of the day, something was up.

The one time he really disappeared was at the Boise Center. One afternoon, a very formal letter was received, announcing that Secretary Rogers Morton from the Department of the Interior would be there the next day. Everyone should be in “appropriate dress attire,” the letter explained.

You can imagine how this was received by a young bunch of Forest Service jumpers, located over at the far southwest corner of this great place called the Boise Interagency Fire Center. It so happened that a local merchant had a *fantastic* sale going on that evening.

We arrived at the jumper loft the next morning, dressed in various striped, snakeskin, checkerboard-designed pants. The secretary never visited the Forest Service jumper loft, and I think Smokey went through a pack or two of cigarettes that day. We didn't look each other in the eye that day. It was a day of avoidance!

One situation when his nerves never failed was when he was the spotter for a fire jump. He knew the area. He pointed out landmarks, drainages, the jumper's location, and obstacles to keep in mind. He was concerned for our safety. We were also reminded often of our responsibility to always be on the lookout for each other and help ensure all the sons had safe jumps and returned home safely.

I wasn't sure where Smokey was with religion. There were a couple of us jumpers who asked if we might sneak away for an hour on Sunday and attend church. Even though we were on the first planeload for a fire call, he

never questioned our request.

“You're not far away,” he would say. “If we get a call, it's downhill to the airport.”

I later learned that he and Lois also ventured off to a Sunday service in Placerville with some of their Idaho City friends. The quiet, gentle manager of the Idaho City Unit had a sense of Christian values that probably was only expressed by his patience and willingness to tolerate us boys, or maybe it was giving us a smile as he lit up another cigarette and kept on strolling.

Shortly after Smokey passed on, Lois wrote this note:

“Smokey made his last jump to go home to God, and all his other smokejumper buddies. Smokey was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather to all his children and to all his smokejumper sons. **Stan Tate** (MYC-53) loaned me this paragraph that he got from Smokey, as he prayed with him a few days before he died. It brings out the inner, quiet statement of faith and trust that Smokey had of his creator and other men and women he worked with.

‘Smokejumpers aren't too smart. They fly over rugged country in old aircraft and then jump out to fight fire. They **trust** many people: the parachute maker, the parachute packer, the pilots of the aircraft, and many other good people along the way. But behind all of this, there is one other thing that this smokejumper **trusts: God**. There are no atheists in a smokejumper camp.’”

Smokey's final jump was May 20, 2004. I received a whisper that he put out his streamers, in an “L” shape, meaning a safe landing. Thank you, God, for giving us James B. “Smokey” Stover. Being one of Smokey's sons, what better closure on this Father's Day morning than “Happy Father's Day, Dad.”

Hoot! 🦉



1992 Base Managers at meeting held in Bend, Oregon. L-R: Dave Noble-Redding, Lanny Allmaras-WO, Rodger Vorce-BLM/Alaska, Greg Anderson-West Yellowstone, Gary Johnson-Redmond, Pat Wilson-Grangeville, Neal Davis-McCall, Gary Benavidez-Missoula, Mike Clarkson-BLM/Boise and Doug Houston-North Cascades. (Courtesy D. Houston)



Items from the Fire Pack



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 of 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)

Smokeyjumping Made It Possible

Today, I run a billion dollar company traded on the New York Stock Exchange, which my partner and I started from nothing in the 1980s. Life has been good to me, and I have enjoyed many adventures along the way. But nothing in my life could ever match the thrill and excitement of six summers of smokeyjumping. Smokeyjumping made it possible for me to put myself

through college and graduate school. It provided the money I needed to afford an education.

Bill Furman (NCSB-62)

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)

Destroy It to Save It?

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks '69)

Here's a poem I wrote out on the line after showing a crew the fire history contained in a tree they had just felled, one of many that day. And it brought up a theme you hear over and over on big fires: basically the age-old lament, "Who the hell's in charge?" I guess the bigger question might be, "Does one-size-fits-all fire management really work?"

During break that morning as I penned the poem, another thought came to me: We are part and parcel to the whole thing. Paid well, lost in work, we occasionally grumble about the direction we are going, but rarely question ourselves. I guess that day I was questioning myself and the profit I was making from a misdirected task. But I stuffed the poem down in the bottom of the pack, and it stayed there forgotten for several years. I went home, spent the cash, and told tales of my achievements on the fire.

Now retired, I was recently using the pack on a long cross country walk. Night had fallen, and I scrunched down behind a windbreak of trees on a high ridge fishing around for my headlamp and something to eat. In the pouch where I keep maps, I saw a dirty edge of paper sticking up. It was this poem written on the back of an IAP frequency list. A little time capsule of my career. It brought back a sea of thoughts and memories of fighting fire.

I felt a combination of pride in the work I had done, and a reminder of the lingering doubt that had dogged me through the years. I thought of Karl Brauneis (MSO-77) and his poems. I turned in the direction of Wyoming and gave Karl a little salute in the dark. And I looked up and thought, "Here's to us all." Man is not perfect. But it was a pleasure working a career with so many that sincerely tried, even the guys who wrote that plan. That I don't doubt.

Sawing Line Through Old Growth Pine

Ten Guys with Pulaski's
could of put it out
two days ago

But the plan said, build indirect line
we're getting paid
we're proud of our crew
and they say those teams
know what to do

Still... the fire
is hardly moving, backing day after day
We could go down there and get it now!
it may never cross the creek

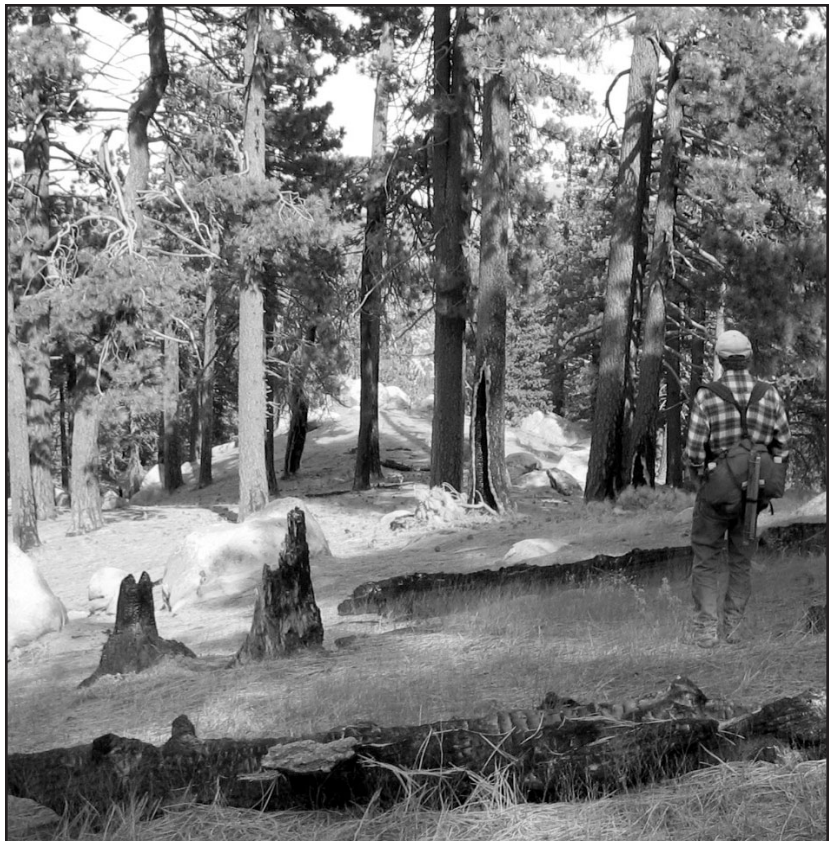
But we've got an assignment
and a job to do

Hey!
Look at this log
Squat around the stump, counting
400 years
three fires - here see
high attitude, sparse fuel
just backing fires, till we came along

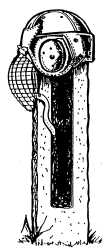
Ahh Shoot!
look at the view
pass the chew
fire-up dude
don't be blue

Bet if we all push
it'll go down that chute
How far?
Lets try!
Laughing, pushing
fearful giggle with the crash

Work all day and work some more
claiming innocence
Like kids in a sand box
the devil in us
at heavens gate



John Culbertson looks at some of the big trees that didn't get cut. (Courtesy J. Culbertson)



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.

William D. "Bill" Keating (McCall '79)

Bill died May 2, 2008, in a private plane accident at the McCall Airport. He grew up in Sioux Falls, S.D., and jumped four seasons at McCall. Bill was the public works director for the City of McCall until 2006 and was currently working for the City of New Meadows.

George A. Wetherell (Pilot)

George died April 23, 2008, at his home in Butte, Montana. 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.

Robert S. Pearson (Missoula '53)

Bob died May 31, 2008, in Birmingham, Alabama. He graduated from Auburn University and the Medical College of Alabama, Birmingham, where he served as chief resident. After serving four years in the U.S. Army as a medical officer, he returned to Birmingham to become a partner with Ophthalmology Associates and Alabama Eye Surgery. He was a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Jefferson County Medical Society. Bob jumped out of Missoula 1953-55 and was an NSA member.



L-R: Doug Houston (RAC-73) and Karl Petty (RAC-71) showing off their 200 and 250 jump pins in 1984. Karl died in February 2006 of Cancer. (Courtesy D. Houston)

George H. Robinson (Missoula '44)

"Hade" died May 9, 2008, at his home in Ocean City, N.J. He was an NSA member and jumped at Missoula 1944-45. Hade was one of the few remaining CPS-103 jumpers and an active member of the Calvary Baptist Church in Ocean View. He was the fire chief of the local volunteer fire department for 44 years and a builder by trade.

John H. Abrams (Fairbanks '66)

John died June 1, 2008, after a battle with cancer. He joined the Navy in 1961 and later earned his degree in hotel management at Washington State University in 1970. John moved to Alaska in 1982 living in Valdez and Fairbanks where he was the contract manager for Asbestos Removal Specialists of Alaska until his death. He jumped at NCSB in 1967 after his rookie season in Fairbanks.

Everett L. "Sam" Houston (McCall '71)

Everett died June 18, 2008, of multiple myeloma attributed to Agent Orange exposure in the Vietnam War. He was drafted in 1966 and became a member of the Special Forces SOG unit and completed missions in Vietnam and Laos. He jumped two seasons at McCall before returning to work for Air America in Laos in 1973. Sam then jumped at McCall in 1974 and Fairbanks 1975-78 while attending medical school at UC Davis and Stanford University. He practiced as a Family Nurse Practitioner for 30 years, mostly in Redding, California.

Bradshaw Snipes (Missoula '44)

Bradshaw died May 28, 2008, in Falls Township, Pennsylvania. He was a ninth generation resident of the area dating back to a 1685 purchase of land by his ancestors. Bradshaw was a CPS-103 jumper and active in the American Friends Service relief efforts in Europe after WWII where he helped in Finland and Germany. He graduated from Guilford College in 1948 and developed his family's tree nursery business and was President of the Pennsylvania Nurseryman's Association in 1989.

Fred A. Barnowsky (Missoula '42)

Fred died July 15, 2008, in Kalispell, Montana. He rookieed at Missoula in 1942 and then served in the Navy during WWII. After the war Fred jumped at Missoula from 1946-56 and then went to Redding in 1957, where he was the first Base Manager, jumping there until 1960. The California Smokejumpers made their first fire jump July 19, 1957 on the Shasta-Trinity N.F. Fred then joined the CIA, where he participated in covert airdrops in Laos and Tibet. 🇺🇸