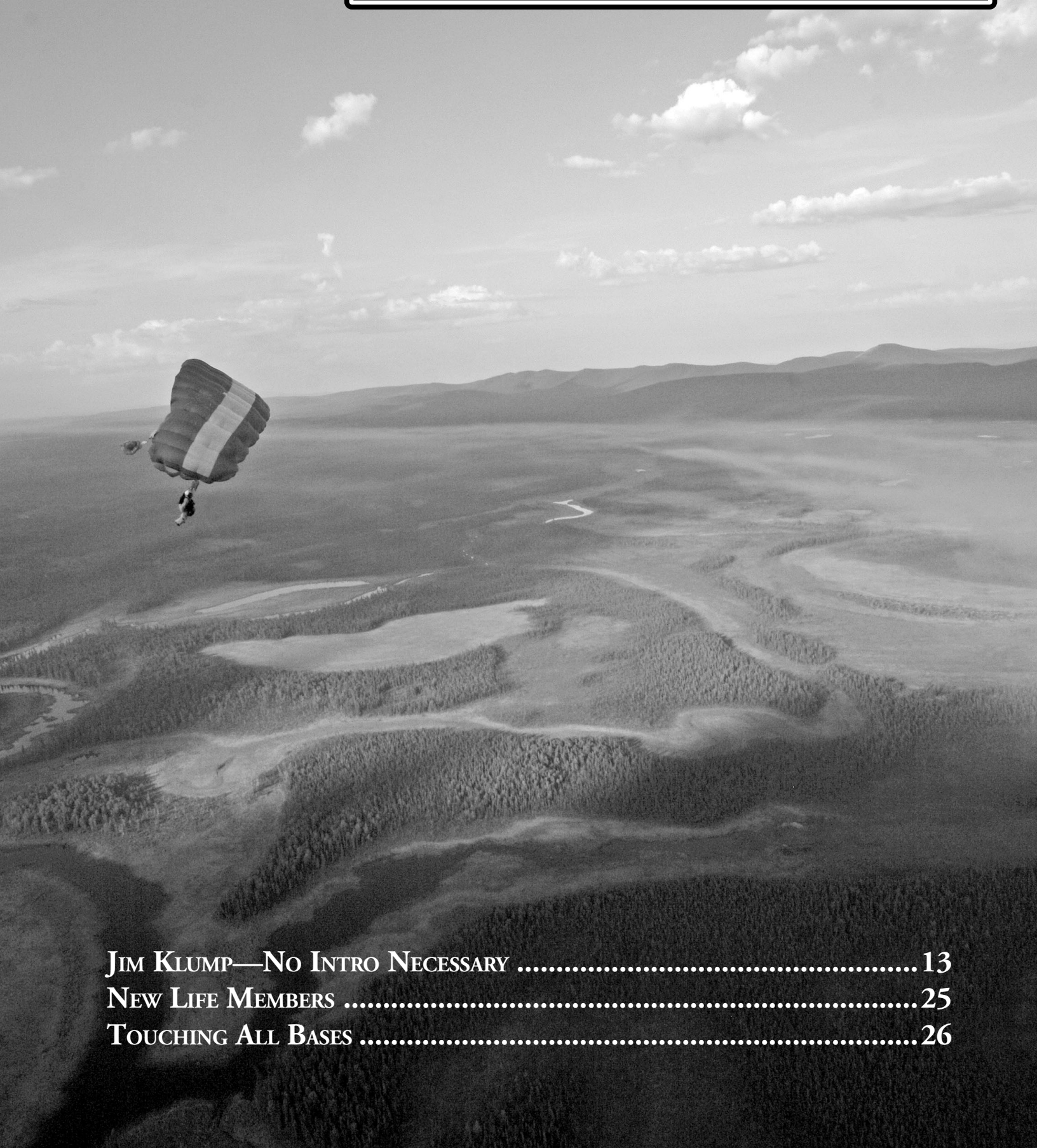


THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2009

# SMOKEJUMPER



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## Message from the President



by Doug Houston  
(Redmond '73)  
PRESIDENT

GREETINGS TO ONE and all. I hope you all had a great holiday with family and friends. Here's wishing you all the best for 2009.

2008 was complete with another smokejumper reunion in McCall and the first-ever reunion at Redmond, Oregon. The base started in 1964, and it was the vision of **Charley Moseley** (CJ-62), one of the first jumpers at RAC, to pull this reunion together. He enlisted the help of **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46), **Al Boucher** (CJ-49), **Bill Jordan** (RAC-67), **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) and **Bill Selby** (RAC-91) to form the reunion committee, and they did one heck of a job. The reunion was attended by about 200 of America's finest and was really a lot of fun. So thank you, Charley Moseley, from LA, lower Alabama, and the committee. Charley took time away from the possibility of a heart transplant in order to make this event happen. Now, it's back to Texas to get on the donor's list. We wish you the best. The Redmond jumpers really helped out with videos, picture books, prints, and a DVD of Mark Corbet. It was also a night to honor Mark's retirement. Mark's jumping career started in 1974, and he ended up just short of 700 total jumps and

over 300 fire jumps. Congratulations, Mark. It's rumored that **Michael Jackson** (RAC-86) and **Tony Loughton** (RDD-83) are next to join the food line on the outside.

Many congratulations also need to go to the Redding and Redmond smokejumpers for the summer that they had. Redding was non-stop jumping for a few weeks until the smoke got too bad to fly or see the fires, and on one day Redmond kicked out 83 jumpers. On that day I counted 224 jumpers who were out on fires nationally. We won't talk about the activity at the rest of the bases, although it gave everyone opportunity to travel and work on large fires.

2009 will see change on the NSA board. I am stepping down and will assume the role of Vice President.

**John Twiss** (RAC-67) will become the President. **Jerry Williams** (RAC-72) has also joined the board in place of **Gary Johnson** (RDD-69). So, this is the last time you will see my smiling face in the magazine. Get ready for a much more distinguished-looking person. John was my rookie trainer back in the day, is a good friend, and is coming from the USFS, recently retired, holding the position as head of Law Enforcement in Washington, D.C. He has a lot of good ideas for the longevity of the NSA and the smokejumper program.

So, I say thanks to all of you, and it has been an honor and privilege to be your President. The board members have been a pleasure to work with and are a very dedicated bunch coming from all of the bases. I'll still be around.

Now is your opportunity. You are in the door, hooked up, your static line is clear. There is a 100 yards of drift and the whole world is a jump spot, so get out there and make something happen. May you always land into the wind.

# Having Coffee With Daredevils

by Tim Woodward

*Reprinted with permission from  
"Idaho Statesman" April 26, 2008.*

**F**orget the obligatory tie for Dad. When **Richard Wilcomb's** (MYC-47) daughter was shopping for his birthday, she bought him a gift certificate for a parachute jump. The jump itself became a family outing.

"My daughter, daughter-in-law and two grandsons decided to jump with me," Wilcomb said. "While we were putting on our gear, my wife said, 'Where's mine?' and she jumped, too. None of them had ever jumped before." That was three years ago, when he was just a kid of 79.

The gift certificate was for a tandem jump with an instructor. No previous training was required, and Wilcomb wouldn't have needed it if it had been. He's a member of the Leaping

Legends - an Idaho group that includes some of the West's first smokejumpers.

Most of the onetime daredevils were based at McCall or in Montana - many of them more than 60 years ago. They meet once every other month at a Meridian golf club to drink coffee, tell tales and reminisce about the days when they were young and smokejumping was new.

"And some of the stories are true," **Lynn Nielsen** (MYC-46) said. Many of the Leaping Legends have nicknames from their smokejumping days. A former Navy fighter pilot, Nielsen is "Ace."

**Lloyd "The Whip" Johnson's** (MYC-43) handle comes from his one time role as their foreman.

A deceased smokejumper, whose ashes were scattered over

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

## Elections for NSA Board of Directors

### *Chuck Sheley, Election Committee Chair*

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at various places in the Pacific Northwest. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2009.

Even though you would be obligated to two meetings a year, it is important to remember that you can be a valuable working BOD member regardless of where you live. In the day of email, a functioning board can work with its members spread across the U.S. If you have ideas and are willing to roll up your sleeves, please consider joining the NSA work force.

### *Election timeline and procedures:*

1. Jan.-Feb. 15, 2009, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 15.
2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
3. Ballot sheet inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
4. Ballots must be received by May 20.
5. New board members to take office July 1st, election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

*Please call, write or email for your filing papers. My contact information is in the left column on this page.*

**The time to act is now!**

the Payette National Forest, was known only as "Paper Legs." Nobody could remember his real name (**Richard A. Peterson**/MYC-47).

Johnson, 91, made his first jump in 1943 on a fire near McCall.

"They tried to find guys who were expendable," Nielsen said, teasing his former boss with a bit of smokejumper humor.

"You never forget your first jump," Johnson said, utterly ignoring the bait. "Your mouth's dry. You aren't scared, but you're concerned. If you were scared, you wouldn't do it." By the time he made that first jump, Johnson already was a seasoned firefighter. He started as water boy on the fire lines when he was 13.

"I wasn't old enough to be out there, but in those days you went to work wherever you could get a job," he said. "I made about \$2 a day plus board and room - all the room you wanted for a sleeping bag."

Johnson, who lives in Fruitland now, ran the fire crews out of McCall for a decade. A slight man of 140 pounds, he thought nothing of carrying a 120-pound pack. He hired most of the men in the room.

"They were all conscientious objectors the first three years because everyone else was fighting the war," he said. "I didn't agree with their philosophy, but they were good boys."

Most of the men he hired after the war were veterans, some of them ex-paratroopers. Many of the men are in their 80s or 90s now. They've been getting together for coffee every other month for something like 20 years. A typical turnout is about 25. They seem younger than their years. They joke a lot, often at each other's expense. Instead of the medical conversations common to people their age, they spin yarns that improve with age.

"Remember the time Ace landed in that dead snag?" Wilcomb asked of no one in particular.

"That story gets better every time you tell it," Johnson said.

"Let me tell it; it's my story," Nielsen interrupted. "I was about 40 feet up. I managed to swing from my chute into the snag so I could crawl down."

"Yeah, but if we hadn't propped the snag up so you could crawl down it you'd still be up there," Wilcomb said to peals of laughter.

That led to a discussion of how things have changed since then.

"The biggest change is the chutes," **Ray Mansisidor** (MYC-46) said. "You glide like a glider now and pick the safest place to land. We had old army surplus chutes."

"No power saws or pumps then, either," Johnson said. "All we had was a shovel and an axe."

The pay has improved, too. In the good old days, they made about \$10 a day. Their jokes and banter belie the risks of jumping from an airplane into a forest fire. The very idea of smokejumping initially was abandoned because it was thought to be too dangerous.

"We lost a guy the first year we jumped," Nielsen said. "A snag hit him on top of the head."

So what does it take to be a good smokejumper?

"Well, you have to be in pretty good shape," he said. "And you can't be afraid to be pushed out of a plane."

"The hard part was fighting the fire," Wilcomb said. "Jumping was the fun part." It was also the part that bonded them for life.

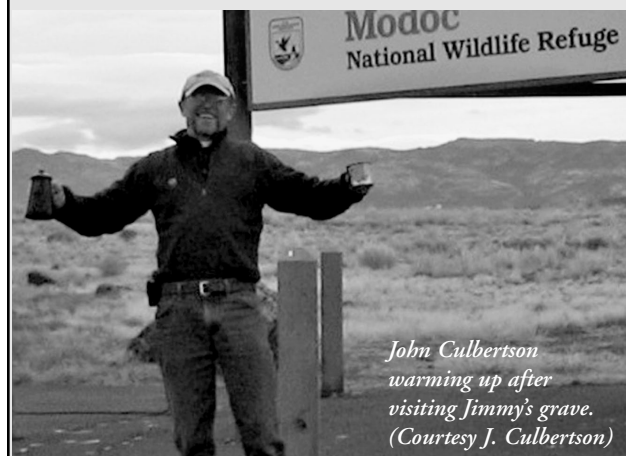
"The uniqueness of the job bound us together," Johnson said. "There was a lot of camaraderie. And here we are all these years later, still talking about it."

## Jimmy

by **John Culbertson** (Fairbanks '69)

Lay  
The dry blooms  
On your grave  
Desert brush  
Juniper berries  
From lonely walks  
in your mountains  
All those years we worked and talked  
Sat, cried  
Talked to myself  
Told you the story of my children  
Shaved the sweat  
From the grip  
Of my hiking stick  
Over the ground where you lay  
Tried to be thankful  
Said my prayers  
Through choked back tears  
Then got up to go  
Looking back  
Nine years older than me  
When you died  
Me twenty years older than you now  
Silence  
passed  
those years  
as I walked on

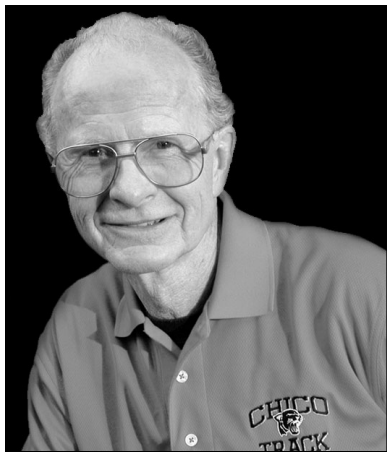
*John's original story on the death of Jimmy Pierce (FBX-69) was published in "Smokejumper" January 1998.*



*John Culbertson  
warming up after  
visiting Jimmy's grave.  
(Courtesy J. Culbertson)*



# Sounding Off from the Editor



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

IN THIS COLUMN in the July issue of *Smokejumper*, I expressed concerns about the developing cash cow that we currently find in wildland fire suppression. Be assured that I am not talking about the meat and potatoes of firefighting: smokejumpers and hotshots. The new wave of unrestrained expenditure of taxpayer money is coming from city and country fire trucks and special order slots filled by retired firefighters.

In review, engine crews in California that are sent to fires are paid 24 hours a day from the time they leave their station until they return. They now stay in hotels/motels instead of fire camps. Minor fires are commonly million dollar projects.

A young local reporter shadowed one of these crews during our fire bust in June. The crew got up at 0300 and drove to the fairgrounds for breakfast and a briefing, after which they drove to a house in the foothills. During the day they kept on eye on the fire, and as one of them said, "At least one of us had to be awake at all times." They returned to the fairgrounds for dinner and then to a local motel for 24 hours

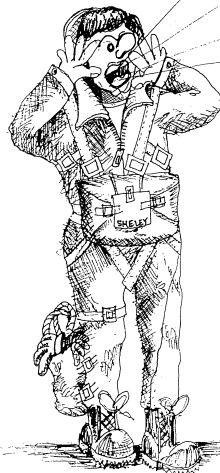
R&R, for which they will also be paid. The state of California and the city of Chico are going bankrupt. Wildland fire has turned into the pot of gold for these people.

**Chuck Pickard** (MSO-48) responded to my last editorial: "I read with interest your comments on salaries, etc. City, county and state employee salaries have risen out of reality. The leaders, as always, being fire and police. Since 9-11, the firemen have used their occupational "hazardous" duty to move into the limelight full bore. In my area (Florida) the fireman have absorbed the ambulance groups and then demanded (and received) as much as 30% salary increases. Now full sized fire trucks are showing at every fender bender."

Chuck (an ex-police officer) sent along a copy of a Florida newspaper comparing wages and benefits for Fire Rescue/EMS vs. the private sector. The public employees received an average wage of \$94,000 with benefits while the private-sector employees came in at \$53,000.

**Karl Brauneis** (MSO-77) gives us hope with his response: "I am under the Wyoming Agreement as a Fremont County Firefighter and am paid on the Federal AD schedule. The AD schedule for me as Command Staff is \$32 per hour with no increase for overtime. Our boss holds us to 15 hours per day unless it is totally justified for work over 15 hours."

Now comes the down side: "The folks in Colorado get overtime and a much higher base rate. They will make double what I make each day. In California (Cal Fire), well, they make so much that they keep their finance section separate from our Team Finance Section Chief. They



don't want anyone to know how much they are making."

**Charlie Roos** (RAC-97) responded: "Well said! I, as well as many city managers, have been saying the same thing for a long time, but in the wake of 9-11 firefighters have become a sacred cow. They could be used in so many ways in the community, but they fight the concept of work in every way they can. Yes, my old gang from the Seattle F.D.

would consider me a blasphemer of the highest order, but the truth is the truth. When I was in the department, we did so little I actually felt my mind beginning to atrophy from lack of activity." Charlie went to city firefighting after jumping and is now an airline pilot.

National columnist George Will recently wrote about Vallejo, California, a community of 120,000 that went into bankruptcy. Strong police and fire unions did their job with the city council. A police captain receives \$306,000 per year. The average firefighter earns \$171,000. Both groups can store up vacation and leave time over their careers and receive a lump sum at retirement. Recently 20 of them retired with a \$370,000 check each. A good way to start your retirement. Oh, I forgot, they are all guaranteed *lifetime* health benefits.

Today I had lunch with a long-time friend, who is a professional firefighter. The fire situation has died down here in Northern California because just about everything burned earlier in the season. I wanted to see if he had any "war stories" from this season. I hardly know where to start.

He told of a fire on a forest north of here that was 100 acres and manned by 60 firefighters. When he

arrived there were about 40 people meeting at the district headquarters planning action on the fire. His first thought was: "Why not put those 40 people on the fire and put it out?" The fire went to 374 acres, involved 521 personnel and lasted seven days. The cost—\$3.1 million!

Then I heard a term new to me: "Double-secret prescribed burn." The plan is to hold back the personnel already on the fire, let fires burn together and then fight them when they get down to the road, where it is safer. Hey, this may not be a bad idea since most districts can't even fund their prescribed burn programs.

Why do these fires cost so much? More reasons than I could write about. But here is a plan that is working well for retired firefighters. A small fire district signs up as a

resource provider for the USFS and state. Let's use the Gold Brick Fire District (fictitious) for this scenario. The retiree signs on as a fire resource even though he/she doesn't live in the district or probably has never been in Gold Brick. He/she is called on a fire and paid 24 hours per day portal to portal—most of it on time and a half. What is in it for the Gold Brick Fire District? Well, they charge 15% of all these earnings as an administrative fee. My friend was one of these districts recently as they were processing \$1.5 million in invoices.

I just got an email recently in which the Auditor-Controller's Office of a near-by county was considering charging these special districts for county time spent processing payroll and other accounting services. The Auditor-

Controller said his office prepared 54 paychecks for fire district employees last month that included many "who are not county residents and some (who) are not California residents. We do not understand why the district paid the All Risk Team as independent contractors earlier in 2008 while the district considers them employees now."

Since my friend has had 30 years in the fire service, I asked him when he was going to pull the plug and join the contractors. Not yet, as I found out that he was interviewing for a Fire Chief position in Southern California that would give him a \$60,000 per-year raise. He could be a Chief for two years and his retirement would be more than his current salary now (which is very good). Hear a whistle in the background? The Gravy Train is right on schedule.

## Historic Document

*In the October 2008 issue of "Smokejumper," we printed excerpts from the last issue of the "Static Line," the newsletter of the CPS-103 jumpers who carried on the smokejumper program during the WWII years (1943-45). Here is more from that January 1946 issue.*

### In Retrospect

**T**he 1945 fire season was undoubtedly the most spectacular of the three in which CPS smokejumpers have participated. All previous statistics were shattered, the loft was even more overburdened, Johnson's pilots went sleepless, the Twisp men jumped out of C-47's into Canada, four or five men were seriously injured, **Al Gray** (CJ-45) had a special plane deliver him clean socks and pants, the CO smokejumpers were put in command of army paratroopers, and so it went.

Every smokejumper at least once has slipped out of his harness, looked around, and musingly observed that a foot one way or the other or a slightly weaker snag, would have cut short his career as a man of action. An unfortunate few have not had to muse - are still wearing braces or crutches. Yet in an essentially spectacular game, in its most spectacular season, a few incidents stand out - especially so since the participants received nothing more severe than blows to the nervous system.

### The Swan

**George Robinson** (MSO-44) was jumping in a high wind;

his feet caught in the top of a tree. This partially deflated his chute, and it blew on past him and below, pulling him out of his tree. George then had the unique sensation of making a beautiful fifty foot swan dive, soaring head first toward rocks and down-timber. George, always the perfectionist, was just extending his arms and arching his body, to make as little splash as possible, perhaps even secretly admiring his diving form, when his chute snagged on a lower tree, caught him up short, and ruined his flawless trajectory by swinging him into a tree trunk, a few feet off the ground. There are those who report that the tree trunk suffered bruises.

On the same fire at which **Archie Keith** (MSO-45) was so seriously hurt, **Ralph Spicer** (MSO-44) found himself hanging head down, chute draped below, with his left heel caught in a notch of a snag, forty-five feet above granite-strewn terra firma. Always a man who can make the best of things, Ralph took advantage of this unique posture to devise several new Folk-dances of the neo-Hungarian school. **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) finally interrupted this reverie, in a masterful demonstration of climbers and rope, and lowered Ralph safely to the ground.

### Last One Down's a Sissy!

Despite the tremendous number of jumps, and the haste necessary in getting sufficient chutes packed, there were surprisingly few malfunctions of parachutes. This is a tribute to the design of the equipment, to **Frank Derry** (MSO-40) and



others who helped work it out, and to the precise, responsible work of the loft crews. Yet there were at least three incidents which were, shall we say, exciting. In each, a smokejumper found himself whistling toward the earth at better than one hundred miles per hour, with prompt action an absolute requisite.

**Norman Kauffman** (MSO-45) jumped a backpack in which, evidently, the lines had been twisted, with the result that he was twisted about, and wound up in the parachute. Though effectively shrouded, Norman was able to reach his ripcord in time, and landed safely, thanks to the emergency pack.

**Phil Thomforde** (MSO-45), we are told, jumped a pack in which the apex had not been tied to the cover, so that the parachute did not string out, but rather bunched up under Phil, held there by the air-blast. Thomforde, devised a new theory of aero-dynamics, and invented two more gadgets for his amazing trunk before bothering to pull the ripcord, neatly timing it so that he brushed tree tops less than three seconds after the emergency pack opened.

**Clarence Dirks** (MSO-45) is the only man in the unit to jump a double-thickness chute. Somehow he managed to get the apex of his back chute opened up inside the main chute, effectively shielding Dirks from the harmful rays of the sun.

## Bear With Me

Thomforde, incidentally, also figured in an episode in the primitive Continental Area. Some of the boys had been stationed up there, before the fire season became hectic. Thomforde, who would be right at home in the days of Launcelot, or of D'Artagnan, was annoyed by the bold insistence with which a big black bear kept prowling around the garbage dump. Some of the other boys, who from old foresters' stories had gained great respect for the bear's potential ferocity and mighty strength, were amazed one day to see the intrepid Phil, armed only with a pulaski, sneak up behind a big bear, which was foraging through the garbage. Before they could stop him, Thomforde raised his weapon and brought it down with a thuck! On the brute's cranium. Expecting to see the engaged bruin rip Phil to shreds with its powerful claws and jaws, the boys were surprised to see it shuffle slowly off, with our hero in pursuit. Happily they were able to dissuade him from a pitched battle. This is perhaps the only account on record of a pacifist bear.

No recounting of the 1945 season would be complete without the tale of Naugle's Rangers, whose matchless daring, intrepid cunning, and superhuman fortitude in the face of cosmic odds are here described in the undying prose of **Hubert Taylor** (MSO-45):

*Naugle's Rangers Or The Historic Peace Churches To The Rescue*

The Meadow Creek Fire is generally distinguished from all others by the fact that more men jumped on it than on any other fire: forty-eight smokejumpers and fifty-five negro paratroopers. But for a few of us it will be remembered for the genesis of "Naugle's Rangers."

Saturday afternoon, July 21, found Carlton Naugle of the Forest Service and CPS-men **David Flaccus** (MSO-43), **Joe**

**Coffin** (MSO-45), **Ted Pfeifer** (MSO-45), **Lowell Mumaw** (MSO-45), **Hubert Taylor** (MSO-45), **Jim Johnson** (MSO-45), and **Bob Searles** (MSO-45) to the leeward of a large spot fire which had just jumped Meadow Creek. The wind shifted and came right down the narrow valley, blowing harder and harder. We all took off down the mountain toward the creek in order to avoid the almost inevitable path of a fire which was crowning out and leaping from tree to tree, as if possessed of the devil and **Earl Cooley's** (MSO-40) propane torch. A few minutes later the fire was racing down both sides of the creek. We ran before it, sometimes down the middle of the stream, and sometimes along the banks.

## Naugle Heartens His Men

Things looked a bit grim for a moment, but Naugle cautioned us that no matter how bad it looked now, we'd do better to relax, because it was bound to get worse. So we moved on, Naugle muttering something about - hope that the Forest Service was worrying about us.

A few hundred yards downstream we found a small open space where the creek divided, leaving a small island in the middle. By this time the smoke was causing us to weep and cough, so we lay down in the thick, lush grass where the air was comparatively cool and clean. The fire roared on like an express train.

## Situation Demands Strong Measures

But affairs were not getting better. Although the fire had raced past us, it left behind a forest of flaming snags. Something was wrong in the nature of things; the fire around us, instead of abating was burning more fiercely than ever. Elsewhere it was dying out. Here was a problem which called for group action. After a few moments of silence the surmise of the group was that the curse could be lifted only by sacrifice - a sacrifice which would propitiate the god of thunder and fire, Vulcan. Quite obviously it would have to be the life of one of the group. But who?

*Indecision Threatens Little Band's Safety*

The Presbyterian in the party said that he didn't honestly feel that his number was up. The Episcopalian agreed that it would be a courageous gesture, but that it would be bad form for him to make such a mess. The Friend suggested that a committee of Mennonites and Brethren be appointed to consider their responsibility in such a grave undertaking. The Mennonite opined that although it might be right for others to indulge in a pagan rite, it wouldn't be right for him. So there we were.

More silence followed, silence shattered by the crash of burning snags. If we didn't act soon, we might all perish, simply because one man failed to do his duty.

## Anabaptist Fortitude

Suddenly it came over the group that since the Mennonites were responsible for all our ills, it followed that it should be a Mennonite to go to the pyre. And besides, there was only one Mennonite in the group, and the MCC would never know. It was done. The flaming inferno turned to cold gray ashes. Naugle's Rangers marched on.

## The Last Days At Savenac

In some contrast to the Wagnerian, cataclysmic fall of Berlin and the German Reich, CPS-103 died a slow, cancerous, lingering death. In mid-November, with no previous notice to the camp administration, the Forest Service suddenly announced that the unit would be liquidated by December 15, and that Selective Service had been instructed to have everyone transferred by that time. The reasons given were lack of funds, and an unexpectedly large number of discharged veterans applying for jobs. Promptly Art Wiebe, the camp staff, and other agencies set the wheels in motion to transfer the men. Each man's preferences went in to Akron, and inter-agency cross-communication began. Finally the requests for transfer went to Selective Service.

Then, during the short, dark days of December, set in a period which might be termed "The Era of Waiting." Everyone was waiting, CPS men were longing either for transfers or discharges. More than half waiting for discharges were on furlough or comp time, and could devote full time to waiting. Augenstein was waiting for FS to get rid of the men. FS was waiting for Selective Service to authorize the transfers.

And still there was waiting. The FS began sending telegrams to Washington. The Religious Agencies sent dozens of their own. Still no transfers. A few men took final physicals on January 1, and on that day a few transfers came through, brightening everyone's outlook. But still CPS- 103 dragged on. Wood and gasoline ran low - the boys were breaking up orange crates for fuel and light. The FS didn't want any delay over reservations, even though travel congestion was at a peak. Finally, on January 12, everyone had a transfer. By the following Wednesday the Wiebes and Weaver left. The camp was closed.

## Sunshine Through Fog

But these somewhat drab times were not without their bright spots. Somewhere **Bradshaw Snipes** (MSO-44) had annexed a long wool coat, which strongly suggested a Russian officer of around 1912. He was promptly dubbed General Zarkov, and soon no one talked except in deep, guttural Russian accents, barking military commands and information.

This had its influence on the Christmas Eve adventure. Some of the boys, under the tutelage of Geraldine Braden, went caroling, and among others serenaded the Italian Intern-

ees in their work cars at Haugen. Only two were up and about, but they invited us in for coffee. The Italians could speak very little English, so Searles and Zarkov took command of the situation by roaring out short, choppy phrases in an accent which was strongly Russian, yet had varying flavors of Yiddish, Mexican and Hollywood French. Amazingly enough the Internees seemed to understand, but their mastery of English was undoubtedly set back two years by this night's work.

When they learned we receive only \$5 per month (they get \$56), one gently replied, with elaborate gestures, "for fi' dolla' mont"—eat, sleep, no work."

*Here and There.....*Just when the camp headquarters was moved into the Sigma Chi house, the radio-phonograph was stolen from the Alpha Phi house, across the street. Some of the alumnae suggested that a search be made at the Sigma Chi house, feeling that the CO's probably had done the dirty work. But the college girls, we were told, rushed to our defense, answering that if there was any group of boys who would not steal, it was the CPS men.— Most of the correspondence coming to camp from discharged men indicates a certain trepidation about facing the world, about having to make vocational choices.—Region One statistics show that the Bitterroot had the most smokejumper fires in 1945 with 46. Then came Lolo with 34, Flathead with 29, Clearwater with 15, and Nezperce with 11. The others had far less: Cabinet 4, Kootenai and Kaniksu with two each, and one apiece for Helena and Lewis and Clark.—After viewing the common acceptance and usage of abbreviations such as WAC, WAVE, and SPAR, the CPS-103 Wives' Club should be glad no one named the group Conscientious Objectors' Wives, (As we have long been tempted to do in this column.)—Men passing through Missoula are invited to drop in at 1025 Helen-maybe it gives even free meals.—There has been some agitation for a smokejumper reunion in 1950.—If we receive encouragement, we'll be glad to help organize it.—A word of appreciation is due to the FS men who had the vision, initiative and courage to establish smokejumping and later, to use CPS men—to people like **Earl Cooley**, Alice Page, and others whose hearts are so big - to the Mennonite Central Committee for pouring in money and effort to enrich the men's free hours and to maintain a spirit which can transcend pettiness—and a word of appreciation to Missoula's Ministers and churches, for the welcome and friendship extended to a minority group—Missoula's a pretty nice place.

# CJ and Fairbanks/Allen and Looper

by Glen McBride (Cave Junction '59)

**W**e miss **Orville Looper** (CJ-49). He and **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) were among the best smokejumper bosses anyone could ever have; however, they were different. It all started for me in 1959, jumping out of Cave Junction. One of the things that made it such a great job was the quality of the training. Jim Allen was in charge of the "Gobi." He made sure the jumpers had what

they needed in equipment, knew the fine points of parachuting, and fire fighting. He always treated us kindly and was like a father to us teenage jumpers. Cave Junction seemed like the Camelot of smokejumping. It was a classy place with lots of *big*, green trees.

Jim had a strategy: to keep the forest from burning down, fires were jumped as early as possible. He knew how





jumped the fire and worked all night, got back on a plane and flew to Fairbanks, just in time to go back to work the next day.

Looper was a patron of the arts. He set it up so I could paint an 8' x 8' sign with the wings and parachute of the smokejumpers on the building. It was different but came out OK. If I could paint it again, I would paint a vulture on the building. Then he let me paint two round, 8' Smokey Bear signs. The first one was kind of crummy, but the last one was not too bad. My fame as a "wrecking yard" artist was spreading. Some little old lady, who worked for the government, asked me to design a brochure for a group she belonged to. They were so "delighted" with my first art project that they wanted me to go to their tea or luncheon. Of course, Looper, who wanted to have good relations with the "purple hair gang," approved. I was whisked away for a delight-

to make this possible: we had to be well trained in parachuting into trees. It got to the point where tree jumps were rather enjoyable. Just pick out the fluffy ones, and stay away from the snags!

A typical CJ spotter and jumper exchange might sound like this.

Spotter: "See the fire down there?" Jumper: "Yes."

Spotter: "Notice there is nothing but wall-to-wall trees?"

Jumpers: "Yes." Spotter: "Notice the borate plane that's bird-dogging us?" Jumpers: "Yes." Spotter: "Get on the ground quickly. The borate plane is going to drop the slurry from treetop level right on top of you." Jumper: Gulp... "OK!"

After two glorious years at CJ and a lot of great fires, I had the opportunity of going to Fairbanks in 1961, where I met Orville Looper. He was also a great boss, and someone who was always available to help solve any kind of problem. This was good, but Fairbanks was a different kind of place! The retardant plane could not only drop retardant on the fires, but it could knock the trees down in the process, which was darn fun to watch.

Fighting fire was not limited by darkness at Fairbanks. Once we jumped a fire at 1600 and worked all night. It didn't get very dark. We then flew back to Fairbanks, just in time to go back to work the next day. The whole crew was dirty-dog tired. We worked a little, looking forward to the end of the day. All of a sudden the fire bell rang at 1600. We got suited back up, and off we went again. We

ful afternoon with these sweet, little old ladies, and, yes, I did use my napkin.

I started to notice a few things about Looper (and I think as he looks down, he would like this). He had a "unique" personality.

Once he came along with the pilot to pick us up from a fire. They brought the Grumman Goose. When the plane hit the lake, Orville started trolling. By the time the plane got to shore, he had caught a 5 lb. lake trout.

As stated Looper had a "unique" personality, but after a few practice jumps, you realized that he was not only "unique", he was crazy. It all started one day when it was Orville's turn to jump. I had only witnessed normal out-the-door kind of exits, but not today. On the final approach, when the spotter hit him on the leg, Looper grabbed the rail above the door and swung out like Tarzan. Now, that was very impressive!

During a meeting Looper was mumbling something about our new nylon jump suits. I started paying attention when he said he wanted to prove to all of us that the suits would really float. Was he going to show us a movie to prove this? No. He was going to jump all of us into a lake (even in the summertime lakes in Alaska are cold).

He arranged for the two BLM mechanics to be out on the lake in a boat to pick us up.... very good idea. He also encouraged us to wear a bathing suit under our jump suit. On jump day Looper shows up in a tight-fitting, bright blue

bathing suit. We were jumping out of a DC-3 in three-man sticks. **Jim Maxwell** (CJ-55), **LeRoy Gray** (NCSB-57), and myself were one stick. Well, the exit was OK, but something was wrong. The chutes opened up perfectly, but Maxwell (an ex-jet pilot out of the Marines) almost disappeared. His chute was dropping so fast it looked like he had a malfunction, but that was not the case. Closer observation revealed that a bunch of the gores had been cut out of the chute. He hit the water so hard it kicked up a plume as high as Old Faithful. There was one advantage. He got down a long time before Gray and McBride. If Maxwell had hit on solid ground he would be only two feet tall today. It makes one wonder who planned out and executed this little caper? Just fill in the blanks.

And the best for last. Looper's spotting; it's time for another round of practice jumps. I'm "in the door" on final approach. Looper hits me on the leg then he holds up a

hook and a static line. As I clear the door he says, "Mac, I didn't hook you up!" Then he flashed that great big smile of his. It was too late to ask him any more questions. I don't normally think fast, but a lot of things started going through my mind. Like I could die, and I was young and... I just about peed my pants, but remembered I did have a reserve chute, and it might work. Then I thought I better wait a little while and see if the main opens up. Maybe that crazy old guy really hooked me up after all. This is a government job and there are supposed to be some kind of standards. Then I remembered Maxwell and figured it was probably a 50-50 deal. What did government regulations mean to Looper anyway? After a lifetime the main did open. Every day after this experience has been a joy, even though I had to inspect a lot of chickens later in life.

*Glen can be contacted at: [chicken\\_csi@comcast.net](mailto:chicken_csi@comcast.net)*

## A Jumper Called "Hud"

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

It is late June 1974 and our DC-3 has just taken off from Redding and is headed to the Shasta-Trinity NF. There is a fire on the horizon and we are getting ready to jump into the big timber of Northern California. Surprisingly all the jumpers in the plane are from McCall or Boise, including **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), who parachuted into France during WWII, and **Jim Diederich** (Redding-70), who jumped out of Redding in 1970.

So far it had been an incredible summer as I got to help train the new class of McCall rookies and then make one of the first fire jumps in Utah. My jump partner is **Rick "Hud" Hudson** (NIFC-73). He is young and clearly in excellent shape. We talk just briefly about how high the trees are down here and then it is our turn in the door. I feel the tap on my leg and Rick follows. I land in 30-foot high manzanita. Rick is 80 foot up in a tree and he rappels down to fight fire with us. We had a super crew and caught the blaze early. Several days later we packed out.

In 1976 **Bob Steiner** (MYC-71) talked me into flying detection in Alaska. We both flew the next two summers and it was super. After two

seasons I went back to firefighting. Bob is now a captain and trainer with Federal Express. That summer our office was a small shack on top of the T-Hanger. We had sofas up there to "scan the horizon" waiting for our next flight. Hud was on the booster crew and we spent time on the roof, not only looking for fires, but also scanning the Alaska Range for new routes to climb.

When I returned to jumping in McCall in 1982, Hud was there. When we ran the mile, his wife, Sharon, showed up with their child, Garrett, in her arms. Over the years I would stay with the Hudson's in McCall and I watched their sons grow up. When I brought my sons down to kayak the Salmon River, our boys would jump on the trampoline together. Their younger son, Reese, would do backwards and forward flips.

Having traversed the Seven Devils in winter, I wanted to try it from Hell's Canyon to the Salmon in summer. So I called the Hud and he said he would go. "We don't need sleeping bags," Hud said. "Just bring a light pack and food."

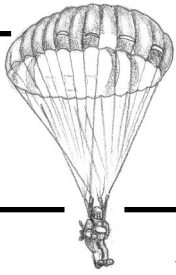
Once when I did a circumnavigation of Long Valley, I asked Hud if

he knew the route from Cascade north to Jughandle Mountain. He quickly named the trails and FS dirt roads one would need to travel. He said he had a day and, if I could keep up, he would go. He didn't even take a map; the route was in his head. It was a great ride.

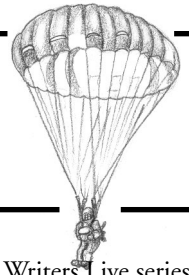
Recently his oldest son, Garrett, sold his whitewater kayak to get a parachute. He is a BASE jumper and has made many jumps off the bridge at Twin Falls, one of the few places one can legally BASE jump. Garrett recently made a parachute jump with Reese. Now they both ski the Sierra Nevada, where Hud has his skiing roots.

Thirty-three seasons after he started, Hud still jumps from DC 3s with the best wildland firefighters in the world. Yet they are now young enough to be his children. As someone who has been in a hospital ER room three times in the last 16 months, I have to admit I am impressed that Hud still jumps from moving aircraft as we did when we were in our early 20s. Hud has remained close to the wild heart of life.

*Jerry wrote this in 2006 and Rick is now retired from smokejumping (Ed.)*



# Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to Tommy Albert (CJ-64), Jim Beekman (RAC-82), Rich Hilderbrand (MSO-66), and Fred Cooper (NCSB-62), who just became our latest Life Members.

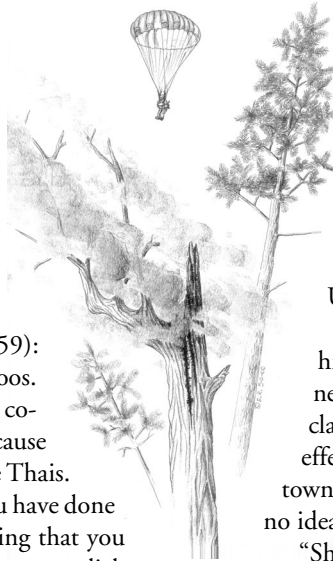
Email from Jerry DeBruin (Associate) in response to a Charley Roos (RAC-97) offer to use his Thai connections for further investigation into MIA Gene DeBruin (MSO-59): "Thank you for your message from Charles Roos. He will contact Fred Rohrbach (MSO-65) to coordinate any efforts that he has in mind. Because of Pisidhi, Fred has much experience with the Thais. Once again, thank you and the NSA for all you have done to tell the truth about "Rescue Dawn." Hoping that you will encourage all you know, and there are many, to click on [rescuedawnthetruth.com](http://rescuedawnthetruth.com) so they too can learn the real truth. Truly, you have been a real workhorse for the NSA in the achievement of its mission. Keep up the good work."

Last July Dave Righetti (FBX-88) and Starr Jenkins (CJ-48) spoke as guest lecturers to a Cal Poly University class in a Natural Resources course called "Fire and Society." Dave took the modern smokejumper section showing slides about his nine seasons in Alaska. Starr covered the 1939-1949 period based on his two seasons. All hands seemed to enjoy the presentations. Both Dave and Starr met again after living not too far apart in San Luis Obispo for years.

Jerry Linton (MSO-48) did an instructor-assisted free fall in June for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. His 18-year-old granddaughter was also in the same load.

As of August 19, the jumpers at the California Smokejumper base in Redding had done a record-setting 562 jumps. The old record for a fire season, which typically runs from June until October, was 523. There's still plenty of the season left, so be looking for an update on this number. In checking the smokejumper daily status report on [www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com), I see that RAC had 83 jumpers out today. Ten of them were on the Siskiyou N.F., which is a good sign. The absence of jumper use in 2002 resulted in the Biscuit Fire in my opinion.

Ted Lowry (PNOR-45), one of the Triple Nickles 555<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion, will be inducted into the Connecticut Boxing Hall of Fame. During his career, Ted faced and fought five world champions, including Joe Lewis, Archie Moore, Sonny Liston and Rocky Marciano. The 555<sup>th</sup> got their smokejumper training at Pendleton, Oregon. Ted's memoir, *God's in My Corner: A Portrait of an American Boxer*,



was recently presented at a Writers' Live series in New Haven, Connecticut.

Feedback from NSA web site concerning the story from *Smokejumper* April 2004, *I Wish I Could Have Met Willi*, by Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): "I'm writing to tell you how much I appreciate your story on Willi Unsoeld (CJ-50). What means the most to me is the photo of Mr. Unsoeld with Devi.

"I took a class in creative writing with Devi in high school. I recall her as having her father's calmness and love of the outdoors. Knowing her from that class for such a short period of time had a profound effect on me. The Unsoeld's were well known about town for their involvement in Outward Bound. I had no idea at the time her father had scaled Everest.

"She was accepting of me and had a completely different, what I felt was more mature, view of the world and life having lived all over the world. Living by being themselves, serving, being positive, being outside of popular culture. No, standing true to self. Not a matter of being in or out. I don't think I can adequately describe it in words.

"I was devastated to read of Devi's death in *People* magazine in 1976, but not surprised. Devi and her father lived and died just being and doing what they loved. I wish I could tell her mother what Devi meant to me then and still means to me to this day. How the power of one person can mean so much to another in life. My 10-year-old even knows about her. Now I can tell him about Willi. Sincerely, Mufi Hayes"

Lee Hotchkiss (NCSB-63) recently underwent heart bypass surgery. We're happy to report that all went well. In a recent (August 29 email) from Lee's wife, Bev: "He came home Saturday afternoon - 4 days after surgery - and has been steadily recuperating and gaining strength. He is walking up to 9 minutes 3-4 times a day, his lung capacity is improving, and the incisions are healing well."

Dick Flaharty (MSO-44) tells me that the CPS-103 jumpers, who held their last reunion in the summer of 2006, will not be getting together as a group again. Age and death have dwindled this group enormously from the 220+ men who handled the smokejumper program during the war years 1943-45.

*I had the pleasure of attending two of these reunions and appreciate that I was able to meet so many of these men. (Ed.)*

Jack Babon (MSO-75) is currently serving with the 926<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade in Iraq. He is a Chief Warrant 3 and is doing electrical inspection for the Army on reconstruction

jobs. Jack is scheduled to return to Missoula in April 2009. You can contact him at: jack.babon@us.army.mil

Several members have called to my attention an article in *The New Yorker* magazine July 28, 2008 issue. It is titled "The Eureka Hunt" and uses Wag Dodge's escape fire at Mann Gulch as an example of actions taken without prior thought, also called "insight experience." It says that Dodge could never explain where his idea for the escape fire came from. However, in the October 2001 issue of *Smokeyjumper*, CPS-103 rookie **Earl Schmidt** (MSO-43) recalls how Dodge told about starting escape fires during rookie training that year, some six years before the Mann Gulch Fire.

NSA President **Doug Houston** (RAC-73) was invited to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> International Firefighting Symposium in Chambéry, France, sponsored by the Iveco Magirus Corp. from Germany. Representatives from Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Bavaria, Chile, Ecuador, and the United States gave presentations on related topics. The U.S., represented by Doug and Paige Houston, were asked to give a presentation on smokejumping. After the symposium, they were fortunate to drive to Normandy and be on Utah and Omaha beaches for the anniversary of D-Day.

**Tim Quigley** (RDD-79) hit the 600-jump mark on September 15 with a jump on the Meadows Fire. That also put Tim at 250 fire jumps over his 30-year career. According to Base Manager **Don Sand** (RDD-79), there are six USFS jumpers who have made 600 jumps. The leader is **Dale Longanecker** (RAC-74), who has more than 800 jumps and is still jumping at NCSB.

I've received a couple copies of an obit for Wallace D. Hoffman, a longtime editor and editorial-page writer for *The Salt Lake Tribune*. In the obit it lists Hoffman as being a smokejumper. Since he is not in our very accurate master database, I contacted the person who wrote the article for the *Tribune*. Her reply: "You know, a former co-worker told me that. Could he have been mistaken? Hoffman lived in Montana and Idaho before Utah, so it's possible he worked as a smokejumper there." I get four or five obits a year that lists the person as having been a smokejumper and they definitely were not. This is just another case of that and an example of poor research.

Got a heads up from **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) about plans to hold a LaGrande Reunion in 2009. Please save June 19-21 for this event. Anyone who jumped or was a pilot at LaGrande should be contacted. Look for updated information in this magazine as we get it. Contact for the event will be Mark Corbet at: mcorbet@web4mix.com

While on the subject of reunions please read **Mike McMillan's** (FBX-96) Alaska Base Report in the Touching All Bases column in this issue. "The Alaska Smokejumpers invite you to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, coinciding with Alaska's induction to statehood in 1959. The dates are June 5-7, 2009. A lot of details about this event are included in Mike's report.

## Welcome Alaska Rookie Class 1979



(Courtesy John Jones)

Top L-R: Tim Hatch, Shawn McKenna, Bob Mauck, Jim Griffin  
Middle: Kim Keaton, Gary Mclean, Bob Stegeman, Mike Durtschi  
Bottom: Rick Jensen, Chris Farinetti, Mark Klingner, Russ Little

# Jim Klump-No Introduction Necessary

by Rusty Witwer, Kris Kristofors (Redding '64), Gary Johnson (Redding '69)

*Kris gets us started:*

The annals of smokejumper history are full of memorable characters. One of these almost larger-than-life characters is **Jim Klump** (RDD-64). How does one write an article about one of the most recognizable personalities in Region 5 fire suppression history? You enlist the help of two outstanding firefighters of seasons past, Rusty Witwer and Gary "Gramps" Johnson. With so many incidents and stories about Jim Klump, one person cannot adequately convey the history of this remarkable character.

Jim came out of the depths of the Klamath River country, an area as remote and rugged as any in the U.S., which includes the towering steepness of the Wooley Creek drainage, the jumpers' worst nightmare. I do not know much about his younger days, but I suspect he went to work for the Forest Service because logging and being a fishing guide probably were the only other viable occupations available to a young person in that remote region. In 1964, Jim came south to Redding to become a smokejumper. He was quite a hell raiser back then, chasing girls and hanging out at the "Oakie Grove." Redding must have seemed like the big city with much more to do than down on the river, and I never figured out how Klump stayed out of trouble during those early years.

Over the following decades, Jim worked in about every first-line forest fire suppression function that existed: Tanker Foreman, Helitack, Smokejumper Retread, Fuels Modification Specialist, and FMO. He got the record for the most jumps by a retread, which happened while I was in Vietnam. Our paths crossed several times over the years. Memories include Jim driving a tanker down a logging road on the Indian Ridge Fire in 1966 with walls of flame on both sides; running into him in at fire camp on the Skinner Mill Fire in 1976; flying into helispots on the Los Padres multiple times; seeing him skiing with **Dave Nelson** (MSO-57) and the Regional Forester at Alpine Meadows; burning log piles on the Truckee Ranger District; and attending various retirements and reunions where he often spoke as a representative jumper of the 60s.

I went to work for Jim in the mid-70s when he was the FMO on the Truckee Ranger District. Although now in district management, Jim did not care about sitting behind a desk. I remember Dave Nelson getting after Jim on the radio about whether a fire was on the Tahoe or the neighboring Toiyabe, but Jim was more interested in getting to the fire and coordinating the initial attack. At every opportunity, he got out into the field where he felt most comfortable interacting with individuals and crews and patrolling the forest. Jim was a great storyteller. He had at least one story (but usually many) about almost anyone he had come across. He often told these stories with a deep



*Jim Klump (Courtesy Rusty Witwer)*

laugh sometimes laced with a touch of sarcasm. Often one did not quite know if he was laughing at the situation or at you. His memory of details, sometimes of the most infinitesimal nature, was unbelievable.

There were many fires Jim and I were on, but one of the most memorable was a small two-manner near the headwaters of Uncles Creek in the Marble Mountains Wilderness Area, which was in Jim's backyard. Jim and **Ron Campbell** (RDD-64) jumped what appeared to be no larger than a campfire and which these days would have been left to burn. They didn't have a radio with them. We kept circling for a while looking for the safe landing panel designations, but could not see them. After circling longer, I got pegged for a "rescue" jump for which I wasn't prepared. When my chute opened and legs moved up towards the sky, the contents of one of my leg pockets, including my camera, fell towards earth. Once on the ground, I don't remember what reason Jim and Ron had for not putting out the panels, but we quickly laid them out so the jump plane could return to base.

Seeing that there was little to do with a fire with a fifteen-foot circumference, I decided to hike down a spur ridge where I figured I had exited the aircraft. About five hundred yards down the ridge, I found my totally mangled camera. I was able to retrieve the film. Jim couldn't believe I found it – but it was pure luck. That evening atop of the ridge was a great Kodak moment. Three jumpers on a ridge high in the Marbles sitting around a campfire with the setting sun beautifully illuminating the Trinity Alps to the south. Jim had already started spinning us up with Bigfoot

stories, and he had many, coming from the heart of Bigfoot country. We wrapped ourselves in our chutes and slept not too comfortably on the ridge, expecting to be awakened at any moment by some hairy, smelly creature. The next morning, we gathered up our gear and expected a moderate packout. To our surprise, a pack train arrived to bring our gear out. The packers made us breakfast and coffee, and we hiked with them a ways, circling one of the many glacial lakes in the Marbles. We then took a trail down out of the Marbles, and I almost took a wrong turn at a fork in the trail, but Jim corrected me, knowing this forest inside and out.

At Rusty Witwer's Retirement last year, I brought up the Uncles Creek fire jump in the Marbles with Jim. He surprised me when he said he had to go back in there on a re-burn. It seemed quite incredulous – not the campfire I remember. Maybe it was a different fire, but with Jim, you never know. Maybe he just wanted to go back for a visit.

#### *Rusty's memories:*

My first contact with Jim was on the Romero Fire on the Los Padres NF in 1971. It was my first crew boss trainee assignment with the Hobart Mills fire crew out of Truckee. Jim was the Klamath Helicopter Foreman, and each day we seemed to get stuck flying on his ship. For a week I thought that Jim was the pilot, as he seemed to have the collective in his hand more than the real pilot once we were off the ground. **Jerry Vice** (RDD-69) was my Crew Boss and knew Jim well from his jumper days. One day near the end of the fire, Jerry had us cut some firewood and when we loaded up the ship after shift, we also loaded up the firewood. Little did I know that five years later when Jim became my DFMO, he would use that firewood to make for a romantic evening at a hotel in Santa Barbara where he proposed to his second wife, Gig.

While Jim was my DFMO at Truckee, he lived on the Big Bend Ranger Station compound on the summit off of I-80. If you have never been there, it gets more snow than any other Forest Service compound in California and maybe the US. Jim called me up that March, and we put together a crew to head up and shovel off his roof as he was stuck inside. He had over 12 feet on the roof and the load had settled on his door so he could not get out. The whole week that we worked on the compound, you could look over at the Rainbow Lodge across the street. It had a 12/12 pitch metal roof and there was no snow on it. Turns out the residences at Big Bend were kit homes that were developed on the Angeles NF back in the early 60s. I am really glad that our Forest Service engineers did not design helicopters.

Speaking of the Rainbow Lodge, since you can't do much up at Big Bend during the winter, Jim got a night job as the bartender. That's where he met my dad, Jack Witwer. My dad had been the Game Warden in Nevada County since after the war. He had retired a few years before, but was up at Big Bend teaching the new wardens some winter survival stuff. They were all at the bar and Jim's keen sense of deduction led him to introduce himself to my dad, saying that he knew me and that he was my boss. Apparently most

of the Big Bend engine crew were also there, and they, too, came up and said they knew me. Jim told me that, after a bit, my dad leaned over the bar and said that years ago he was known as Jack Witwer. Now that he was retired, he is known as Rusty's Dad. Since I just retired I understand what he was saying. As Mark Twain said, "I could not believe how dumb my dad was when I was 20 and how smart he was when I was 40."

Jim and I remained in contact over the years and both his boys worked on Hobart at different times. They worked hard and most of the crew had no idea who their dad was. During my last fire season I got offered the opportunity to be the IARR for all the Region 5 folks that were up on the fires in Montana and Idaho. It was a great assignment, especially after being up there over the years on different incidents. It kind of put together all those different drain-ages that we spent time in into one big overview. When I pulled into the Grey Creek Fire near Council, Idaho, I had no idea that Jim was there with his UniEngine Company.

Jim's daughter, who worked for him, had just been shot to death outside of the camp entrance. Jim and I arrived within minutes of the shooting. That event will stay with Jim for the rest of his life, as it will with me. I am not the most religious person in the world, but have always tried to just do damage to myself, not other people. For the next week or so I got the chance to help my old friend out and one evening, trying to make sense of it all, I realized that maybe there was something from above that made me pull into that fire camp that morning.

After 40 fire seasons it's time to let a younger bunch take the reins. With all the changes that have happened to the Forest Service over the years, the one thing that no one can take away from any of us who walk and work those hills, are the friendships that were built at 3:00 am coming out of Wooley Creek.

#### *Gary Johnson recalls some Jim Klump stories:*

The first time I remember meeting Jim Klump was my "Poge" (1969) year at Redding. The forests in Northern California had picked up a number of lightning fires at the end of July, and Jim came down from the Klamath NF as a retread. As I recall, Jim and several other retreads - **Joe Castillo** (RDD-65), **Gordon Brazzi** (RDD-66) and **Rich Farmer** (RDD-64) - were all briefed and on the jump list. They had been assigned to make firepacks out in the Fire Cache, adjacent to the Ready Room. Walking by, I heard all this hooting and yelling coming from the back of the Fire Cache. When I went to investigate, I saw Jim and a bunch of the other retreads playing "Broom Hockey" with push brooms and some type of homemade puck. Needless to say, Jim was one of the ringleaders. When **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53), our Smokejumper Base Manager, saw what was going on, he just shook his head and walked away.

There were many more opportunities to get to know Jim over the years, and they all pretty much involve some type of interesting story. Like the turd contest Jim and I had down in R-3 (his was longer, but mine was thicker). At a R-5 reunion later that year, he presented me with a plaque with a

replica of my winning turd mounted on it

Then there was that little two manner in the middle of the Marble Mountain Wilderness on the Klamath NF. A jumper from West Yellowstone and I took care of the fire and packed our gear to a rocky pinnacle above the fire. An Evergreen 205 helicopter came to pick us up. As it happened, Jim was in the left seat. This was before we removed the dual controls in the contract helicopters. I don't think I need to tell you the rest of the story.

Over the years on countless fires, especially when things were going to hell, you could always count on Klump. He

had this ability to stay calm, cool and collected. He was able to focus on the situation and figure out a way to take care of the problem. And have fun doing it.

*Kris Kristofors trained at Redding in 1964 and, after completing his U.S. Army commitment, returned to Redding and jumped for several years. Rusty Witwer is a well-known firefighter in California. He is probably best known as the Hotshot Superintendent for the Hobart Hotshots. Gary Johnson split his smokejumper time between R-5 and R-6, having trained in R-5 in 1969 and moving up to Redmond in 1988.*

## A Taskmaster's Real Character

by Don Webb (McCall '56)

**I**t was the winter of 1956. The place was the Council District of the Payette National Forest in central Idaho.

U.S. Forest Service officials gave six McCall smokejumpers special training in something called "tree measurement timber sale cruising." This involved selecting trees to be cut and ones to leave as seed trees. We marked and numbered each tree to be cut; we took a DBH – diameter breast-high – for each tree and the estimated number of logs, then recorded this information in a book.

Our crew consisted of **Max Allen** (MSO-48), **Richard "Paperlegs" Peterson** (MYC-47), **Miles Johnson** (MYC-53), **Tommy "Shep" Johnson** (MYC-56), me, and one fellow whose name I can't remember. Our camp consisted of several small trailers adjacent to the proposed timber sale.

**Dale Fickle** (MYC-45), a Forest Service employee, gave us special training on how to tie snowshoes so they'd stay on our feet all day. He had been an instructor for winter survival for the U.S. Army's mountain troops during World War II.

We worked a schedule of 10 days on, four days off. The snow was deep and required snowshoes each day. We worked in a line of six, parallel to the slope – and most of the slopes were quite steep. Max was the squad leader and worked in the middle of our line, recording information as we called it to him.

Snags were considered bad in the 1950s, so we all carried stick matches and set fire to every snag we encountered. The Council District ranger, Frank Youngblood, could walk out his front door and see how we were progressing just by seeing the smoke from the snags.

We worked most of the winter on this project. As spring-time approached, our working conditions changed. We still had enough snow to use snowshoes between trees, but around the base of each tree there had formed a ring of ice.

In order to get the "DBH" and mark the tree, we had to get close to the trunk. This situation caused us to fall and slide downhill several times a day.

Max didn't have this problem, because he didn't need to get close to the trees. When one of us would fall and slide down-

hill, Max always had a somewhat derogatory and colorful comment to make. Anyone who remembers Max can appreciate this.

Around 3 p.m. on the last day of one of our 10-day stints, Max slipped, fell and went sliding down the hill. We all heard him crash into some brush below us, followed by several seconds of total silence. Then we heard him yell: "F— it. Everyone go to camp."

Max was at camp when we got there and had the engine running on our government carryall. He told us to get our gear and load it into the truck, and to be quick about it. No one said a word when we departed camp, but we all knew we were supposed to work until 5 p.m. and it was only about 3:30.

There was a remote bar about halfway back to McCall. Max pulled in and parked our green Forest Service vehicle out front; there were no other vehicles around.

We all followed Max inside and sat at the bar, where Max ordered each of us a beer. We hadn't taken but one or two swallows of beer when we heard another vehicle pull up out front. One of our party looked out the window and said: "Oh, s—," as he recognized forest supervisor Jack Kooch.

It was about 4 p.m., and Jack had a reputation of firing – on the spot – people who had screwed up.

Well, we couldn't hide and we had no excuse, so we just sat there looking at the mirror in front of us and watched Mr. Kooch walk in.

Jack spoke to only two people, the first of whom was Max. He asked if we were ahead of schedule or behind, to which Max answered: "A little ahead, sir." (We were ahead, but Jack already knew this because of our snag fires.)

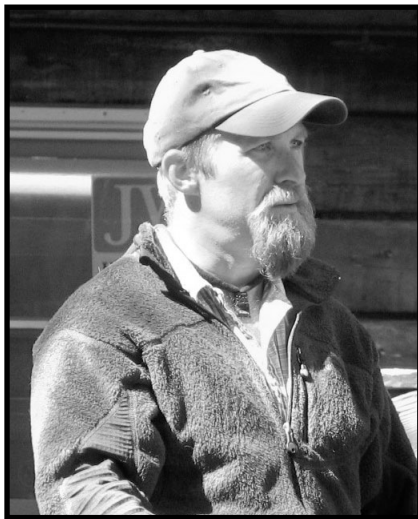
Jack responded: "Max, working conditions are not the best up there right now, are they?"

"No, sir."

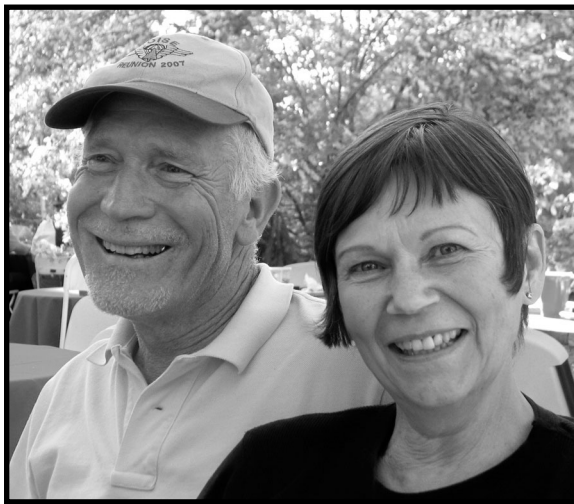
Jack then put a \$10 bill on the bar and told the bartender to "give these boys one more beer, and then send their asses home." He turned around, walked out and drove away.

From that moment on, there were six smokejumpers who would have done anything Jack Kooch asked of them!

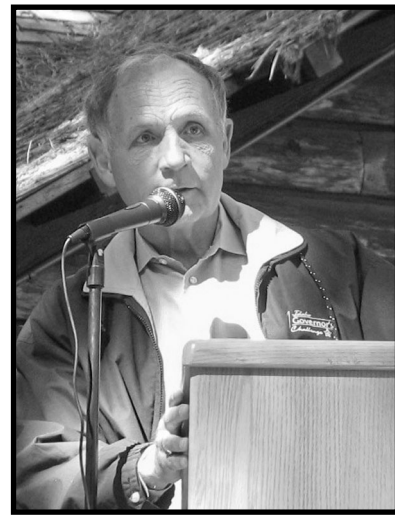




*Todd Franzen (MYC-98)*



*Dale Schmaljohn (MYC-60) & Marily*



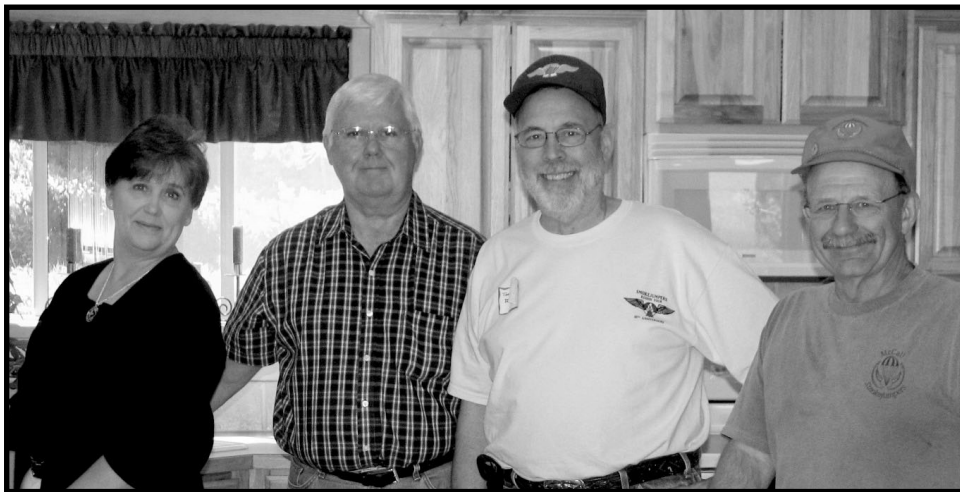
*Guy Hurlbutt (IDC-62)*



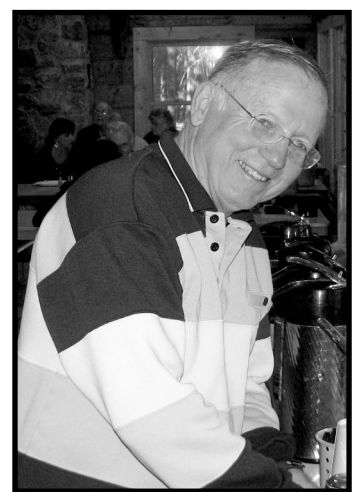
## McCall Reunion 2008



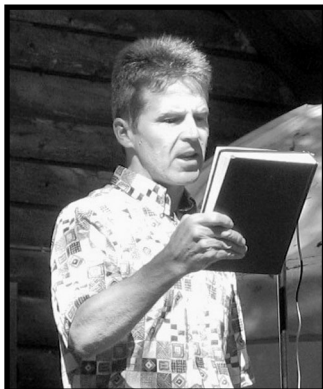
*Photo's Courtesy Tom Decker (IDC-64) & Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67)*



*Velma & Wayne Sugg (IDC-65), Tom Decker (IDC-64) & Francis Mohr (IDC-63)*



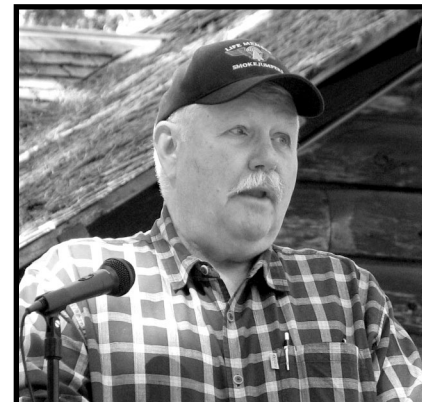
*Leo Cromwell (IDC-66)*



*Kevan Richards (MYC-92)*



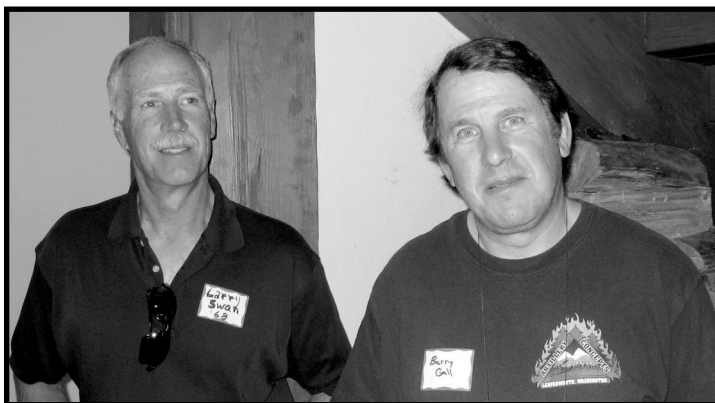
*Heather Haynes & Pete Pride (MYC-83)*



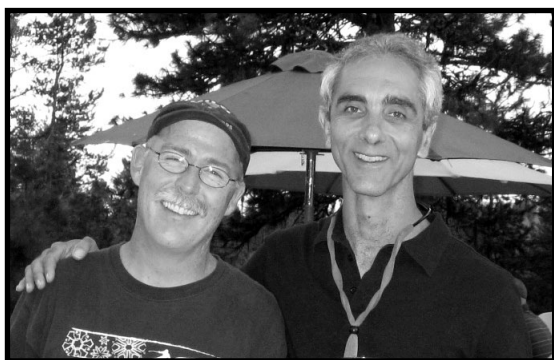
*Dick Graham (IDC-58)*



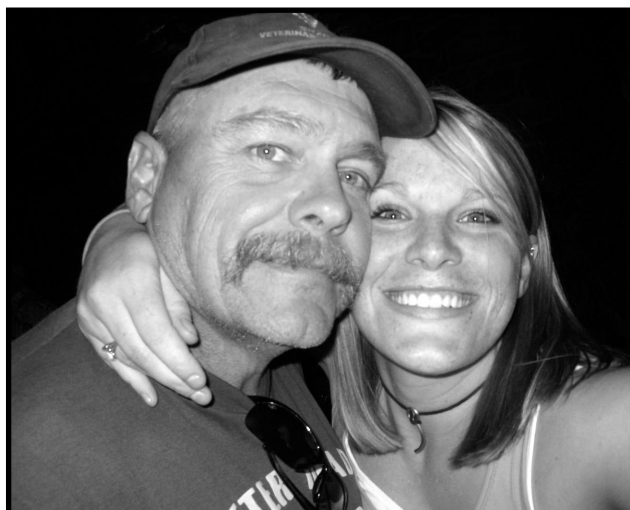
*Jason Miller (MYC-98) &  
Gracie Moore (R4-Pilot)*



*Larry Swan (MYC-68) & Barry Gall (MYC-81)*



*Roger Staats (MYC-86) & Mike Tyrrell (MYC-86)*



*Allison Stout (MYC-80) & Daughter Sierra*



*Front L-R: Rick Hudson (NIFC-73), Murry Taylor (RDD-65), Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67)  
Back L-R: Les Rosenkrance (MYC-61), Jim Duzak (MYC-84), Jim Buchanan (NIFC-71),  
John Humphries (MYC-79), Ed Kral (MYC-66), Vern Hammill (MYC-66),  
Bill Harro (MYC-68) & Don Bell (IDC-69).*

*Layout Design by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)*



# NSA Trail Crew



## Former Smokejumpers Return To Fix Trails

*(This article was published July 29, 2008, in The Missoulian, Missoula, Mont. Reprinted with permission.)*

by Kim Briggeman

IT'S BEEN 45 YEARS SINCE **Dan Hensley** (MSO-57) parachuted out of an airplane to fight a wildfire. In the ensuing years, he taught school in Southern California, worked on mountain rescue teams and did counterintelligence for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. But he never forgot the rush, the camaraderie and the sense of accomplishment that came with smokejumping.

"I think almost everybody would say the same thing. It was the best damned part-time job we ever had," Hensley said.

He was sitting at a campfire in the mountains of southwest Montana, one of nine former jumpers and associates who'd hiked into the proposed Italian Peaks wilderness area the day before to do trail work. It had been a gradual climb, but not an easy one. At 8,200 feet, the camp was about 7,800 feet higher than Hensley's home in West Hills, Calif. Five days of trail work with Pulaskis, saws and shovels loomed ahead and Hensley, 71, was feeling the effects of a serious accident he suffered a few years ago. But he was exactly where he wanted to be.

"It is about recapturing your youth," he said, reflecting on his smokejumping days out of the Missoula base in the late 1950s and early '60s.

July means a working vacation in the Rockies for Hensley and other ex-smokejumpers from around the nation, most of them in their 60s, 70s and even 80s. They traveled on

their own dime to Missoula to work in the National Smokejumper Association's Trail Maintenance Program, which is marking its 10th year of existence.

Coordinator **Jon McBride** (MSO-54) sent crews of six to 10 men and women on weeklong projects to seven sites in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, the Seeley Lake area, and three national forests in Idaho. Earlier, the program had single projects in Utah, on the Iditarod trail in Alaska, in Colorado in late June, and in the Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho. In September crews will work on trails in the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness in Minnesota and on the Western States Trail in California.

The trail maintenance program got its start in 1998, when McBride and **Art Jukkala** (MSO-56), a fellow ex-smokejumper from Missoula, saw a news story about the new Bob Marshall Foundation, now the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation. The story talked about the disappearing trails in the Bob. Where there were nearly 4,000 miles in the 1930s, only 800 remained as the Forest Service's budget for trail maintenance dwindled.

"We got talking and we felt that was totally unacceptable," McBride said. "Art expressed to me: 'How can the Forest Service profess to manage land that they cannot enter to look at and see what has to be managed?' What it meant was most of the wilderness was inaccessible."

Maybe, Jukkala and McBride decided, the old smokejumpers could do something about it.

"There were lots of guys who jumped with us who know how to open up trails, big time," McBride

said.

They contacted Carla Cline Belski, executive director of the Bob Marshall Foundation, and "she made it very clear to us she would be glad to have us work under the auspices of the foundation."

The men led the first crews into the Bob Marshall in July 1999, McBride in the northern end at Spotted Bear, Jukkala in the south on the Blackfoot Divide out of Montour Creek.

The second afternoon out, July 12, Jukkala and his crew returned to camp after the day's work. It was an extensive climb out of the Spruce Creek trail, McBride said.

"Art was sitting on a log waiting for dinner. He probably had a cold beer in his hand, and he kind of laid over and he was dead," said his longtime friend. It kicked Jukkala's fellow jumpers in the gut. But their response didn't surprise McBride.

News of Jukkala's death was reported in the National Smokejumper Association's quarterly magazine, "so the entire smokejumping community, both active and former, was informed within a matter of weeks," he said. "I probably had 25 or 30 people telling me, 'Let's keep this program going and I'll volunteer next year.'"

Twenty-seven did volunteer in 2000, and they completed five projects. The next year the numbers rose to 43 and eight. Seventy-nine volunteers worked on 10 projects in three states in 2002. The rapid growth rate has slowed, but "we've not had one year that wasn't bigger than the year before," said McBride.

The program expanded from the Bob Marshall – where the

smokejumpers work under the coordinated auspices of the wilderness foundation and four national forests – to include other forests in Montana, Idaho and elsewhere.

And while opening and improving often-remote trails remains a focal point, the smokejumpers now have drive-to projects to work on. Hensley and **Richard Trinity** (MSO-66), a retired general surgeon, spent the week before the Beaverhead project fixing up the Double Arrow Lookout near Seeley Lake so the Forest Service can rent it out. Their camp was at the ranger station in town. It's especially close to their hearts, because Seeley Lake was the site of the first training base for smokejumpers in the 1940s.

While the bulk of the volunteer force remains ex-jumpers, more and

more "associates" are pitching in. They are non-jumpers who "have the same feelings and objectives that we do about wilderness areas," and join NSA to help out, McBride said.

"The jumpers have probably opened 1,000 miles of trail in 10 years," McBride said, "but it could be more." Often, they complain they aren't given enough work to do. Jukkala remains the only fatality on a smokejumper trail crew and serves more as an inspiration than a deterrent.

"You know, the guys are not concerned about dying up there," said McBride. "I've had so many tell me, 'I just wish I could die the way Art died.' What a wonderful way to die, in wilderness as opposed to dying in the hospital. That's why I think they keep coming. They don't

care about that aspect. There's no fear."

"In talking to a lot of people, it's apparent that if we don't encourage people to visit the wilderness and have a means that they can visit the wilderness – meaning trails that are open and passable – then we're not going to have any defenders of the wilderness in the future," McBride said.

"A lot of the greenies who I'm at odds with would like to close the trails. They don't want people in the wilderness, and I can't understand why. I think they only want themselves out in the woods.

"By doing that you lose people who know anything about the wilderness and people who will stand up and be activists and speak up and defend it."

## A Smokejumper's Icon

by Nona Hengen

*Reprinted with author's permission.*

**T**he wreckage of an airplane in a stand of firs in the shadowy reaches of a dark forest was indeed an uncommon thing to stumble upon. Burt Wolfrum, my neighbor's son, was hiking in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, north of Missoula, in August 1988 when he came upon this scene.

The shattered fuselage lay embedded in a carpet of twigs and pine cones; sparse vegetation grew on the periphery and inside the shell of the plane, and the pale green of the grass was absorbed by the gloom of a stand of old growth timber. Burt suspected that I would be interested in the scene and brought me his photograph of it. Later, when I began to sketch the remnant of that plane on a canvas, I thought the scene begged the addition of two elk that were not present when the shutter was snapped.

As I studied Burt's photograph, I wondered how the plane came to be where it was. There was a clue from just enough lettering on the fuselage to make out a fragment of a name. It was a Johnson Flying Service Ford Tri-Motor, the first one flown in for mountain flying.

### In The Beginning

The Ford in the name was Henry Ford, whose Model T put America on wheels. The plane that lay in smoldering ruins in that stand of trees was the brainchild of the Ford Motor Company, and it played a significant role in the development of air transport in America.

With a buy-out of the Stout Metal Plane Company, the Ford Motor Company plunged into aircraft design and production; began training pilots and mechanics; planned the layout of airports, terminal buildings and concrete runways; refined radio and navigation procedures, and took upon itself an extensive campaign to convince the public that flying was the future of transportation.

In two years, 14 Tri-Motors were built. In the year before the stock market crash, 146 were built. The Depression brought the economy to a standstill; the \$50,000 price tag was too steep for most airlines, and Ford had saturated the market. The moment was right to produce an aircraft with retractable landing gears, and the Boeing 247 made its appearance in 1933. It was faster than the Tri-Motor, and the Douglas DC-2 that followed in 1934 boasted a more efficient performance and operation than the Tri-Motor. Demand for these two planes soon surpassed demand for the Ford Tri-Motor, and the latter would soon be phased out of the airline passenger business. Rather than becoming a relic, it was reinvented as a heavy-duty freight transport carrier.

In his 1957 book, *The Ford Story: A Pictorial History of the Ford Tri-Motor, 1927-1957*, William T. Larkins eulogized the beloved Tri-Motor of the Johnson Flying Service of Missoula. Larkins tells how the Tri-Motor, "used by all of the major airlines in the United States at one time or another" and also flown by the military, operated on wheels, floats and skis. It was used in aerial refueling, acrobatics and parachuting; put to work pulling neon signs through the air



*Back to Nature. (Courtesy Nona Hengen)*

for night advertising, as well as taking up searchlights and loudspeaker systems; and used to dust timber, spray crops, haul machinery, gasoline and oil, to mine ore, even to transport live cattle.

### **The Johnson Flying Service**

The name of pioneer pilot aviator Bob Johnson of Missoula is synonymous with the name of the plane Burt Wolfrum photographed. The wreckage in the trees is that of “Old Man Johnson’s” first Tri-Motor. Sources disagree as to whether this particular plane was flown by United Airlines or Pacific Air Transport, but whichever it was, it had been initially used for passenger service. Johnson heard about its availability and had it flown to Missoula. Looking up as it approached and taken aback by its size, he is said to have exclaimed under his breath to someone nearby, “Oh, my God, that’s too big!”

Author Steve Smith, (*Fly the Biggest Piece Back*, Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, 1979), describes the Ford Tri-Motor. “To get it up in the air and fly it,” he writes, “the first challenge was to learn the throttle settings necessary to synchronize the three engines (no two could be set exactly alike).”

The Tri-Motor was made entirely of metal. It had a high wing; its flat sides and bottom gave it the look of a whale, and some likened its rudder to a barn door. Inside were steering wheels, reminiscent of those in Henry Ford’s Model Ts, and the tires *were* the same as those on Ford’s deluxe

Model Ts. A top speed of 135 mph was claimed for Johnson’s new acquisition, with a cruising speed of 105 miles per hour and a range of 500 miles.

When asked what it was like to fly the Tri-Motor, Johnson mechanic Art Pritzl, commented that it was “like driving an old truck that steered hard.”

The Tri-Motor is further described in Smith’s book as “hulking” and “a fat-winged flying washboard.” A common sight in the skies over Missoula, residents began calling it “The Tin Goose.”

Johnson would soon find out that the noise of the motors all but drowned out voice communication with a co-pilot, and that, while visibility through the V-shaped windshield was surprisingly good, the nose engine had an “annoying habit of throwing oil back” on the windshield, and the “manifold smells of the nose engine were with the pilot every moment.”

If it was not love at first sight, soon after Bob Johnson took his new Tri-Motor up in the air, he was on his way to developing a passion for his “Tin Goose” that he would retain throughout his long and eventful career in mountain flying.

### **The Beginning Of Smokejumping**

Some people believed that smokejumping was a far-fetched idea that would fizzle. These naysayers held that the time-honored method of fighting fire with ground crews would continue to be the norm. But by 1941, the Forest Service had begun a program of training smokejumpers,



with Missoula as the center of operations using the Tri-Motor to drop jumpers and their gear.

World War II intervened, producing a manpower shortage that pulled men away from training at the smoke-jumper base in Missoula. There was a great need to train parachute rescue units for the Coast Guard and the Army Air Force, and Johnson pilots, highly experienced, put their ambitions to fly for the Forest Service on hold and devoted valuable expertise to the war effort.

## A Young Man's Calling

The remains of a Tri-Motor in a forest may have held an unusual interest for young Burt Wolfrum because he had grown up listening to stories about smokejumping told by a smokejumper—his dad.

While attending the University of Montana at Missoula, **Fred "Fritz" Wolfrum** (MSO-53) spent his summers training for jumping and fire fighting and all that went with the work, which included brush piling and fighting white pine blister during periods of inactivity between fire calls, constructing and maintaining facilities, trails and such. Danger and drama leapt to the fore, however, when the men were called out on a jump, flown to fight a fire one hundred or more miles away, parachuting on it in less than an hour from deployment.

Beginning in 1953, Fritz made 88 jumps during the six seasons he was with the jumpers, from fighting fires in Montana's mountains to the pine forests of New Mexico. He knew the Tri-Motor well, having parachuted from it many times.

## The Tri-Motor In The Bob Marshall

In his book *Fly the Biggest Piece Back*, author Steve Smith writes about the crushing disappointment of the Johnson Flying Service in losing its first Ford Tri-Motor.

Bob Johnson's older brother, Dick, was flying it, bringing a load of freight in for a landing at Big Prairie, northeast of Missoula, around 6 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon in early September 1938. On approach to the narrow strip at Big Prairie, while slowing to land and about four to six feet from touching down on the ground, the heavily loaded plane encountered a down draft which "slammed it down" hard. The landing gear on one side buckled, the tip of the wing touched the ground and the Tri-Motor careened a thousand feet before ground looping off the runway. It disappeared into a stand of firs at the edge of the runway, where its wings were sheared off before it came to a standstill in the trees. Dick, momentarily knocked out, regained consciousness and found his clothes saturated with gas leaking from ruptured fuel lines. By the time men from the ranger station could reach him, he had managed to stagger out of the wreckage, walk a short distance, and pitch face forward, collapsing in shock. He was flown to the hospital in Missoula and released four days later. In a month and a half, he was flying again.

In his book *The Ford Story*, William Larkins adds a simple straight-forward caption to a photo of the brothers' first Tri-Motor taken three years before the accident, when Bob Johnson took delivery of it: "Damaged while landing at

Forest Service 'Big Prairie Landing Field,' . . . and could not be flown out. Since no roads went into this area, small parts of the plane were flown out and the remainder left there."

Bob Johnson's disappointment over losing this valuable plane is described, author Smith says, in remarks made at the time by an acquaintance of Bob. The acquaintance described him as "the most disappointed man I think I've ever seen. Here was an airplane that was just the apple of his eye, the finest thing that Bob ever owned. It was a big, powerful, load-carrying airplane that he'd worked hard to get. When he lost it, he just couldn't possibly have felt worse; it was just that much a part of him."

The biggest pieces flown back seventy years ago from the wrecked plane were its three motors. No one is permitted to carry anything out of the Bob Marshall Wilderness these days, so the gutted body of the stalwart old Tri-Motor rests in peace, undisturbed except for the occasional elk that may walk past. But for one moment back in 1988, when young Burt Wolfrum framed the scene and clicked the shutter, this reminder of the derring-do world of the men who flew smokejumper crews and cargo into remote mountainous areas for the U. S. Forest Service would never have excited my imagination and inspired me to pick up my brush.



(courtesy Paul Ross/moyercreek.com)

# The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

THE 64,000-ACRE GUN Barrel Fire last summer was one of the biggest fires in Region 1 in 2008. According to Becky Aus, Shoshone National Forest Supervisor, the fire, burning mostly in beetle-killed timber, was a cost-effective way to clear the forest for new growth. The Forest Service spends an average of about \$300 per acre for prescribed burns, while the Gun Barrel's \$10.5 million price tag translates to a cost of about \$160 per acre. Heavy fuels in rugged terrain and often-extreme winds made fighting the fire dangerous. Only one private structure, a shed used as a doghouse, was lost during the blaze. The unoccupied, abandoned Sweetwater Lodge and its cabins burned. The Forest Service owned those structures. At its height, 569 people, 16 crews, 29 engines and eight helicopters staffed the fire.

The Dunn Mountain Fire, 30 miles northeast of Billings, Montana, burned 102,383 acres in light fuels and downed timber with 436 personnel, 17 engines, five dozers, four graders, three tenders and one helicopter at its height. The fire came in at \$748 an acre. Still far less than the \$1000 an acre that firefighting costs have risen to in

recent years. Rehabilitation was projected to be \$150,000. The Dunn Mountain Fire was in the same general area of the 2006 Bundy Railroad Fire. Management of the Bundy Railroad Fire was the subject of a well-documented, profanity-laced tirade by then Senator Conrad Burns, R-Montana, directed at the Augusta Hotshots. That tirade is thought to have caused Senator Burns to lose a very tight race for his third term in the Senate. Senator Burns is now a lobbyist.

I attended the 75<sup>th</sup> annual Fall Water School last September at Montana State University. A "contractor" from Libby, Montana, conducted a sales pitch cleverly disguised as a lecture titled "Wildfire Mitigation Through Forest Fuels Reduction Treatments in Community Watershed Areas." Among his comments were: "Overstocked, unhealthy forests with too many trees per acre grow fuel at a rate equal to 300 gallons of gasoline per year." I am not a fire scientist, but I thought this statistic might be a little embellished. I played around with the numbers a little and tried to factor in BTU's but was unable to come up with any meaningful

numbers. The contractor did speak at length about the John Deere 1490D Energy Wood Harvester that bales biomass into bundles that, depending on the type of wood and moisture content, contain a megawatt of power in them. The harvester can yield 20-30 bundles (or megawatts/hour) per hour. The volume of a bundle is about a cubic yard. A single machine can thin up to four acres an hour. The bundles can then be stored in the forest or at a power plant. They will not rot or spontaneously combust. More information on biomass can be found on the National Renewable Energy Laboratory web site: [www.nrel.gov](http://www.nrel.gov)

At deadline, Nicholas Evans author, of the novel *The Smokejumper*, had been hospitalized, along with his wife, after eating poisonous mushrooms in Scotland. He has no kidney function and faces an uncertain future. We wish him well. Evans also wrote the *Horse Whisperer*.

This column is dedicated to Neptune Aviation Services Chief Pilot Gene Wahlstrom, Co-Pilot Greg "Gonzo" Gonsioroski, and Crew Chief Zachary VanderGriend, the crew of Tanker 09.

"I never worry about action, only

## Please Tell Us When You Change Your Address

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# Honored Life Members Bring Back Memories

by Harvey Harden (Idaho City '59)

**T**he article by Leo Cromwell (IDC-66) in the October 2008 issue of Smokejumper made me proud that I had the privilege of working with or for Jim Larkin, Smokey Stover (MYC-46), Kenn Smith (IDC-55), Wayne Webb (MYC-46) and Moose Salyer (MYC-54).

Larkin was the pilot for most of my jumps during the summers of 1959-63 at Idaho City. Most of the flights were fairly routine, but I remember returning to Idaho City in the Twin Beech with several other jumpers after a drop when things were not normal for Jim. He had a bad case of "the runs" and after landing, he came scrambling out of the plane and made a beeline for the can. I never knew he could move so fast, but in spite of the speed, he never made it in time. He was pretty upset and more than a little bit embarrassed. For that immediate period he did not want to be around anyone and, of course, the feeling was mutual.

Stover was simply the best base supervisor one could hope for. He was humble but proud, and I always marveled at the way he would blow the ash from his cigarette without removing it from his mouth.

In the five summers I worked for Smokey, he was only upset with me twice. On one occasion I had the misfortune of having a "repeater." Smokey escorted the other jumper and me down to Boise to have a chat with the superintendent. The "super" must have loved jumpers because he was pretty easy on us. Of course, Smokey was smart enough to use the entire episode to make a training point for the benefit of the other jumpers.

The second occasion when he was upset with me was when I was involved in a scuffle with some of the locals. After a non-temperate evening in town, our base helicopter pilot decided to ride his motorcycle into one of the bars. Just before he let out the clutch to ride up the ramp that had been provided, a local logger smacked him in the eye. A scuffle started and several jumpers were involved. Smokey was rightfully concerned with any activity that would diminish the prestige of the smokejumper base. Accordingly, he required that the involved jumpers apologize.

Smith was the spotter for many of my fire jumps. He was an excellent spotter and knew the backcountry very well.

My first introduction to Kenn's social skills was when he hosted a "flaming maiming" party for the jumpers at Idaho City. He had just returned from Silver City and had brought some tequila with him.

We were all in a big circle in front of the Stover house.

He poured everyone a drink of tequila. The drinks were set afire and the idea was to suck in the flame and quickly douse it with the drink. I swear that tequila was just as flammable as lighter fluid because one jumper ended up with fire on his face. Fortunately, he was not injured. I remember how the party started but have no recall of how it ended. The next day, my assignment was to sit in the shade of the loft building and cut wire into six-inch lengths to be used as weight for drift streamers.

On most occasions, Kenn was happy after dropping a load of jumpers. I only remember one time when he was a little irritated. A jumper had been sitting in the door of the Twin Beech, and Kenn had his head out the spotter's door. The jumper got sick to his stomach and lost his soda. It blew swiftly and accurately right into Kenn's face. He laughed about it later but was initially visibly upset.

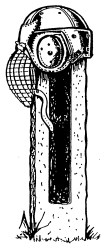
Webb was the best at what he did. He would always do his best to improve jumper safety. On a practice jump at McCall, I had a Mae West and deployed my reserve. Wayne was very concerned and was very organized in his attempt to reconstruct problems for the benefit of safety. One of the jumpers got a picture of the jump, which I have in my scrapbook.

I have good memories of Wayne on the ball field as well. During my initial and refresher training at McCall, it was great fun pitching against Wayne. I could throw harder and had a good curve, but Wayne had a great riser. It was hard to get a good solid hit against Wayne, and most batters simply "popped up." Wayne's team usually won. What a gentleman he was.

Salyer was one of those guys whom the Neds just naturally looked up to. He was a gentle giant. The word about Moose among the Neds was that he was the only jumper to do a "stand-up" landing. I am sure they can easily be accomplished with today's equipment, but a "stand-up" with the old style of chute is simply amazing. We were also told that he was chewed out for not doing the traditional landing.

I appreciate all the work that goes into publishing "Smokejumper." What a nice way to be able to reconnect with the friendships formed during those exciting summers of the late '50s and early '60s.

*Harvey can be contacted at: 524 N Village Ln, Liberty Lake, WA 99019.*



## 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.

### **Wayne D. Kurtz (Missoula '45)**

Wayne D. "Tuffy" Kurtz, 87, of Smithville, Ohio, died Friday, June 13, 2008, after a short illness. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers during WWII and jumped at Missoula during the 1945 season. Starting while still in school and continuing for 50 plus years, he was an independent milk hauler for area dairy farmers.

### **Bradley C. Diggs (Missoula '68)**

Brad, 59, died Friday, July 25, 2008, of cancer in Seattle, Washington.

He was born and raised in Missoula and graduated from Amherst College and Harvard Law School. After law school, Brad joined the law firm of Davis/Wright/Tremaine in Seattle where he enjoyed his legal career, chaired the firm's commercial transactions practice, and eventually became managing partner in 1994. He jumped at Missoula during the 1968 and 1969 seasons.

### **Paul C. Shrock (Missoula '44)**

Paul died April 25, 2008, in Goshen, Indiana. He was a member of the Mennonite Church and was part of the CPS-103 jumpers during WWII. Paul jumped at Missoula during the 1944 season.

### **Calvin "Gene" Wahlstrom (Pilot)**

Gene died in the crash of his air tanker Sept. 1, 2008, just north of Reno, Nevada. He was licensed as a pilot in 1979 and flew retardant, smokejumpers, and lead plane during his career. Gene was Chief Pilot for Neptune Aviation of Missoula, Montana.

### **Ralph G. Johnston (Redding '63)**

Ralph died September 4, 2008. He started work with the Forest Service on the Angeles National Forest right out of high school, spent three years in the Army, and returned to the Angeles. In 1957 Ralph was Air Officer for the Angeles, was Superintendent of the Chilao Hotshots 1960-61, and later was Helicopter/Helitack Specialist for R-5 in Redding. Ralph was the first USFS Helicopter Trainer, and he worked with and trained Helicopter Managers in all nine regions. During his career Ralph trained over 7,000 personnel.

### **LeRoy E. Gray (North Cascades '57)**

LeRoy died September 6, 2008, at his home in Colville, Washington. He graduated from Winthrop High School in

1957 and started jumping at NCSB that summer and continued the next two seasons. In 1960 he jumped out of Anchorage and then went into the army that fall. He came back in 1962 and jumped his final season at Anchorage. LeRoy was an avid horse lover. After retiring from the Bureau of Reclamation at Grand Coulee Dam in 2000, he spent much of his time training horses and building horse tack in his leather shop.

### **Bert D. Tanner (Missoula '68)**

Bert died September 16, 2008, following a battle with esophageal cancer. He received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a Master's from Utah State University. Bert was a member of the football, hockey and rugby teams at UW and served in the U.S. Army Reserves.

He joined Campbell Scientific Inc. in 1978 to begin his 30-year career as Vice President of Marketing and Customer Service. He had a sincere interest in the careers of young scientists and a keen eye for talent at its early stages. Scores of the best environmental scientists worldwide acknowledge his influence on their careers. Bert jumped at Missoula in 1968, 72-75 and 1977 and was an NSA member.

### **Don G. Fitzjarrald (North Cascades '62)**

Don died September 24, 2008, of a stroke. He graduated from high school in Twisp, and served in the Navy 1956-59 and was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Independence. After leaving the Navy, Don worked for the Okanogan Forest road crew until 1962 when he took his rookie training at NCSB. During his career as a smokejumper (1962-75), Don made 262 jumps. In 1975, he transferred to the Cle Elum District of the Wenatchee Forest as Fire Management Officer. He later transferred to the Crescent District of the Deschutes Forest and retired in 1989.

### **Arthur M. Cochran (Missoula '42)**

Art died October 3, 2008, at the Grangeville Health and Rehabilitation Center at age 93. He was a "pioneer" smokejumper jumping at Missoula from 1942-51. Art then worked for the CIA and retired in 1967 moving to Stites, Idaho, in 1978.

### **John L. Ainsworth (Missoula '43)**

John died August 6, 2008, in Maple Valley, Washington at age 90. He graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Southern California and was

a CPS-103 jumper during WWII. John jumped at Missoula 1943-45 and was one of the few CPS jumpers to jump all three years of the program. He moved to Montana in 1947 working on the construction of the Hungry Horse Dam and retired from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1981. John was ahead of his time being an early advocate of organic gardening, composting and solar power. He built and drove an electric car in the 1970s.

#### **William J. "Bill" Padden (Cave Junction '48)**

Bill died October 22, 2008, in Duluth, Minnesota. He jumped at Cave Junction 1948-53 after serving in the U.S. Army Airborne. Bill graduated from St. John's University in 1953, worked for National Cash Register for 20 years and owned Griff and Associates in Hibbing, Minn before retiring.

#### **Brynolf "Bryn" Hammarstrom (Missoula '43)**

Bryn died July 18, 2008, in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania at age 90. He graduated from Wesleyan University in 1939, was drafted into the Civilian Public Service in 1941 and jumped with the CPS-103 group at Missoula 1943-44. After smokejumping he spent two years as a medic in Puerto

Rico and, after being discharged, he went to work at a chemist developing floor coverings. In 1970, after extensive rehabilitation work recovering from a bicycle accident, he spent twenty years of volunteer work for many service organizations in his area.

#### **William Edgar Nafziger (Missoula '43)**

Ed died September 16, 2008, at age 90. He graduated from Seattle Pacific University and was part of the CPS-103 jumpers. Ed jumped all three years during that program. He was at Missoula for two years and jumped out of McCall in 1945.

#### **William P. Weber (MSO-44)**

Bill died November 1, 2008, in Wilton, Wisconsin at age 89. He was farm boy from Wisconsin and joined the CPS program in 1941 jumping at Missoula during the 1944-45 seasons. After the war Bill spent four years volunteering with the American Friends Service Committee in Europe helping with food distribution programs. He went back into farming in 1952 and in 1957 opened a photography business in which he remained until 1981. Bill was active in social and environmental issues and ran for state representative at one time

## **New NSA Life Members since January 2008**

*Thanks for your support!*

<u>#</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Base</u>	<u>Year</u>
204 .....	HOUSTON .....	PAIGE .....	FAIRBANKS .....	1995
205 .....	BETHKE .....	FLOYD .....	MISSOULA .....	1961
206 .....	PIETRAS .....	JOHN .....	MISSOULA .....	1973
207 .....	WARDLE .....	CHRIS .....	ASSOCIATE	
208 .....	LECLAIR .....	JOHN .....	MCCALL .....	1977
209 .....	GRAHAM .....	RICHARD .....	IDAHO CITY	1958
210 .....	THOMAS .....	TOM .....	NORTH CASCADES .....	1962
211 .....	LARKIN .....	JIM .....	PILOT	
212 .....	SMITH .....	KENN .....	IDAHO CITY .....	1955
213 .....	STOVER .....	JAMES "SMOKEY" .....	MCCALL .....	1946
214 .....	WEBB .....	WAYNE .....	MCCALL .....	1946
215 .....	SALYER .....	KEN .....	MCCALL .....	1954
216 .....	STEPHENS .....	DAVE .....	FAIRBANKS .....	1976
217 .....	LAMMERS .....	JOHN "DOC" .....	MISSOULA .....	1971
218 .....	SEGUIN .....	JERE .....	LAGRANDE .....	1977
219 .....	ALBERT .....	TOMMY .....	CAVE JCT. ....	1964
220 .....	BEEKMAN .....	JIM .....	REDMOND .....	1982
221 .....	HILDERBRAND .....	RICH .....	MISSOULA .....	1966
222 .....	COOPER .....	FRED .....	NORTH CASCADES .....	1962



# Touching All Bases



## Alaska Base Report

Mike McMillan (FBX-96)

The Alaska Smokejumpers made the best of an anemic fire season on the home front with an intensive training schedule, the establishment of our maritime program, and a steady diet of lower-48 fire assignments.

Our season head count jumped to 87, including six transfers listed in my last TAB column. Last but not least of our transfers is **Amy Duning** (NIFC-07), joining us in late summer. We also hosted three Boise boosters/trainers and 16 'new Man Ram-Air Parachute' rookies, representing every USFS base but one. Their good attitudes and hard work during three weeks of NMRA training paid off as they put their new skills to the test, flying freely under red, white and blue parachutes to wildfires in Alaska and Lower America. I've never had the pleasure of piloting a round canopy, but it's probably safe to say the NMRA jumpers are forever spoiled.

Collaborating with the Alaska base, Region 1 is taking the lead setting the future course of Ram-Air smokejumping for the USFS. The goal is to have 30 or more Ram-Air smokejumpers operational in R-1 within three years.

Ten of 16 Alaska rookie candidates completed our training in the spring of 2008. They are: **Scott Beninati**, **Ian Dooley**, **Travis Hart**, **Heith Hoerdeman**, **Kristen Hostetler**, **Jameson Kane**, **Brian Kirkman**, **Chris Lord**, **Jason Schroeder**, and **Graham Worley-Hood**. They're a strong bunch. **Hostetler** is the first woman since **La-on-a Dewilde** (FBK-98) to complete Alaska rookie training. **Kristen** was smiling *almost* the entire time.

**Derek Patton** (RAC-00) led the 2008 Alaska rookie-training cadre. His fellow instructors were: **Jim Dibert** (FBX-98), **Randy Foland** (FBX-07), **Chris Swisher** (FBX-03), **Gabe Lydic** (FBX-98), **Jeff Stark** (FBX-03), **Brandon Kobayashi** (FBX-05), and Boise representative **Dray Thompson** (NIFC-05). **Swisher** is the lead rookie-training instructor for 2009, filling the boots of 'General' Patton, who did an excellent job indoctrinating many wide-eyed candidates to the ways of Alaska Smokejumping.

**Jay Wattenbarger** (FBX-92) is our new training section supervisor and **Doug Carroll** (FBX-94) is now assistant crew supervisor. **Robert Yeager** (RDD-92) is our crew supervisor. **Yeager** and wife, **Deborah**, welcomed beautiful baby **Kaitlyn Mae** in July, their first child.

In training and assignment news, an early EMT class with a focus on wilderness response successfully trained nine new EMTs, bringing the current number of Alaska Smokejumper



EMTs to 25. **Chris Wennogle** (FBX-07), **Kurt Borcharding** (GAC-95), **Kris Dudley** (FBX-07), **Ward Scanson** (FBX-07), **Chad Rice** (FBX-07), **Bram Granger** (FBX-07), **Kip Shields** (FBX-04), **Matt Oakleaf** (FBX-05), and **Scott Hampton** (FBX-07) are now practically doctors. They're expensive, but good.

**Ivan 'MDMA' Smith** (MSO-95) was certified as Air Attack Group Supervisor.

**Rob Allen** (FBX-93) detailed to the Kenai as AFMO through the summer.

**Bob Schober** (MSO-95) detailed as a military zone technician here at AFS.

**Joe Don Morton** (RDD-95) attended the Fire Use Training Academy (FUTA) in October.

**Chris Swisher** and **Brandon Kobayashi** served as MCAD (military liaisons), accept-

ing the lofty task of making army grunts nearly fireline sane within weeks.

**Lisa St. Clair** (NIFC-03) and **Porter McQuery** (FBX-06) detailed to Region 3 as Gila Smokejumpers. They left in April, and **Porter** didn't return home until October 15, earning him the 'ghost jumper award.' He spent much of his fire season detailed to the Silver State Hot Shots in Nevada.

In a slow-paced Alaska fire season, highlights include one load of jumpers making four fire jumps in five days, based from McGrath. **Kip Shields** did a "kick-ass job," reported **Robert Yeager**, in leading multiple loads of jumpers to a stunning victory over a swampy fire near Huslia. In August, a load of jumpers saved the beaches of Togiak from burning.

'Highlight reel' accuracy awards for 2008 go to **Isaiah Fischer** (RDD-05) and **Heath Hoerdeman** (FBX-08). On a fire jump into a high country meadow in Idaho, **Fischer** managed a direct hit into a lone "five by five foot mudhole," according to **Wally Humphries** (FBX-90). "I don't know how he did it," reported **Humphries**. "He was stuck up to his reserve in mud. I thought we were going to pull his arms off trying to get him out."

On a project jump in Alaska, **Hoerdeman** collided with a solo brushpile in the middle of a large spot, finding himself tangled in a mess of sticks. "He had to work pretty hard to hit it," chuckled **Tony Pastro** (FBX-77).

In all, we sent 186 jumpers out the door on 31 fires in Alaska (half our average), and 232 jumpers out the door on 96 fires in the Lower 48. Alaska jumpers each averaged 37 days on fires in 2008 with 67 jumpers traveling to bases across Lower America. Our jump king was **Travis Hart** with 11 fire jumps. **Jeff McPhetridge** (MYC-93) and **Mike McMillan** both made their 150<sup>th</sup> fire jumps in 2008.

In his first year as base manager, **Bill Cramer** (NIFC-90) said things got off to a quick start. "In my first five minutes on the job, I had a call to get someone out of jail. Then I had to lend **Marty Meierotto** (FBX-94) my shirt, literally off my back, so he'd be presentable for a training class he was rushing off to," reported Cramer. We wouldn't expect anything less, Bill.

New to the Alaska Smokejumpers is our maritime unit. In 2007 we received a Zodiac inflatable raft from Alaska's Air National Guard Pararescue Unit, complete with outboard motors. In 2008 we received two additional Zodiacs from this elite and generous bunch. **Matt Corley** (FBX-98) is our 'go to' boat guy, now certified to instruct our crew as boat operators. So far 12 jumpers have been licensed to operate our expanding fleet.

**Chris Silks** (FBX-91), **Marty Meierotto**, **Matt Corley**, **Tamar Young** (FBX-07) and the rest of the PC crew collaborated to make our Zodiac package paracargo-ready. Consisting of an A-22 palletized load weighing about 750 pounds, it includes the raft, air pumps, motor, paddles, PFDs, fuel, and a tool kit, delivered from our Casa via its rollertrack. Our ability to deliver an inflatable, motorized raft augments our initial and extended attack capabilities in Alaska, given the number of cabins and allotments requiring protection on remote lakes and rivers, as well as wildfires burning anywhere near the maze of waterways gracing God's country.

In September we had our first opportunity to employ the Zodiac operationally on our last fire jumped in 2008. **Gary Baumgartner** (FBX-88) ordered up the raft to demobilize his 'four-manner' – a small fire burning near the banks of the Kantishna River. After a forty-mile journey down river, the four re-appeared on the mighty Tanana River near Manley Hot Springs. Ward Scanson was the certified boat captain. Chad Rice was grinning and happy to be on dry land again, but Bram Granger disembarked as the token landlubber, wobbly and woozy from his adventure on the high seas. The successful Zodiac paracargo drop and crew demobe operation was an invaluable maiden field test, teaching us more about boat and motor packaging, the Zodiac's capacities, and outboard fuel consumption.

If acquiring three Zodiacs wasn't enough, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service donated two hard-shell riverboats, multiple heavy horsepower outboards (jets and props), and three boat trailers to the Alaska Smokejumper Maritime Unit. By fall, our warehouse at 1512 and surrounding grounds looked like a boat show to the glee of many.

Our paracargo section dropped 119,966 pounds in 36 missions on wildfires, projects, and training drops in 2008. We delivered about 17,000 pounds of supplies to a BLM camp located at the base of the Bering Glacier to support their summer operations. This included 1,000 gallons of helicopter fuel and, more notably, 9,000 pounds of plywood and metal roofing, requiring new and innovative packaging techniques for safe paracargo deployment of building materials.

The paracargo section's Cushman motorized cart has a new look, thanks to the artistic efforts of **Aaron Worley** (FBX-06). The small electric buggy is sporting a colorful painted mural of a Hindu god on its flat front, complete with

gold tassels as window trim.

It's inspiring to be part of a group where talents and unique personalities are embraced, however odd they might appear to the mainstream. The Alaska base remains such a place. A culture of acceptance fosters cohesiveness and trust among our crew. At the end of the workday, it's easy to see why many folks linger at the jumpbase or gather later for barbecues, parties and bonfires.

One such gathering last fall took place outside **John 'Freebird' Fremont's** (FBX-05) Yurt in the hills above Fairbanks. On a dark September night, a dozen jumpers and their girlfriends sat around a small campfire under the black spruce, beating drums, passing plates of moose and caribou meat. Gabe Lydic and his old guitar led the merry band in a rousing song he calls "Caribou Stew" - with lyrics he made up on the spot, celebrating good hunts and good friends.

Through the fall, the bros killed many sheep, a few moose, and a glut of caribou.

The happiest hunting tale to date recounts the adventures of the Cramer brothers. Bill and brother **Jeff Cramer** (FBX-02) were out in Minto Flats late September. Young Jeff climbed a tree and began making cow moose calls. His efforts first produced a wolf, appearing from the brush and quickly disappearing. Jeff soon enticed a "really big" grizzly bear, coming at the pair "looking hungry and hunting with purpose," said Bill, who dropped the beast with his .306 "at 17 paces." Its skull measured 25 inches, and Bill described the bear as "one for the record books. It was Boone and Crockett sized." The pair suspended their moose hunt and hauled the bear carcass back to town. "I think Jeff needs to work on his moose calls," concluded big brother Bill.

The Alaska Smokejumpers invite you to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, coinciding with Alaska's induction to statehood in 1959. The dates are June 5-7, 2009. Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> we'll host an indoor gathering, likely at an area brew pub. Activities will be highlighted by an audio-visual buffet, distinguished by eras/decades, featuring running AV presentations of smokejumper portraits, parachuting and firefighting. We welcome any additions to the AV menu, just bring them along and we'll make room for them on our DVD, VHS and slide projectors. We hope the evening will be light on speeches, but heavy on toasts to the cast of characters that make our history remarkable.

Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> will feature "the largest smokejumper camp ever assembled," predicts **Bill Cramer**. Multiple fire camps under 35-foot paracargo canopies will be set up in a wooded, remote, but easily accessible area of Chena Lakes, just outside town. Through the afternoon, active jumpers will parachute into the area on the hour throughout the day. We hope nobody will want to depart before daybreak as overnight camping is encouraged - flashlights not required.

Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> will be a day of rest and self-directed outings. Our jump base and barracks will be open through the weekend for folks to recoup and make themselves at home. A drive to Chena Hot Springs is just one idea for a scenic and relaxing day trip. Alaska Airlines will reportedly offer a whopping 10% discount, if anybody is impressed, on selected area hotels.

For questions, comments, or to discuss how you can make

this celebration more memorable or affordable, please contact Bill Cramer at (907) 356-5541. To see a photographic representation of the Alaska Smokejumpers, please visit [www.alaskasmokejumpers.com](http://www.alaskasmokejumpers.com). To view the most complete and compelling collection of contemporary smokejumping photographs available, visit [www.spotfireimages.com](http://www.spotfireimages.com).

## Boise Base Report

Quincy Chung (NIFC-03)

Some of you may know that the Boise Smokejumper Base was vacant this year. Our building's walls were taken off and reassembled to withstand earthquakes, as mandated by federal law. Engineers and contractors spent the summer doing earthquake renovation on the building and finished up in October. If you have recently swung into NIFC, you will see that we are beginning our move back into a *safer* building. The loft has been blessed with significantly more windows, and the building has received a new interior face-lift. Hopefully, with the new windows in the loft, sewing production will increase and depression will drop.

Another fire season has come and gone, and, quite frankly, I can't say the fire season ever actually started. This season was the third slowest in a decade - both in fires and jumpers out the door. With a slow fire season usually comes the increase in conduct issues (take a moment to think about what went on in years past during slow times). It was with great happiness the Crew Supervisor's office reported no such issues. Nice job Boise Jumpers. Although we had no issues with conduct, we did have two injuries. **Jeff Hughes** (NIFC-07) broke his femur on his first fire jump of 2008, and "**Iron**" **Al Seiler** (FBX-85) was struck by a widowmaker in California. Both spent some time in the hospital. Al was back on the list in two weeks, and Jeff looks to make a full recovery for next fire season.

This year was the first time in years I can remember Boise didn't send jumpers to our sister base in Alaska. In fact, Alaska jumpers were into the Basin Operations before July 1. They came down in preparation for "Armageddon" and stayed for the rest of the season. The slow season led to many hours in the outstations doing P.T., playing scrabble, and learning to read. When we were overloaded with jumpers, operations in Boise allowed many opportunities for jumpers to take single resource assignments. At one time there were 22 jumpers out on single resource assignments. Thanks to the project fires in California for making that happen.

Similar to last year, there was a tie for Jump King. Congratulations to **Connor Horrigan** (NIFC-08), **Ben Oakleaf** (NIFC-05), and **Scott Cook** (NIFC-07) for each scraping 13 jumps out of a slow season. The rest of the base generally averaged 5-8 jumps, with a handful only managing one or two jumps. It's hard to remember the last time that happened in the Great Basin. On the flip side, **Wally Wasser** (MYC-79) hit yet another milestone by surpassing 750 total jumps this season. Congratulations Wally. **Eric Hipke** (NCSB-90) made his 200<sup>th</sup> fire jump in 2008.

When we left you in the spring, there was a Rookie class continuing their trek towards becoming Great Basin Smokejumpers. Those strong individuals finished their train-

ing and became active on the Boise list. Congratulations to the Graduating Class of 2008: **Rob Benoit**, **Adam Bumgardner**, **Connor Horrigan**, **Eric Plaza**, and **Anthony Salomon**. Another event that took place in the spring was the Forest Service Ram-Air Parachute Training. The Forest Service individuals and BLM trainers that took part in the Interagency Training, report it was a huge success. Congratulations to: **Rocky Ahshapanek** (GAC-90), **Mark Duffey** (WYS-98), **Mike Fritsen** (MSO-90), **Jason Junes** (GAC-04), **David Keller** (RAC-04), **Mike Goicoechea** (MSO-99), **Jarrod Sayer** (MYL-95), **Keith Wolferman** (MSO-91), **Scott Wicklund** (NCSB-91), and **Dan Vanderpool** (GAC-01).

With the welcoming of new individuals, we regret to inform you that the **Eric** (NIFC-01) & **Amy** (NIFC-07) **Duning** will be leaving the Boise Smokejumpers. The husband and wife duo will be heading to Alaska to start a new chapter in their lives. We wish them all the best and hope to see them down in the Lower 48 next summer. Also leaving the Boise organization are "**Iron**" **Al Seiler** and **Kenny "MF" Franz** (LGD-75). I can't begin to report the history on these two individuals. Combined they have 56 years of jumping experience and over 484 fire jumps! Mr. Franz and Mr. Seiler have been mentors to many and have contributed to anything they touched. Both of these individuals have had tremendous impacts on the smokejumping world and will be missed. Kenny and Al, the Boise Smokejumpers thank you for everything that you have done, and we wish you the best in the next chapter in your lives.

As with the ending of any fire season comes the preparation for winter Rx. As in years past, the Rx department has done a great job of establishing work for our base. Potential projects include burning for the South East and the BLM in Dillon and Butte, Montana.

Our base continues to see families grow as more jumpers have children. I was blessed with a second child and first boy, Tanner, this summer (**Quincy & Michelle Chung**). **Brian** (NIFC-04) & **Liz Cresto** delivered their first child, Joseph, in October. Other expecting parents include: **Paul** (FBX-96) & **Trina Lenmark**, **Kurt** (NIFC-03) & **Sierra Atkins**, **Steve** (NIFC-03) & **Jen Stroud**, and **Dan Zach** (RAC-00) and **Michelle Moore** (MSO-99).

With the creation of new life comes the passing on of others. The Boise Smokejumpers would like to take a moment of silence for Arthur Lindstrom. Art piloted the Twin Otter for Boise during the 2004-06 seasons and was a friend to all the smokejumpers that he encountered. Art, you will always fly in our hearts and be remembered and missed. Please visit the attached link to read about the indention Art left throughout his life on this earth: <http://www.groganfuneralhome.com/obituaries/08094ahl.asp>

In closing, as the leaves begin to turn and temperatures cool, Boise would like to wish everybody a safe and fun winter. We will see you when the clouds break and the dust is wiped from the lockers.

## Grangeville Base Report

Mike Blinn (RDD-01)

Gacsuckers had a fairly slow year locally, as the green up

didn't end until about two days ago and lightning was conspicuously absent. Fortunately, the fires that weren't to be had in Idaho were available in California, and, later on, in Oregon and Washington. Many of our jumpers hit the road as single resources early in the season and were rarely glimpsed the rest of the year.

We did open up a new satellite base at the old Cottonwood Air Center while the Grangeville runway was being repaired. We dropped a couple of plane loads out of C.A.C., so there are now not only Gacsuckers but Cacsuckers in Idaho County. Shirts will be available shortly.

**Jason Jones** (GAC-04) and **Dan Vanderpool** (GAC-01) successfully completed Ram-Air parachute training in Alaska and continued jumping square parachutes throughout the season. Both were part of a larger Forest Service group who undertook the training to become better familiarized with Ram-Air parachutes and systems. The purpose is to be able to include Ram-Air parachutes in future canopy evaluations for use by Forest Service smokejumpers.

The slow fire season left people with lots of time to delve into other pursuits.

"Days Off" was formally added to the "18 situations that shout watch out" and were endured with nail biting trepidation from operations. **Robin Embry** (GAC-85) took up mountain biking, breaking her hand and missing the rest of the season. **Kelly Matthews** (GAC-08) also took up biking. She managed to jam a stob into her quadriceps deep enough to require wound drains and multiple layers of stitches. **Randy Nelson** (GAC-87) rekindled his love affair with carpentry. In order to expedite his projects, he purchased a nail gun and ended up tacking his hand to a board with it. Our ATGS, **Tom Bates** (GAC-95), attempted to jump the twin otter on a Honda 90 in order to make a little cash on the side. Anyway, this is the story **Nate Hesse** (RDD-01) told me. He broke his hand bad enough to require pinning.

There was a lot of movement at GAC this year. We hired seven rookies and ended up with four after training: **Justin Freeman**, **Kelly Matthews**, **Shawn Faiella**, and **Zack Stewart**. We traded **Garritt Craig** (GAC-06) and **Ted McClanahan** (MSO-95) to West Yellowstone for two first round draft picks (to be named later) and **Dan Mooney** (WYS-07), a promising prospect out of South Dakota. Redding offered up **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03) to free agency in order to lower their salary cap, so we picked him up as a GS-7 Squadleader. **Cameron Chambers** (NCSB-04) accepted a GS-7 squadleader position - he's a real bruiser with size and speed, so we're looking for him to put it all together this next year. **Nate Hesse** was promoted to assistant loft foreman. We have a lot of confidence in him. We're just hoping he doesn't wilt in the spotlight. **Jared Shuster** (GAC-06) transferred to McCall. **Audrey Banfill** (RAC-06) and **Darby Thompson** (RDD-04) really are trying to touch all bases. They are leaving for Missoula after accepting PSE GS-6 jobs. It's the third base for each in their careers, so given ten years in the business, they may complete the Grand Slam. Good luck, slugers!

During the winter and spring months, **Jodie Baxter** (GAC-07) did a five-month detail to the Schenck Job Corps

Center on the Pisgah NF in North Carolina. His task was to organize and train a hand crew for the Job Corps' Wildland fire trade program. **Jodie** returned this fall to help out as the assistant for another thirty days. **Kelvin Thompson** (GAC-95) worked as **Jodie's** assistant on the same detail for the month of February. **Jodie Stone** (MSO-02) detailed to Grangeville Dispatch this year. Without our "mole" over there, we probably never would've gotten out. **Mike Blinn** (RDD-01) did a 120 day detail as the foreman of the Bitterroot Hotshots and has been trying to get Gacsuckers to walk in a straight line ever since.

That about rounds it out, lads and ladies. Hope all went well for everyone this season and continues through the winter.

## McCall Base Report

**Andre Mascheroni** (MYC-01)

With the long winter of 07/08 coming to an end and snow into June, McCall saw **Rick "Hud" Hudson** (NIFC-1973) retire in April with 609 jumps and 12 kegs paid. Five jumpers were sent to Silver City to eat green chili and stay warm, while snowflakes were flying, and 10 Neds attempted to start rookie training. Only six graduated with congratulations going to: **Amber Peck**, **Jazz Beyuka**, **Matt Castellon**, **Curtis Ryan**, **Marcus Swan**, and **Jeremy Dempsey**.

In June we hosted the 65<sup>th</sup> Smokejumper Reunion, and the beer and "story" telling flowed while Ned Spotters **Todd Haynes** (MYC-02), **Matt Galyardt** (MYC-02), **Jason Class** (MYC-04) and **Jason Miller** (MYC-98) tried to find the jumpspot with streamers. We also welcomed **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98) and **Chris Niccoli** (MYC-95) into foreman positions and said farewell to **Mike Krupski** (MYC-01), **Nick Caple** (MYC-01), **Craig Martin** (MYC-98) and **Kelvin Palm** (MYC-93). These outstanding jumpers accepted positions or details and are moving up in the world, or sideways, at least.

**Jared "Shaq" Sayer** (MYC-95) went to Alaska to jump the square parachute with the new Forest Service Ram-Air training program. Transfers: **Sam Cox** (MSO-07), **Elysia Ewing** (MSO-07), **Jared Schuster** (GAC-06), and **Darcy Walsh** (MSO-06) will be trying to fill those shoes.

The McCall jumpers had a slow season with 103 fire jumps on 23 fires. The McCallys made up for the slow jump season with 540 days on single resource assignments and 391 days on prescribed/ fire use fires. To close out the season with a grand finale, **Steve Mello** (MYC-74) tried to retire again with 451 jumps and 9 kegs paid. We'll see if they let him this time.

Currently we have five folks headed to Boston for the great ALB search, eight to R-8 for Rx and fried food, and four still huddled around a warming fire in Colorado on the last suppression action of the year. Today, the snow flies again while the DC-3 sleeps in Ogden.

## Missoula Base Report

**Rogers Warren** (MSO-00)

The fire season of 2008 was one of the slowest the Northern Rockies has experienced in recent years. Only 17 fires were



jumped from Missoula. However, most Missoula jumpers were able to stay busy by utilizing their wide range of additional skills and provided a good service to our customers.

**Andy Hayes** (MSO-79) began his retirement tour early by leading a group of 20 jumpers to the southwest in April to fill various initial attack and overhead roles. The group spent time scattered around the region, but most notably on the Trigo Fire where their quick thinking and structure protection tactics saved several residences and garnered some publicity in the local paper. This spring we also welcomed the safe return home of **Rob Ellis** (MSO-98) from his 3<sup>rd</sup> tour in Iraq with the USMC.

The Silver City season started in May with **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91) returning to run the operation. Silver City was staffed with 20 jumpers: five from Missoula, three from Grangeville, two from West Yellowstone, five from McCall and, for the first time in recent history, two each from Boise and Fairbanks. The base hosted three aircraft making rotations throughout the season: a McCall Twin Otter, Missoula's DC-3 and Grangeville's Twin Otter. One significant action was the first-ever fire jump on the San Carlos/Ft. Apache Reservation. Sarah reported a season total of 10 fires jumped and a good time had by all.

Region 1 rookie training commenced in Missoula on May 19. The class started with 24 and ended with 16 successfully completing the 5-week training. The Missoula rookie candidates proved to be a hard working bunch and were a welcome addition to the jump list. They are **Ashton Ferruzzi**, **Dave McClay-Schulte**, **Tighe Williamson**, **Ryan Butler**, **Deb Gruneburg**, **Marc Babieracki**, **Jake Mikovitz**, **Ian Quist**, **Travis Parker**, **Alex Williams** and **Shane Philips**.

On the morning of June 21<sup>st</sup>, while many were just getting in from a night of rookie-hosted celebrations, Missoula sent the first of what ended up being a total of 54 boosters to Redding. The activity seemed never ending with steady requests for boosters and miscellaneous overhead. All returned home with stories of good deals, lots of overtime and a few cases of poison oak. A big thanks to Missoula jumper **Ed Lynn** (MSO-95) who detailed to Central California to help organize Type II crews. Ed facilitated a steady stream of Missoula jumpers to fill crew boss assignments.

In other news, Missoula squadleader **Rocky Ahshapanek** (GAC-90), assistant base manager **Mike Fritsen** (MSO-95), foremen **Mike Goicoechea** (MSO-99) and **Keith Wolferman** (MSO-91) successfully completed Ram-Air parachute training in Fairbanks. The four remained in Fairbanks for the Alaska season, returned to the lower 48, spent some time in the Great Basin, then finished off the season at home in Missoula. The Forest Service Ram-Air parachute program was judged as a success and will likely be pursued in 2009. A huge thank you goes out to both the Boise bro's and Alaska bro's for having the commitment to make it happen.

As mentioned earlier, Missoula witnessed the "end of an era" this summer. Operations foreman Andy Hayes retired with much fanfare on August 2. Big Ernie clearly smiled on Andy on July 28. Having worked his way to the top of the jump list, Andy found himself first in the door and gazing out

at a "good deal" just inside the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Content with his final fire jump, Andy spent his last day at the base starting every sentence with, "This is the last time I'll..." One can imagine a day such as this. "This is the last time I'll do roll call... This is the last time I'll take a 9:30 coffee break" etc, etc. Finally, Andy hosted a party at his house on October 4<sup>th</sup>, complete with catered pig roast, plenty of beverages, narrated slide show, and about 150 guests. It was a fitting end to a great career. Andy will be missed, but not forgotten, due to the endless supply of impersonators around the base.

This fall is seeing the usual requests for Missoula jumpers to assist in numerous projects around the region. Thanks to a continued relationship with USDA/APHIS, **Frank Castillo** (MSO-92) has secured climbing work back east due to a new outbreak of the Asian Longhorned Beetle. It looks like a busy winter and spring with jumpers going all directions.

A few other notable events are some recent promotions. Sarah Doehring moved to the Operations Foreman, **Tory Kendrick** (MSO-00) to the Assistant Operations foreman. **Dan Cottrell** (MSO-01), **James Francis** (MSO-88), **Billy Phillips** (MSO-01) and **Rogers Warren** all moved to GS-8 Spotter positions. **Jake Besmer** (MSO-03), **Colby Jackson** (RDD-03) and **Barry Burris** (MSO-00) moved up to GS-7 positions and **Arhi Cornelius** (MSO-06) joined the exodus to the Missoula City Fire Department.

## West Yellowstone Base Report

**Ernie Walker** (RDD-01)

Although it was a year that snails could keep up with, West was fortunate enough to log the first R-1 fire jump on the Custer N.F. on June 19. There was also a week in July when West was hopping, getting boosters from MSO, GAC, and, of course, the BLM detailers. West operated with 30 jumpers this season. A total of seven fires were jumped out of West, with five fires pounded. **Hardy Bloemeke** (MSO-77) hit the landmark of 200 fire jumps for his career. I'll bet that there are a few tales there! Hardy also went on three air attack missions out of West. **Jon Ueland** (MSO-82) is also very close to the 200 fire jump landmark; not bad for an assistant base manager. A total of seven ICT3 assignments were taken by various Yellowstone jumpers in Arizona, Montana and California.

West Yellowstone Air Tanker Base also managed to pump 40,530 gallons of retardant, thanks to **Cole Parker** (MSO-92), tanker base manager, and **Billy Bennett** (WYS-98), assistant manager. Billy also got his base manager signed off. Way to go, Billy!

The fishing derby was fantastic this year with a total of 281 fish; the largest recorded was 24" by our own pilot, **Randy Leypoldt**. Randy also upgraded his boat to a cabin cruiser with two engines. We will all be water skiing and fishing in style in 2009!

**Brian Wilson** (WYS-98) has been busy building his mansion outside of West Yellowstone, and it should be completed sometime next year.

The Ram-Air program was a success with our own **Mark**

**Duffey** (WYS-98) completing the season with six fire jumps in both Alaska and the lower 48. West is looking forward to a bright future in the program and hopes to train more jumpers next year.

West jumpers stayed busy building (Alaska sawmill) lodge-pole benches, picnic tables and bike racks. Twice weekly Pilates and Yoga classes were a hit, thanks to the local girls Shawna, Kelly and Kati.

The tea party was a success with **Joe Rock** (WYS-05) winning the rifle, **Nick Stanzak** (WY-05) winning the fly rod, and local Tom C. winning a bottle of Old Crow and some berry wine. Yum! The turnout was smaller this year, with several guys already out on project work. Guest jumper **Mike Pennacchio** (MSO-00) did manage to win the big flip!

Winter work is under way with jumpers working in Ashland (Custer NF), Lewis and Clark NF, Alaska, and ALB climbing in Massachusetts.

West would like to welcome our new, much needed, office assistant Magen Crowley. Twelve jumpers hit landmark jumps this year. Gee, that's a lot of kegs!

## North Cascades Base Report

**Michael Noe** (NCSB-99)

The 2008 season started early for a handful of folks that helped Region 8 with their prescribed burning and unit preparation. NCSB sent five jumpers to Georgia from February to April.

In Washington, the spring was full of district work and local burning as well as preparing for rookie training. Nine brave souls showed up early one May morning, and seven of the nine successfully completed rookie training. Congratulations to the new smokejumpers, and we are anticipating another rookie class next year.

The fire season was an average one with 30 some fires staffed by jumpers for over 150 jumps. Washington was hit with a few good lightning storms at the end of July and into August. We had booster help for a good portion of the summer, and we appreciate the help from all the bro's.

The last fire jumped out of NCSB was at the end of September, near Cascade Pass above Stehekin. You know it's the end of the season when you wake up to snow on the ground. October has been full of local burning and project work.

Thanks to everybody who helped NCSB have another great season and always remember...KEEP ON JUMPIN!

## Redding Base Report

**Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03)

The smell of smoke mixed with the cool September air that flowed freely into the open door of the Shorts C-23 Sherpa aircraft. Half digested microwave pizzas and traces of last night's whiskey sloshed angrily in our bellies as the aircraft circled the growing inferno below. We were somewhere over the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. "Aw hell," grumbled **Tim Quigley** (RDD-79), as he flicked his half smoked Winston out the open door of the airplane and squinted through the smoke to the jump spot into which he would be navigating his primitive, round-style parachute. The violent wind blew cakes of salt off of his crusty jump suit and into the

wide, fear-filled eyes of the rookies behind him. "Are you ready, Quig? Leg straps tight?" asked **Bob Bente** (RDD-88). "What do you think, lunchmeat?" growled Quig. Bob gave his briefing while we orbited one last time. "On final," said Bob, as we approached the exit point. It was time. Before the words "get ready" could escape Bob's lips, Quig shot him an icy stare and said, "Just slap me, Bob....just slap me." And with that slap, Quig launched himself out of the plane and into the record books as the first Redding jumper to reach 600 jumps. Never a one-milestone-at-a-time kind of guy, Quig also timed it so that this was his 250<sup>th</sup> fire jump. Not too shabby, I say.

And there were other impressive milestones met this summer. **Dan Hernandez** (RDD-85) received his 450-jump pin, and jumped his 200<sup>th</sup> fire. **Josh "Bike Shorts" Mathiesen** (RDD-94) jumped his 125<sup>th</sup> fire, though in sharp contrast to Quig's jump, J-Roy had sweat on his brow and a quivering lower lip, and his exit could best be described as "noodle armed." **Don "Earnhardt Jr." Graham** (RDD-01), **Scott "Jedareah" Smith** (RDD-2002) and **Caleb "I lost my phone" Edwards** (RDD-02) each received their 150 jump pin, and **Brad "I'm still from Ohio" Schuette** (RDD-04) got his 100 jump pin. **Brian Kvisler** (RDD-03), **Brian Pontes** (RDD-03) and **Dylan Reeves** each jumped their 50<sup>th</sup> fires.

A wise man predicted that we would break records here in the R double D this year (see last spring's TAB), and break records we did. It all started back in June, when a massive storm system produced 30 hours of lightning, which in turn started 1139 fires in northern California and humbled the weak, unimpressive storms offered up by other regions. Within a few days, we had over 100 boosters here representing every Forest Service base, as well as several borrowed airplanes and lots of extra cargo. Five weeks later, we were still jumping fires from the same lightning storm and had already put 420 jumpers out the door. All said and done, we put 614 jumpers out the door this summer, shattering our previous record of 523 set back in 1999. Now, as you might expect, this excitement prompted a hushed conversation between a high-level advisor to the President of the United States and W himself, who said, "What's all this hubbub in Redding, Billy?"

"It's Edward, sir."

"Don't jerk me around, Billy, just get me a flight to the R double D. Stat."

And so, we were swarmed by Secret Service and surveillance teams, and visited by the President, Senator Feinstein, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the guy from FEMA. Things were going smoothly until **Donovan Lee** (RDD-03), quote, "went for something" in his pocket and was tazed repeatedly by Secret Service personnel. There was also a briefly awkward moment during which an impromptu handshake between Arnold and **Kyle "Karl" Dornberger** (RDD-01) escalated to an arm wrestling match, then some actual wrestling, and ultimately resulted in the "Governator" bench pressing Kyle 11 times. This drew a round of applause that seemed to ease the tension in the room, although by this point the President had already been whisked away to his waiting helicopter.

This summer saw the birth of a baby, who reportedly weighed 27 pounds, sported medium-length sideburns, and already had a few tattoos. What do you call such a baby, you ask? You call him **Ronan**. **Ronan Wheeler** (RDD-28). So congratulations to Frances and **Derek "I Sweat Sausage Gravy" Wheeler** (RDD-05). The rest of the 2028 class will be born to Kristi Ralston, Shelly Johnson and Carmen Schuette this winter.

No sooner had we breathed a collective sigh of relief that we had finally gotten rid of **Brad "Stick my Face in Dough and Make Gorilla Cookies" Moschetti** (RDD-06) to a Hotshot crew, when suddenly he was back. It seems the BLM does background checks, and "that kind of thing" isn't taken lightly "around these parts." Apparently less picky, the Reno Fire Department picked up **Jesse Rowan** (RDD-06), who can be seen with a freshly waxed chest on the April page of the 2009 firefighter calendar. I'm imagining it will be like Reno 911, but for fire.

Another one to leave us this year was **Shane "Half Beard" Ralston** (RDD-03), who accepted a GS-7 in Grangeville and then proceeded to jump fires out of Redding all summer while collecting per diem. On a similar plan, **Kyle Dornberger** (RDD-01) transferred to WYS and then detailed to Redding for the summer. I think those guys might be on to something.

Once again this summer a group of Alaska bros graced our base with their presence, helping to create a new breed of super-wildlander that we called the CAK jumpers. These CAK suckers were kind enough to leave us a gift before they left, which was opened on the night of our end-of-the-year party. We still have the basketball, but the rest of the gift was gone in a few hours, and could be found mixed with bits of food all over **Don Graham's** (RDD-01) house the next day.

Thanks, guys!

I speculated last fall that after spending months in the southeast, **Brian Pontes** (RDD-03) might have contributed to the baby boom we've been experiencing. Well, Brian has moved back to Kentucky to raise little Bosphorus Pontes, who bears a striking resemblance to Brian, but has no teeth. We're all very proud.

Well, dragon slayers, the fat season is upon us. Weigh-in is months away and it's too cold to go outside. So fire up the PlayStation, whip up another batch of mudslides, and loosen up the drawstring on those sweatpants. It's nap time.

## Redmond Base Report

**James Hansen** (RDD-87)

My fellow Americans: In these uncertain times, I'd like to take this opportunity to address the one issue in the forefront of all of our minds – the status of the Redmond Smokejumpers. Jump-wise it was a more or less average year, with 320 jumps made on 76 fires out of Redmond. These numbers might be a little fuzzy, but in an election year a little numerical elasticity is par for the course. Eleven brave rookies completed training this year. I was appointed rookie training "coordinator," which basically means that I hid behind a clipboard, shuffling papers and murmuring about "going to check out the jumpspot" while the bulk of the

work fell to **Justin Wood** (RAC-01), **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC-01), **Ryan Koch** (RAC-01) and **Aaron Skillings** (RAC-05). **Howard McGuire** (RAC-07) and **Josh Voshall** (RDD-03) also made huge contributions, as did many of the bros. Joining the tribe are: **Erin Springer**, **Nate Robinson**, **Matt Britt**, **Katie Scheer**, **Chris Hinnenkamp**, and detailers **Jesse Haury**, **Jerrod Russell**, **Nolan Brewer**, **Jacob Welsh** and **Casey Kuska**.

Redmond continues to draw transfers, and this year we welcomed **Jeannine Faulkner** (MSO-98), **Peter Hammett** (MSO-06), **Tommy Parker** (NCSB-07), and **Jason Barber** (RAC-05). Also welcomed into the fold are the newborn daughters of Ryan and Heather Koch and Ralph and Anne Marie Sweeney. You know those kids possessed of boundless energy and freakishly preternatural ability that knock your ass down on the ski hill and generally make you feel like an ossified relic? Yeah, well – look out.

How the demands of parenthood will affect Ralph's pursuit of his pilot's license remains to be seen, but he's been making a good run at it just the same. **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92) completed his private ticket this summer, when not preoccupied with negotiating a federal bailout of sub-prime welfare fund loans. Along with pilots **Peter Hammett** and **J9**, Redmond is developing quite the little aero squadron, and there's been talk of buying an airplane, though given **J9's** history of aeronautical mishaps she's going to have to supply her own duct tape and pop rivets.

For a time, in the clubby, convivial atmosphere of the Redmond base, foosball and ping pong tables materialized to the delight of much of the crew (and some under-employed pilots). Yet even I, who viewed the things as a damn nuisance, and whose life goal is to fully earn the title "curmudgeon," was surprised at the swiftness of the demise of these entertainments. After a period of seeming entente, the corridors all aflutter with the ricochet of little plastic balls, the table tennis Taliban issued the fatal fatwah. The ping pong table was last spotted – ignominiously folded like the wings of a dying swan – being wheeled into the hangar, only to appear at last report in the garage of **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91), under what nefarious circumstances one can only guess.

All in all it was a pretty good summer here in RACistan, with a fair number of jumps, lots of single resource deals, and no serious injuries, save poor rookie **Nate Silva**, who busted his wrist shortly after the end of rookie training and remains the only one of his class without a fire jump. The sewing room is abuzz with a few fire cache projects, and soon we'll start filtering out to Region 8, where hopefully a good round of prescribed fire awaits.

Before I close, I'd like to extend my thanks, both personally and on behalf of the bros, to the organizers of this year's Redmond reunion. As much as we might consider it our birthright to bitch about the vagaries of federal employment, we still have a pretty sweet gig, thanks in large part to the effort of our forebears to create and sustain the Redmond program over the decades. Come by anytime, brothers and sisters of old, and see how we're holding up. If you take an ice cream out of the freezer, though, you're still going to have to pay for it. Take care, everybody. Stay safe.