

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JULY 2010

SMOKEJUMPER



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Message from the President



by John Twiss
(Redmond '67)
PRESIDENT

I HOPE YOUR summer is going well and you're staying upwind from the smoke.

Have you ever thought back about why you wanted to become a smokejumper and how it affected your life? I know I have.

I saw my first smokejumpers after hiking seven miles to a fire in Yellowstone National Park. I looked up and saw parachutes everywhere and 16 of the biggest guys I had ever seen hit the ground running. They were like a fireline-building machine and had the fire lined in no time as I watched, spellbound.

They talked and laughed as they worked and even pulled me out of the flames as I got too close to the fire. I saw the "smokejumper" patch on their fire shirts.

I knew right then that I wanted to be a smokejumper. I wanted to join this group of people I admired for their courage, skills and high morale. I wanted to try and do this job that I knew was very difficult, and perhaps beyond my ability and stamina.

As I talked with them on

the fire that day, I knew that I wanted adventure and travel. I wanted to wear that smokejumper patch and jump wings to show the world that I had achieved something that was very special and only a few get to do.

I wanted to be a smokejumper so I could work with the best of the best firefighters. I also thought it would help me meet girls ... and it did!

I applied, was hired and luckily survived rookie training in Redmond, Ore. As I jumped more years, I realized that all of my expectations of the smokejumpers and myself had come true.

The job was very hard, adventurous and addictive. I loved the teamwork and camaraderie. I worked with a great group of high achievers. I felt my self-confidence grow each year, and I felt successful for the first time in my life. I knew that if I could do something this difficult, I was probably capable of surviving in the real world someday!

I was very proud to be a smokejumper.

When I left the smokejumpers after nine years to see if I could actually function in any other occupation, I felt an immediate void as I missed my jumper family. However, over time I realized that I actually had some skills that were marketable.

I knew how to work long, hard hours and show up on time. I could lead people in difficult circumstances. I could laugh when times were tough. I wasn't afraid to try something difficult and frightening. I could work with different personalities in

a team environment and I had learned to perform at a high level.

As I look back on my working career and life in general, I realize that those positive traits that helped

me achieve some success were all developed in the smokejumpers.

I feel very fortunate to have been a smokejumper, and I joined the NSA to give back and

to continue my association with each of you. Life has been good in large part because I was lucky enough to have had the chance to be a smokejumper! 🇺🇸

The Birth of Smokejumping-Notes Of The First Forestry Parachutist

by Giorgy Alexandrovich Makeev (Leningrad 1949)

Part Four

In Part One (April 2009) Makeev told of his efforts to develop a smokejumper program in the Soviet Union in 1934

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

and to convince the Head of Forest Protection that it could be done safely and effectively. In spite of negative reports from his superiors, Makeev was given approval to further develop the smokejumper program in 1936.

In Part Two (July 2009) Makeev designed and developed the necessary equipment for the program and the first fire jumps were made in 1936. An accident during training almost stops the program but Makeev convinces his superiors to let him continue.

In Part Three (October 2009) new Soviet Smokejumper program makes eighty-two fire jumps and shows the effectiveness of their aerial cargo system.

Thanks to Bruce Ford (MSO-75) and Tony Pastro (FBX-77) for their translation of this historic document.

1938-Handling Fire Suppression With Smokejumper Crews

At the end of 1937, The Head of Forest Protection gave the order to further widen the parachute service. During the winter of 1937-38 it was necessary to train smokejumpers, to refine, order, and acquire materials. That winter the management of all aerial forest fire protection was given to me. It was necessary to put together production plans for all the projects, draw up instructions, study questions of supply, and to sign agreements. Little time remained for preparations for actively fighting fires. On my own authority, I allocated one aircraft especially for fire operations

The Head of Forest Protection placed an order for 1500 of the "RLO" backpack pumps for ground-based forest protection. The completion of such a big order was an extremely difficult accomplishment. Because forest aviation still didn't have its own workshop, the



Fireline explosives have been used by Russian Smokejumpers since the late 1940s. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)

orders had to be placed with other workshops and factories that were not concerned with timely delivery of the materials.

This year the cargo parachutes for dropping retardants to fires were re-designed. The blivet for retardant solution was made from a transparent, impregnated, acid-resistant rubber material.

In December I succeeded in getting to Krasnoborsk for jumper training. Part of the students had already arrived, but studies still hadn't started. This year it was necessary not only to train new jumpers, but also to increase the qualifications of the experienced ones and to train the best of them as pilot-observers. Pilots were later trained from these ranks and came to comprise the best cadre, called the "golden cadre" of forest aviation.

She's Too Small To Be a Smokejumper

Returning home one day my wife met me with the words: "Some girl who arrived at the parachute school

is waiting for you here. But I think she is completely unsuitable for jumping."

"But what about our Obrucheva, isn't she an excellent worker?" I answered.

"That's Obrucheva. You can immediately tell that she is a good worker, but this one is small and sickly."

"Tikina finished the school perfectly well and turned out to be the best female jumper in forest aviation. In one day she was able to make two jumps and put out two fires."

On the stairs I meet a small, strongly-built girl in a printed cotton blouse with an open, still childish face, who gave me documents and said that she came from the Totemski forest cooperative. **Manefa Grigorevna Tikina**, the documents proclaimed her.

“Oh dear, she’s so small,” I thought. But **Tikina’s** height didn’t scare me so much as her awkwardness. It was clear that she hardly had the presence or bearing of a gymnast.

It will be a little hard to train her in parachute jumping, I thought while observing the lessons. **Tikina** struggled to climb in or out of the airplane’s cabin. But I was mistaken in my initial opinion of her. **Tikina** finished the school perfectly well and turned out to be the best female jumper in forest aviation. In one day she was able to make two jumps and put out two fires. She was awarded the badge of honored worker in forest production, and any man would envy the calmness and composure she showed as she stood on the wing of an airplane getting ready to jump.

The Goal Is To Put Out Fire Without Any Outside Help

Good instructors arrived at Krasnoborsk from Leningrad. At the Northern Base the best technical force for jumper instruction was mobilized, increasing the qualifications of the experienced ones and retraining the best of these as pilot-observers. In the spirit of shared workload, even my wife was used in teaching general subjects to the jumpers.

Lessons for all three groups went ahead at full speed. Some pored over aerial navigation, others studied parachute packing till late in the evening, and some busied themselves with literacy and arithmetic. The time went by quickly and, after a month and a half, the new jumpers completed and mastered jumping. After two months the pilot-observers had finished training.

Now it was necessary to hurry to Leningrad to undertake the acquisition of supplies for fighting fires. I had to part with the jumpers.

At the party marking the end of studies, I addressed the jumpers with these words:

“Comrade jumpers, last year we mastered jumping to settlements and quickly suppressing forest fires with the participation of the local population. We proved the feasibility of this project, since the area burned by fires was much reduced. But this is only the first half of our assignment. The second half is more difficult. This year we have to master suppressing fires independently with jumpers, without calling on the local population. The difficulty of this work lays both in jumping into the forest far from settlements and in putting out fires with a small jumper crew. This assignment is more important than the first, since it allows us to put out

the very hardest forest fires farthest from settlements, and to free the local collective farm population from spending a lot of time at this work.”

Sadly saying goodbye to the jumpers, I headed back to Leningrad. The summer of 1938 didn’t catch forest aviation unawares. Towards the beginning of the fire season, all the air bases were staffed with jumpers, and supplies were well replenished. Only at the end of July was I able to get out to Krasnoborsk. I was worried by the absence of news about jumpers independently putting out fires. At the station in Kotlas, the new head of the smokejumper service, the wonderful pilot and jumper Dorosev, met me.

“Well, why aren’t you putting out fires independently?” I asked immediately.

“What do you mean? Our jumper crew just put out a fire by themselves.”

I was very heartened. But my joy gradually diminished since it turned out that the crew was not dropped to a fire, but to a settlement, from which the jumpers went with a forester several kilometers to the fire. This was not the independent suppression of a fire far from a settlement, I thought.

As soon as we flew into Krasnoborsk, information came in about large fires in the Kotlas forest trust. They began proposing that I take part in the patrol flight. Since I was not fatigued, it was awkward to turn it down. I had to immediately fly off for a protracted five-hour patrol with a representative of the forest fund and a pilot-observer. The old story of nausea was repeated on the flight. All my innards were upset and when the flight was over, I was completely sick.

The Big Challenge

Immediately on our return, one of the patrol aircraft reported a big fire starting in the Vyski forest cooperative. This fire was thirty-five kilometers from the closest settlement and it was unmanned. It was spreading quickly and had now already reached 60 hectares. It threatened to destroy the timber of a large logging operation. The fire was 80 kilometers from Krasnoborsk.

“So what do you say we should do, Georgy Alexandrovich?” asked the head of the air base.

“We have to drop a jumper crew. If they can’t put it out, then they can hold the fire until workers arrive from the town. We need to drop a single jumper to the settlement to quickly get workers headed to the fire.”

“We can drop them but it’s a long way and difficult. It might be better to pick a better situation for using jumpers for the first time, and catch this fire with conventional methods. And if it spreads, we

won't be to blame."

"We have to drop the crew and do all we can to put this fire out quickly. We're obligated to."

"Then, it's good that you're here. We'll drop them."

The head of the jumper service flew off with the senior pilot-observer on another recon and brought back a sketch of the fire and jump spots. Right next to the fire was a little swamp where it would be possible to throw cargo, and the jumpers would have to be dropped one and a half to two kilometers from the fire. I was torn. I had to participate in the first jump and see the jumpers work, but I felt so bad after the flight that I couldn't jump with them.

Could I refuse this flight and everything still be okay? I could jump now and quickly check the jumper's work, but here I was with such nausea that my stomach was still nearly turned inside out. I reassured myself by assigning as boss **Kopilov**, *the most experienced and dedicated jumper crewleader*. There was nothing to do but dispatch the jumpers alone.

Preparations started. With great sadness I dispatched the crew without me, every moment regretting that I wasn't jumping myself. Now the crews assigned to the flight were briefed on the mission. The pilots and jumpers dressed in full equipment. Personnel parachutes and retardant in bladders with cargo parachutes were brought up to the ramp. Finally the planes began lifting off in succession, tracing curves over the aerodrome and getting in formation. Then they formed a wedge and flew off straight and out of sight. I impatiently awaited the airplanes' return. At last the ground crew began to listen attentively and look into the distance.

"Here come three, and the fourth probably flew to the settlement," one of them said.

From the arriving **Dorosev** I found out that the jump went safely. Now they had to fly back and drop retardant blivets, tools and food. These flights were only finished late in the evening.

I had to get ready for a possible jump myself. I discussed this with the boss of the airbase. Acquainted with my increasing deafness, he requested a medical certificate. Since I didn't have it, I had to go to a doctor. On the next day, after a good night's sleep, I received a certificate from the doctor about my fitness for parachuting, having shown my instructor's certificate. The boss of the aviation base looked at the certificate and said, "You pulled strings."

"But I have no acquaintances here," I answered.

"All the same, you pulled strings," he repeated.

"Okay, if you want to jump, jump, but give this certificate to the office."

That day I made a training jump at the aerodrome,



Jumper in protective suit after landing on timber jump, Central Airbase, 1957. (Courtesy Valery Korotkov)

rested well, and again had a happy outlook on life. The patrol aircraft, returning from a flight, reported that a destroyed tent was visible in the jumpspot. The fire didn't appear to be spreading further but still wasn't out.

Only two jumpers now remained at the aerodrome. They privately complained to me that they weren't assigned to the previous flight.

"If they need another crew flown out, then all three of us will jump together," I reassured them.

Another Fire

Towards evening another situation requiring independent fire suppression arose. The pilot-observer **Shestakov**, *a former jumper*, returned from patrolling and reported that about fifty kilometers from the aerodrome and eighteen kilometers from the nearest settlement, a fire was burning. It was burning heavily in a section of good commercial pine forest and was crowning out. It was decided to deploy the remaining jumper crew. To reinforce the jumpers, a telegram was sent to the neighboring district for dispatching an additional two jumpers by plane.

I wound up flying in **Dorosev's** plane with the

jumper **Yushin**, a former film projectionist. In the other plane was the jumper **Lebedev**, a former village librarian. Neither were forest workers.

"Boy, what an unfortunate crew," I thought. "Both jumpers aren't real woodsmen, and just look, here is a fire heading into the crowns." But it turned out I was doing Yushin and Lebedev a disservice in thinking of them this way.

Before loading, **Dorosev** suggested that I sit in the rear cabin and climb onto the left wing and that **Yushin** sit in the middle cabin and climb out on the right. In my heart I was thankful to **Dorosev** for this since, as I hadn't trained for a long time, jumping from the right side would be harder.

Dorosev's was the lead airplane. **Efimov** and **Lebedev's** plane followed closely. After twenty-five to thirty minutes of flight, we arrived at the fire. About two kilometers away a big column of smoke was visible. After dropping the drift chute, **Dorosev** set the plane on final. The engine throttled down. **Dorosev** raised his hand. **Yushin** and I quickly climbed out on the wings. As soon as I gripped the ripcord handle and turned to **Dorosev**, I saw his hand rise a second time. Not waiting for **Yushin** to jump, I immediately leapt. When the canopy opened I saw the descending **Yushin** to the right of me, closer to the forest. Under my feet were clearly visible isolated trees standing on the edge of the swamp.

"It wouldn't do to end up in one of these," I thought, grabbing at several suspension lines and ready to "slip," if necessary. But slipping wasn't necessary. The trees remained to the side, and I landed softly on a pillow of sphagnum moss. **Yushin** also landed close behind me, but **Lebedev**, jumping a bit later and being smaller and lighter than us, still hadn't landed. **Dorosev** circled us twice and flew off to the aerodrome. Putting the parachutes in the containers and setting out together, we left two chutes on a high dry tussock and took the third with us to use the canopy as a signal.

Oh, how hard it was to walk! You had to lift your legs so high your knees nearly hit your chin. I tried to share with **Yushin** and **Lebedev** carrying the parachute, but soon saw that this was beyond my strength. **Yushin** and **Lebedev** carried the parachute in turn without complaining. Having gone about a kilometer and a half, we started to worry because we hadn't seen the fire in a long time. **Yushin** climbed a tree, said the fire was visible right nearby, and indicated the direction. We turned our steps that way.

Soon the forest started to thin, pure spruce appeared and we descended into a deep ravine with a lovely creek. With what delight we drank the cold, clean water of the sylvan stream. How gratifyingly the

water ran down our parched throats! The fire was visible nearby.

Having filled the "RLO" pumps with water, we had just gotten to the fire when we heard the roar of an engine. We still hadn't picked an opening in the forest for dropping cargo and ran to the closest thin area of the forest. Just then, nearly snagging the treetops, an airplane circled over our heads vainly scanning the forest for us. We ran into a thin spot and quickly laid out two white parallel lines with the canopies of parachutes. Standing, we waited. The clatter of the engine approached again. There between the tops of the spruce and pine was the hurtling plane, and leaning over the side of the cabin the head of the pilot-observer closely examining the forest. The airplane headed right toward the panels. Now the pilot-observer waved his hand and, on the next pass, dropped axes and shovels on cargo chutes.

By now the flaming tongues of the fire were apparent-sometimes rising higher and burning brightly, sometimes crawling low, crackling and rustling.

"Before me stood one of the best jumpers, the former warden, Kulizhki."

On the next pass cargo chutes began raining from the plane with axes and shovels attached with long streamers. When everything was thrown and the airplane flew off, we again took our backpack pumps and went to the fire to slow its spread. Then **Yushin** went to retrieve a chute stuck in a tree. **Lebedev** continued to hold the head of the fire and protect the signal chute from the flames, and I went to scout the fire edge. The left border went down slope to a low-lying area with damp soil in the middle of which ran a stream. On the other side of the fire there turned out to be a winter road. Now the whole view of the fire was clear. We just had to stop the head of the fire, and it wouldn't get away from us on the flanks. In the middle of the fire many trees were already engulfed with fire to the very crowns. Returning from the recon, I saw two more people.

"Hello, **Giorgy Alexandrovich**. Fancy meeting you here," one of them said, walking up. I immediately recognized the tall, slouched person with the familiar coal-black eyes and open smile.

"My dear fellow, so its you, **Kulizhki**."

Before me stood *one of the best jumpers*, the former warden, **Kulizhki**.

"Its me, all right. They called us and as soon as we flew into Krasnoborsk, they immediately sent us right

behind you.”

I was a great friend with **Kulizhski**. The five of us amiably set to work. Under such conditions putting out a fire wasn't hard. This isn't the same as last year when I was alone and exhausted, with despair in my soul, feeling completely helpless, I reflected happily, calmly building fireline and recalling last year's work.

We worked tirelessly for about four hours, first holding back the advancing front of the fire, then when the fire weakened, making a reliable fireline. After the head of the fire was finally stopped, we took a break, got canned goods, bread and candy from the cargo, and snacked and smoked. Then we went on to put in more reliable line. Towards five in the morning the fire was completely contained on all sides and only in the middle did individual trees continue to flare up. Soon we saw people walking toward us. This turned out to be a forester with workers. We spread a guard around the fire, fed the forester and workers bread with canned goods, and started getting ready to hit the road. After 24 hours we returned to Krasnoborsk.

At this time the head of Forest Protection Central Management arrived at the airbase from Moscow to acquaint himself with the detachment. He was shown single and group parachute jumps, and the new supplies. During his stay a patrolling pilot-observer returned and reported that an old fire, on which a certain forest cooperative had worked rather listlessly, had flared up and now covered a large area.

“And has the trust been apprised of this?” asked the manager.

“Every day we report this by telegram to the forest cooperative and to the trust. Each time we also throw a message streamer to the forest cooperative, but nothing ever comes of it. Here, with this fire, several settlements must be mobilized, but the forest cooperative isn't doing it, so the fire is flaring up,” the pilot-observer answered.

“What should be done now?” asked the manager.
“Decisive measures must be taken.”

Decisive Measures Must Be Taken

“Rather than divert people from hay making, let's put out the fire with jumpers. It's understandable that it's hard for the collective farms to allocate people now for firefighting. Right now every person is very valuable to them. I think sending out eight to ten jumpers would handle it,” I opined. The manager seconded me and the order was given to prepare for flight.

“Well, comrades, you are entrusted with an impor-

tant assignment. You will save many valuable collective farm days. Don't return with bad reports, but quickly inform me by telegram of good results,” I said on parting with the jumpers, seeing them off for the jumps. After a day a telegram arrived from Kopilov that the fire was fully contained.

Alas, not waiting for the jumpers' return, I had to rush to go to Leningrad. In Leningrad, I impatiently awaited telegraphic communication every tenth day about the action of the Northern Detachment jumpers. Information about jumper deployments and their suppression of forest fires now began to arrive often. On large fires arising outside the protected region, aircraft of the Northern Airbase transported and dropped tools, retardants, and food cargo to forest guards and workers.

Eight-Hundred-Forty- Nine Jumps in 1938

Now business took off. 1938 gave forest aviation a big step forward in actively fighting forest fires. From this year on, forest aviation went to independently suppressing fires. Enthusiastic jumpers of many districts successfully put out forest fires without calling on local residents.

In 1938, 849 parachute jumps were completed; 172 forest fires were put out by jumpers, many of these independently; 4.4 tons of retardant and other cargo were dropped to forest fires. Verkhne-Toyemskoye operating district came out the winner in the socialist competition of operating districts, attaining the following record figures: 89% of all fire starts were put out in the initial stages with jumper participation, and 25% of fires were put out by jumpers alone without calling on the collective farm population. Losses from forest fires were reduced five-fold. This was a big success. Now the problem of freeing the collective farms from expending much labor and time on firefighting during their peak work periods was successfully resolved. It remained only to widen the use of aviation and the parachute service.

Widening the use of aviation and parachute services in forest management grew quickly. To the end of 1947, 6225 parachute jumps were completed by smokejumpers and 903 forest fires were put out. This despite the fact that there were no jumps during the four years of WWII. Now the quick suppression of forest fires by jumper crews should significantly increase with the introduction of fireline explosives, the probable future use of portable forest motorized pumps, hand pumps and special two-way radios. In sum, this will excellently equip forest aviation's smokejumpers. 🦋



*Alaska Smokejumper Ian Dooley arrives at Upper Yukon Territory
Fire, May 2009 (Photo by Mike McMillan, Alaska Smokejumper)*

Jump Leaders

400+ Jumps as of December 15, 2009. Bold Indicates Still Active

NAME	Rookie Base/Year	Years Jumping	Fire Jumps	Training Jumps	Other Jumps	Total Jumps	Bases Jumped
1. Dale Longanecker	(RAC-74)	35.....	358	500.....	3	861	RAC, NSCB
2. Walt Wasser.....	(MYC-79)	31.....	371	402.....	5	778	MYC, NIFC
3. Mark Corbet	(LGD-74).....	31	305.....	392.....	0	697	LGD, RAC
4. Tim Quigley	(RDD-79)	31.....	262	326.....	35	623	RDD
5. Bill Moody	(NCSB-57).....	33	208.....	205.....	202.....	615	NCSB
6. Tony Pastro	(FBX-77).....	28.....	276	341.....	0	617	FBX
7. Rick Hudson.....	(BOI-73)	35	240.....	367.....	2	609	BOI, MYC
8. Steve Reynaud.....	(NCSB-65).....	30	351.....	250.....	0	601	LGD, NCSB
9. John Button	(NCSB-75).....	35	231.....	363.....	7	601	NCSB
10. Eric Brundige.....	(MYC-77)	33	178.....	407.....	2	587	MYC, FBX
11. Jeff Kinderman.....	(MSO-75)	32	192.....	344.....	43.....	579	MSO
12. Mike Burin.....	(MYC-88)	20	228.....	332.....	5	565	MYC, NIFC
13. Ken Franz.....	(LGD-75).....	31	242.....	322.....	0	564	LGD, FBX, NIFC
14. Al Seiler.....	(FBX-85)	20	252.....	310.....	0	562	FBX, NIFC
15. Greg Anderson	(MSO-68)	37	142.....	416.....	3	561	MSO, WYS
16. William Craig	(MSO-66)	36	240.....	317.....	0	557	MSO, GAC, WYS
17. Dave Hade	(MYC-77)	28.....	239	315.....	0	554	MYC, FBX
18. Bruce Ford	(MSO-75)	31	286.....	247.....	0	533	MSO, FBX
19. Doug Houston.....	(RAC-73)	29	324.....	206.....	1	531	RAC, NCSB
20. Ron Rucker.....	(RAC-76)	29	258.....	271.....	0	529	RAC
21. Charles Flach.....	(MSO-68)	35	263.....	263.....	1	527	MSO, WYS
22. Troop Emonds.....	(CJ-66)	23	259.....	268.....	0	527	CJ, FBX
23. Jon Curd	(FBX-82)	24	210.....	315.....	0	525	FBX, NIFC
24. Hartmut Bloemeke .	(MSO-77)	32.....	206	294.....	11	511	MSO, GAC, WYS
25. Mike Cooper	(MYC-86)	24.....	251	258.....	1	510	MYC
26. Mel Tenneson	(FBX-86).....	24.....	231	276.....	0	507	FBX, NIFC
27. Joe Chandler	(MSO-71)	29	257.....	238.....	11	506	MSO
28. Ron Omont	(RDD-78)	26	232.....	270.....	2	504	RDD
29. Mark Motes	(RDD-86)	24.....	230	273.....	0	503	RDD, NIFC
30. Steve Clairmont	(MSO-62)	23	126.....	371.....	6	503	MSO
31. Larry Fite	(MSO-60)	30	170.....	332.....	0	502	MSO
32. Tony Loughton	(RDD-83)	27.....	235	264.....	0	499	RDD, RAC
33. Bruce Nelson.....	(FBX-81)	23	217.....	275.....	0	492	FBX
34. Jim Cyr	(MSO-63)	30	151.....	337.....	4	492	MSO
35. Frank Clements	(NCSB-88).....	21.....	231	257.....	0	488	NCSB, NIFC
36. Jim Raudenbush	(FBX-82).....	28.....	209	273.....	0	482	FBX, NIFC
37. Daren Belsby	(NCSB-86).....	24.....	186	294.....	2	482	NCSB
38. Steve Nemore.....	(RAC-69)	27	203.....	279.....	0	482	RAC NCSB FBX NIFC
39. Dan Hernandez	(RDD-85)	25.....	208	272.....	1	481	RDD, FBX
40. Neal Davis.....	(MYC-69)	35	135.....	346.....	0	481	MYC
41. William Werhane	(MSO-66)	34	159.....	314.....	4	477	MSO, WYS
42. Rod Dow	(MYC-68)	32	284.....	192.....	0	476	MYC, FBX
43. Barry Koncinsky.....	(MYC-74)	31	173.....	301.....	1	475	MYC
44. Eric Hipke	(NCSB-90).....	19.....	205	267.....	0	472	NCSB, NIFC



45. Jon Ueland.....	(MSO-80)	29.....	202	254.....	14	470	MSO, WYS
46. Tom Carlsen.....	(MSO-70)	29	181.....	281.....	8.....	470	MSO
47. Jeff Robinson	(RDD-86)	24.....	195	272.....	0	467	RDD, RAC
48. Matt Woosley	(NCSB-84).....	26.....	184	281.....	2	467	NCSB
49. Tim Pettit.....	(MYC-75)	27	233.....	234.....	0.....	467.....	MYC, RDD, FBX, NIFC
50. Eric Rajala.....	(MSO-82)	28.....	220	240.....	6	466.....	MSO
51. Pete Pride	(MYC-83)	25	161.....	302.....	1	464.....	MYC
52. Bert Mitman	(RAC-70)	35	175.....	287.....	0	462	RAC, FBX, NIFC
53. Gary Baumgartner ..	(FBX-88).....	21.....	163	297.....	0	460.....	FBX
54. Terry Williamson.....	(MSO-69)	29	172.....	282.....	2	456.....	MSO
55. Thad Duel.....	(MYC-56)	32	206.....	246.....	0	452	MYC
56. Don Sand.....	(RDD-79)	31.....	164	281.....	6	451	RDD
57. David Zuaires.....	(RDD-91)	19.....	162	288.....	0	450	RDD, NIFC, FBX
58. Paul Chamberlin	(MSO-71)	29	227.....	220.....	3	450	MSO
59. Larry Wright	(MSO-71)	29	247.....	202.....	1	450	MSO, GAC
60. Jim Linville	(MSO-69)	32	198.....	226.....	19.....	443	MSO
61. Bill Cramer	(NIFC-90).....	20.....	195	247.....	0	442	BOI, FBX
62. Dennis McCoy.....	(MYC-83)	26.....	175	262.....	1	438.....	MYC
63. Larry Nelsen.....	(MSO-56)	30	155.....	279.....	0	434	MSO, WYS
64. John Dube	(RAC-70)	25	230.....	203.....	0	433	RAC, FBX
65. Mike Brick	(RAC-76)	26	198.....	235.....	0	433	RAC, GAC
66. Chris Palmer	(RDD-75)	22	208.....	223.....	0	431.....	RDD, MYC, FBX, NIFC
67. Robin Embry	(GAC-85).....	24.....	180	239.....	10	429	GAC
68. Jerry Zumalt	(RDD-70)	28	150.....	263.....	11	424	RDD, BOI, GAC
69. Wayne Williams	(MSO-77)	33.....	193	221.....	5	419	MSO
70. Steve Mello.....	(MYC-74)	33	217.....	199.....	3	419	MYC
71. Mike Patten	(MSO-87)	21.....	187	225.....	3	415	MSO
72. Gary Dunning.....	(FBX-66)	25	175.....	238.....	0	413	FBX, CJ, WYS
73. Dalen Romero.....	(FBX-83)	25	171.....	241.....	0	412	FBX
74. Todd Onken.....	(MSO-82)	23	137.....	251.....	24.....	412	MSO
75. Shannon Orr.....	(RDD-92)	18.....	204	207.....	0	411	RDD, NIFC
76. Dave Custer	(MSO-70)	30	172.....	236.....	1	409	MSO, FBX
77. Dennis Geving	(MYC-89)	21.....	157	250.....	0	407	MYC, NIFC
78. Tom Koyama.....	(CJ-74)	25	190.....	214.....	0	404	CJ, BOI, MYC
79. Billy Thomas.....	(MSO-75)	25	185.....	215.....	4	404	MSO
80. Fred Pavlovic.....	(MYC-89)	21.....	153	248.....	2	403	MYC
81. Jon Foland.....	(MSO-68)	20	152.....	250.....	0	402.....	MSO, WYS, LGD, GAC
82. Jerry Ogawa	(MYC-67)	34	184.....	217.....	0	401	MYC, BOI
83. Bill Bickers.....	(NCSB-72).....	21	193.....	208.....	0	401	NCSB, LGD, RAC

Missing or incomplete information

George Steele.....	NCSB-72	24.....	409+ ..	NCSB, LGD, FBX, NIFC
Jim Olson.....	(FBX-78).....	24.....	400+	FBX, NIFC

Any adds/corrections contact: Tim Quigley (530-226-2885) or tquigley@fs.fed.us

Summary of Ram-Air Progress in 2009

by Tim Wallace (Missoula '06)

The 2009 fire season was the second of recent collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to train Forest Service jumpers on ram-air canopies and the BLM's drogue deployment system.

There have been many questions posed by current and former jumpers about the collaboration, and the intent of this article is to shed some light on the nuts and bolts of the agreement between Region 1 and the BLM and how things have gone so far.

One of the many questions jumpers had this season revolved around whether or not Region 1 was converting to square parachutes. The straight answer is no, we're not converting. Our plan is to get operational experience on different parachute systems for a large pool of people from all levels of our organization.

The intent is to develop experience in-house so we can evaluate different canopies and deployment systems in the future.

Many of you might be curious about what direction the program is headed and what the goals of it are. I'd like to cover a short history of the former Inter-Agency

Smokejumper Deployment System (ISDS) program before we go much further to explain some of the reasons we've chosen to go the way we have.

ISDS was a process that began in 2002 to identify and evaluate a universal canopy and deployment system that both agencies could use to streamline inter-agency smokejumper operations. One parachute, one deployment system for every base.

The canopy had to be an off-the-shelf, non-developmental, direct-bag, static-line-deployed parachute. The search process for such a canopy indicated that a universal system would most likely be a ram-air canopy. Only two vendors, Jump Shack and Complete Parachute Solutions (CPS), offered viable canopies for smokejumper operations, but neither could meet the strict performance specifications without making major "developmental" modifications to the canopies.

One canopy, the CPS Classic Pro, eventually came forth and was evaluated completely by the BLM using its drogue deployment system. Restricted to a static-line deployment system and with no baseline experience on ram-airs, USFS personnel found themselves unable to properly evaluate any ram-air canopies. A consensus couldn't be reached, and the program stalled when the budget of \$4 million was gone.

The expensive lesson of ISDS was that Forest Service evaluators could not effectively assess a system or a canopy when they had little or no experience with either.

ISDS was part of Forest Service doctrine to reassess the next generation of parachute technology every 10 years. The most recent product of that process is the FS-14, whose development was started in 1996.

While the FS-14 has undergone several modifications, the 10-year cycle of evaluating a next-generation parachute is three years overdue. While the FS-14 has proven very capable in many capacities, it is generally agreed that we've maxed out the performance of round parachute technology.

The Forest Service Ram-Air program is an extension of the 10-year, next-generation parachute assessment based upon the hard lessons learned from the ISDS program. The mindset is that in order for Forest Service employees to objectively evaluate different deployment systems and canopies, they first need a solid base of experience on other systems.

The most logical approach was to tap into the wealth of knowledge and experience readily available



Successful Timber Jump 1939 Program (NSA Files)

from Alaska and Boise. It took the BLM 30 years to learn how to evaluate and employ a different system. Its success was hard-won and its experience can help guide the USFS through a smoother process. For this reason, it makes the best sense to train USFS evaluators by putting them through the BLM's New Man Ram-Air (NMRA) training program.

Ten USFS employees were selected from nearly every Forest Service base in 2008 to train in Alaska in the NMRA program. The 2008 pilot program was successful and brought forth a three-year agreement in 2009 for the BLM to train 10-12 individuals from Region 1 each season until the agreement concludes in 2012.

The intent is to develop experience in-house so we can evaluate different canopies and deployment systems in the future.

The goal of the three-year agreement is to have 30 USFS employees actively jumping ram-air canopies in Region 1. It's expected that at the end of 2012, a good foundation of experience will be present in a self-sustained USFS Ram-Air program to allow the Forest Service to evaluate different canopies and deployment systems on its own.

In order to get to this goal, the initial Region 1 NMRA candidates came from the overhead ranks. The second class was more stratified throughout the organization with varying levels of experience and responsibilities. Candidates were chosen based on their ability to learn and train, and on their competency at parachute handling, loft skills, and availability for the time commitment NMRA training requires.

The 2010 class will lean toward deepening the field of experience, while still using the same selection criteria. Next year's NMRA training is scheduled to be held in Missoula with the BLM providing oversight for both USFS and BLM trainers. Missoula's facilities, classrooms and units will be used for the first week, with training jumps the following weeks in Missoula, Nine-Mile, and at the Condon Work Center. The training will use the same format and standards as the previous classes to maintain continuity and quality of training.

I'll be the first to say that NMRA training is intense, the learning curve is steep with a short time frame, and both seasons have had individuals who were not able to complete the training. In the event jumpers cannot finish, they still retain their status as smokejumpers and return to their respective bases to refresh on all aspects of the round system. While

they're not able to continue jumping ram-air, their experience with the training is valuable and is added to the final report which will be completed in 2012.

While Region 1 is currently the only USFS region engaged in the training, other regions have expressed interest and have the option to enter into an agreement that best suits their interests and objectives. There is no overriding plan or intent to force other Forest Service bases into a ram-air program. We figure they know what's best for their base and don't pretend otherwise.

Funding has been an issue but has all come from hard dollars out of our permanent budget by making cuts in other areas. None of those areas includes jobs, and we currently have more permanent positions than we've had at any time in the last 20 years. The money set aside for ram-air training has gone into salaries, training costs, and purchasing enough mains and reserves to presently support all of our ram-air jumpers.

The majority of mains we have in our inventory are DC-7s with MT-1S reserves. We also have a few CR360s which, while they have a lot of good press going around now, will be jumped at a later date. The BLM is currently running the CR360 through its evaluation process. Only when we know that evaluation process and have the breadth and depth of experience to back it up will we venture that way. Crawl, walk, and then run.

As of November 2009, the program has shown promise and the progress made in the last two seasons lends itself to further gains for the program. With more operational jumpers being added to the mix, the scope of experience is broadening. Each NMRA graduate leaves training with 25 evaluated training jumps and has averaged 6-9 fire jumps per season.

The past two seasons have seen USFS ram-air jumpers operational in Alaska, the Great Basin, Region 6, Region 5 and Region 1. Fires have been two-manners in the Kootenai and Shasta-Trinity up to evolving Type 1 project fires in Alaska, and everything in between.

It's not so much that square canopies are jumping Forest Service country, as the BLM has been doing that for some time. What is different is that jumpers with experience in Forest Service country on round parachutes are jumping the same country they used to on square parachutes, putting their experience in context.

Is this really a better canopy? Am I safer with a different system? Does the benefit outweigh the risk? These are the questions that can only be answered by the individual through experience. The more people we have asking these types of questions and giving their input based on experience, the stronger an organization we have to continue doing what is easily the best job any of us has ever had. 🍄

A Smokejumper Exits Vietnam/ Notes on Babylift

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

Fred Donner (MSO-59), a frequent contributor to this magazine, sent me the following as a personal note. My wife, KG, and I had the opportunity to visit with Fred and Beverly in Minnesota last summer enroute to the Boundary Waters Trail Project.

I was impressed with this example of the diversity of careers, backgrounds and talents among smokejumpers and will reprint, with permission, the following from the October, November, December 2009 issue of the "Air America Log." (Ed.)

The April, May, June 2009 issue of the *Air America Log* noted a proposed Operation Babylift reunion in Saigon in 2010. After my last year as an Air Force lieutenant in Vietnam commanding the aerial port squadron detachment at Bien Hoa, I was the Air America traffic manager at Danang 1965-67.

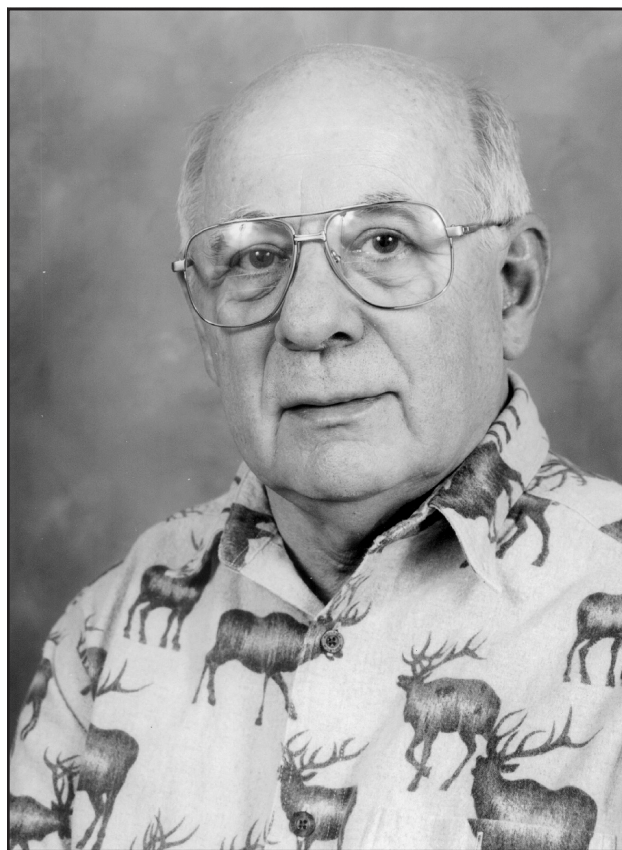
In 1971 I returned to Vietnam as a business manager for the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). I was at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport April 4, 1975, helping SIL Australian and New Zealand members find an Australian/New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) evacuation aircraft. At that time I saw a U.S. Air Force C-5A Galaxy being loaded in a facade of secrecy and later take-off.

After finding an ANZAC aircraft, I came upon a European TV crew on their knees, beating the ground with their fists in a frenzy of frustration and rage while pointing at a huge column of smoke on the horizon, all crying and screaming that it was the "baby plane" and could I take them there in my Volkswagen van? I told them it was impossible. Saigon was abuzz with rumors that evening that the C-5A had been shot down on take-off and everyone killed, all false.

Two days later my wife and I and our adopted Vietnamese daughter left Saigon as volunteer escorts on another Babylift flight. We considered it the least we could do after seven years in Vietnam.

I follow the C-5A story closely because my wife and I lost a family friend on it. A lot of erroneous information has been published on Babylift in general and the C-5A crash in particular, and I do what I can to correct the same.

Anyone interested in Babylift history should read *The War Cradle* by Shirley Peck-Barnes. According to the



Fred Donner (NSA file)

book, there were 342 souls on board. Of 114 adults, 94 died and 20 survived. Of 228 children, 78 died and 150 lived to make it to the United States. The C-5A tragedy was only one part of Operation Babylift, albeit the most dramatic. This book covers the history and politics of Babylift, an event in which orphans were used (and unintentionally sacrificed) for a political agenda, one debated ever since.

For a personal look at the C-5A crash, see *Leave No Man Behind* by Garnett Bell and George Veith, an excellent book on the history of the POW-MIA search in SE Asia. MSgt. Bell lost his wife and son in the C-5A crash and tells the story in the book. Looters amputated an arm and fingers of his dead wife for the jewelry on them.

I asked Fred for clarification on "the history and politics of Babylift" and he furnished the following information. He

added that the U.S. Air Force C-5A was the largest transport in the world at the time. He stated his reason for the original item was to call attention to the two books cited that he thinks will be of interest to Air America alumni since Air America helicopters rescued survivors of the C-5A crash and also because of Air America alumni interest in the POW-MIA controversies.

Operation Babylift was part of the mad scramble of the U.S. getting out of Vietnam in March and April 1975. There were a number of foreign-run orphanages in Vietnam operating on shoestring budgets that could never afford airfare for their orphans destined for U.S. adoption. Even though, for years, several U.S. airlines had offered free seats and a return trip to persons who would escort small numbers of orphans to the U.S., the U.S. ambassador sold President Ford on the idea of

an enlarged operation. The increase in numbers would use empty returning military aircraft to remove the orphans. Supposedly this would generate public opinion in the U.S. for continued support of the faltering South Vietnamese government. It could also surreptitiously remove U.S. citizens as escorts, hopefully avoiding notice that the U.S. was bailing out. On the first big weekend of the operation, a C-5A took off and was nearing the coast when it had a mechanical malfunction and depressurized, causing chaos inside. Attempting to return to Tan Son Nhut Airport, it crashed short and bounced across the Saigon River. Liberals and conservatives have debated the debacle of exiting Vietnam ever since, and Operation Babylift has furnished enough evidence for anyone to argue anything they want to. But this C-5A was technically not the first and definitely not the last Babylift flight, only the most famous and dramatic.

Snowed in at Warren

by Earl Dodds (McCall '49)

Flying in a light airplane has been a major means of transportation in the Idaho back country for many years. Many isolated ranches and properties where people live have airstrips on their properties, or nearby. In addition, the Forest Service and Idaho's Department of Aeronautics have built and maintain a number of public airfields.

In the Big Creek Ranger District, there are four such airfields: Chamberlain, Big Creek, Cold Meadows and Soldier Bar. They're open to the public and receive sporadic use during summer and fall by hunters, fishermen and wilderness travelers. The Postal Service runs an Air Star Route on a regular basis to provide mail service to those people who live in the backcountry. Consequently, airplanes are a big part of the backcountry scene.

I did a lot of flying as a passenger during my time as ranger and had a number of unforgettable experiences, but there is one particular flight I remember.

During my early years as a ranger, the Payette National Forest contracted with Johnson Flying Service for all the flying associated with the smokejumper program and to serve the Forest Service stations in the backcountry. Johnson also had postal service contracts for the backcountry mail route and with the Soil Conservation Service to conduct snow surveys at several locations.

They also did a lot of flying for the outfitters, the

recreating public and for the isolated ranches. Johnson Flying Service was highly regarded in aviation circles as pioneers and experts in backcountry, mountain flying in Idaho.

Dave Schas (MYC-48) was the second pilot for the Johnson Flying Service operation based in McCall. He worked under the direction of longtime Idaho bush pilot Bob Fogg. Dave and I were about the same age and had been smokejumpers at about the same time.

I spent a lot of time flying with Dave on official Forest Service business and as a companion on some of his other flights. He took me along on the mail run several times and to do the snow measurements on the Deadwood Summit survey course. I accompanied him on one of his personal fishing trips in the lower South Fork. But the flight I remember most vividly was to retrieve an outfitter's base camp gear at Cold Meadows in the dead of winter.

Cold Meadows is well named. The coldest temperature ever recorded in Idaho was minus-60 degrees Fahrenheit at Island Park Dam. I've always felt that Island Park held the record only because there were people there to read the thermometer, while no one is at Cold Meadows in the winter. Its 4,500-foot airstrip is exceptionally long for that area. However, as the elevation is 7,000 feet, most pilots are particularly cautious when it comes to landing there.

Cold Meadows is also about as removed from civi-



Earl Dodds sweeping snow off Travelair (Courtesy E. Dodds)

lization as it is possible to find in the Idaho backcountry. If you go any deeper than this, you start coming out the other side.

There was a period of time in the 1950s and 60s that the wildlife biologists in the Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game were convinced that the population of elk was out of balance with the habitat, particularly the big-game winter range. They felt there was plenty of summer and fall elk range, but that the amount of area available to the animals in the winter and early spring – due largely to the heavy snowfall in central Idaho – was only a fraction of the summer and fall range.

So, the biologists wanted to harvest more elk in order to reduce the size of the herd and to bring the number of animals in line with the capacity of the winter range to sustain a healthy population. One way to bring this about was to lengthen the hunting season. For several years, then, the big-game hunting season went from about mid-September to the first week in December in most of the backcountry.

The hunting outfitters, who operated out of base camps in the river canyons, thought this was a great opportunity to handle more guests and make more money. However, those outfitters who operated in the high country, like Larry Garner at Cold Meadows, were contending with winter conditions during late-season hunts.

The Forest Service required the outfitters to completely dismantle their camps when finished and clean up the areas. This was asking a lot when there were several feet of snow on the ground and the bottom seemed to have fallen out of the thermometer.

Garner dismantled his base camp, made a big pile of everything on the edge of the airfield and made

arrangements with Johnson Flying Service to retrieve it. That's where Dave and I became part of this little adventure. Dave needed someone to help him and I volunteered.

The weather was so unsettled that year, and Johnson was so busy flying hunters out of the back country, that it was sometime in January before we flew to Cold Meadows in the old Travelair N9038 to do this task.

Fogg realized the need to change the landing gear on the Travelair from wheels to skis for a landing at Cold Meadows. However, he didn't want to do this until all of the flying that required wheels to retrieve hunters from the lower elevation

airstrips along the Middle Fork had been completed.

Now, old Travelair N9038, built in 1929, was an institution in itself among the Idaho bush pilots. It was a real workhorse of an airplane, sort of like a flying truck, and was used to fly all sorts of things in and out of the marginal backcountry airfields – from smokejumpers to elk the hunters had bagged. I always thought it looked like a big brother to the "Spirit of St. Louis," Charles Lindbergh's airplane.

We flew back to Cold Meadows without incident. From the air the central Idaho backcountry was dressed for winter – all white with the exception of a few south-facing slopes. Cold Meadows looked completely deserted and lifeless. Of course, everything was buried under several feet of snow, but there were no tracks of game animals; all the game had left for lower elevations.

Dave was hesitant about setting the airplane down in all that cold powder. He made a pass at the strip and as soon as the skis touched the snow, sending a long plume of powder behind the airplane, he would gun the engine, packing down a strip of snow and then taking off and making a go-around to repeat the process.

After about four passes, he decided that the snow was packed to the extent that the airplane would stay on the surface and not sink into the deep snow, so we landed and taxied up to the pile of gear and shut down the engine. I often thought about this situation in later years when using snowmobiles. A common occurrence with snowmobiles is to drive the machine off a packed trail into deep, unpacked snow and get it stuck, so that a great deal of back-breaking effort is required to get it back onto a packed surface. If that had happened with the Travelair, we would have been in a world of hurt.

I soon found out why Dave wanted some company

on this flight. We were faced with a rounded mound of gear – maybe seven or eight feet high by itself – covered with four feet of snow. About everything that had been in use in the base camp for the three months of the hunting season was in the pile – tents, stoves, cots, sleeping pads, kitchen equipment, lanterns, gas cans, pack and riding saddles, and a lot of loose odds and ends. Some of the canvas items had gotten wet and were frozen, about as pliable as plywood.

We had brought a snow shovel with us, and we shoveled snow and wrestled with this stuff for several hours. By the time we got it all loaded, the cargo space in the airplane was so overloaded that we couldn't use the regular door to enter. Dave crawled through the window on the pilot's side and instructed me to follow him as he taxied to the far north end of the airstrip.

He said something to the effect that there was no need for me to crawl through the window as he had a job for me on the north end of the airstrip. So away we went, Dave taxiing the plane up the airfield and me following along, hoping that he would not take off without me.

When we both got to the north end of the runway, Dave leaned out of the open window and handed me a length of rope with a carabineer tied at the end of it. He instructed me to snap the carabineer into the fitting on the strut that is normally used to tie the airplane down at night. Then I was to hold onto the end of the rope and act as a pivot while he gave the airplane full power and attempted to turn 180 degrees to be in proper position for takeoff.

The Cold Meadows airstrip is quite long, but also quite narrow. Turning a loaded, ski-equipped airplane around in loose, powder snow is no easy feat. I wrapped the end of the rope around my wrists, got a firm grip on it and braced myself as best I could while Dave ran the engine up to full power and applied full rudder for a turn to the left. But he just overpowered me, jerking me off my feet and dragging me full-length, facedown in a blizzard of snow as I was in the slipstream of the plane's engine. Dave then cut down on the power, leaned out the window and hollered something to the effect that I had to get a better brace and hold tight as we only had one chance to swing the airplane around. So I did the best I could, and the plane turned a little each time before I was overpowered.

There is a shallow bank on the northwest end of the airfield. After several attempts, we had swung the Travelair around partway and the right ski rode up on the bank, causing the left wing to drop and dip a few inches into the powder snow. But around she came, off the bank, and lined up for takeoff.

I crawled through the window on the right side, and off we went. As soon as we got up to cruising altitude, we could see a storm coming our way out to the west. Dave asked, "Where do you want to spend the next few days until this storm blows over?"

I replied, "Not at Cold Meadows! Let's at least see if we can make it to Chamberlain." Chamberlain is about 25 miles west of Cold Meadows and about 1,200 feet lower in elevation and has a nice Forest Service cabin.

When we got over Chamberlain, it still didn't look too bad to the west, so we kept going. Soon we were over the South Fork of the Salmon, then Warren Summit and the practically abandoned old mining town of Warren. Then we just barely sneaked through Steamboat Summit.

Now all we had to do was to make it over Secesh Summit, and we would be in the North Fork of the Payette River drainage and all downhill to Payette Lake and McCall. But as the airplane got closer to Secesh Summit, things started to get bad. Here we were in a narrow canyon that was getting narrower and covered with a dense layer of clouds. We were flying just under most of the storm clouds, and ahead the two sides of the canyon seemed to dissolve into clouds, also.

There was no hole to sneak through. I was getting antsy about this situation but afraid to tell Dave how to fly when suddenly he put the airplane into a sharp turn to the left and we reversed direction. Back over Steamboat Summit we went and landed at Warren just as it started to snow big time.

Warren is an old gold mining town that was founded during the Civil War. The town has been virtually abandoned for many years. The airfield is just below 6,000 feet, and receives a limited amount of use even in the winter as the town is on the aerial mail route. Warren is about 40 miles northeast of McCall and completely snowbound for much of the winter.

Just out of the airplane, we were welcomed by Jack Pickell, the postmaster and unofficial mayor of the town of Warren – population 7, just before our landing, and now 9 for the next three days.

Like a good horseman who takes care of his mount before tending to his personal needs, Dave was immediately concerned about the plane's welfare. We quickly tied her down good and tight, both wings and the tail. Then he borrowed an empty five-gallon can from Jack and drained all the oil from the engine so we could take it inside and keep it warm next to Jack's wood-burning stove.

Next, Dave was concerned about snow accumulating on the wings and possibly forming ice, which can make it impossible to take off and fly. So we got

into the cargo inside the plane and unloaded all the loose canvas we could find – tents, ground cloths, and mantis (square pieces of heavy canvas used for packing all sorts of loads onto pack animals) and did our best to cover the wings.

Dave was worried that the skis might freeze to the snow under them so that they would no longer slide. He wanted to somehow jack them up off the snow to prevent this from happening. I thought that this was not such a good idea as, being a skier, I'd had experience with downhill skis that had been left outside overnight. If conditions were just right, moisture can condense out of the air, forming frost – much like occasionally happens with a car windshield.

So, I suggested that we bury the skis under 18 inches or so of powder snow to keep them away from the night air; that's what we did.

We spent the next three days in the hospitality of Jack's home waiting for the storm to pass and trying to find something interesting to do. He loaned us snowshoes and we hiked to several of the old mine adits. Then we visited each of the people wintering in Warren: three couples and one old bachelor. It didn't take long for Dave to find out that the bachelor was making home brew, and we made lengthy pit stops at his place for each of the three days that we were grounded.

Generally we were very bored as Warren in the

month of January is not the liveliest place. If I ever had any illusion that there is something romantic about being snowbound and wintering in the backcountry, this experience cured me of that notion.

On the morning of the fourth day, we awoke to a bright, clear, sunshiny day with the temperature around zero. So we removed the canvas from the wings of the Travelair, borrowed a kitchen broom from Jack, and I went to work sweeping snow off all the horizontal surfaces. Dave put the warm oil back in the engine and shoveled snow off the skis so that they were no longer buried.

The skis were in good shape for a takeoff, and my suggestion that we bury them in snow was probably my biggest contribution to this entire escapade.

Dave started up the engine and let it warm up for an extra long time. We said good-bye to Jack and the town of Warren, took off with no difficulty, and in no time we were back in McCall.

This was maybe not the greatest wilderness adventure of my time in the back country – maybe not a true wilderness experience at all in the minds of some of the purists – but it certainly was a great wilderness aviation adventure that I will never forget. 🦋

Earl Dodds retired as District Ranger on the Big Creek Ranger District in the Payette National Forest.

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

IN MY LAST column I alluded to cheating and other problems in

Incident Command System training outside the federal resource agencies. Shortly after I turned in that column, I became aware that a teaching assistant in an ICS 300 course in my jurisdiction handed out the answers to the final exam to the students from his agency. There were about 24 students in the class, including responders from state and local agencies, the military, and volunteers.

The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, showed a lot of weaknesses in interoperability and incident command. After Sept. 11, President Bush ordered that NIMS (National Incident Management

System) would be implemented across the United States. The U.S. Government tied NIMS training to funding, and the government spent hundreds of millions of dollars in equipping and upgrading equipment for first responders.

One of the few requirements was that agencies had to become NIMS/ICS compliant to receive funding. The problem is, the government never put any checks and balances into the requirements and left the entire system open to widespread cheating and incompetence.

One of the worst examples

is the Charleston (S.C.) Fire Department. That department responded to a report of a rubbish fire outside a large furniture store June 18, 2007. The fire extended into the building and conditions deteriorated rapidly, resulting in the deaths of nine firefighters. You can read one investigative report at www.wusa9.com/news/gallery/SofaSuperStoreReportFinal.pdf. The NIOSH report is located at www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face200718.html.

What is important about this fire is the fact that every chief of-ficer's personnel file is filled with ICS training certificates. Yet, ICS was never implemented on the fire.

According to an article in the Charleston Post and Courier newspaper, "The city's own experts concluded the Fire Department's command system was virtually nonexistent at the blaze, leaving firefighters without supervision or clear instructions and leaving commanders with no idea of who was where and what they were doing.

"No one was monitoring who was in the building, how long they were inside or how much air they had left in their tanks. Key tasks were left undone and standby rescue teams were never established in the rush to funnel as many people inside as possible, according to the consultants' report."

Past and present members of the Charleston Fire Department may face criminal negligence charges. While this was a structure fire fought by municipal fire departments, there are many lessons to be learned, and I encourage everyone to study the reports on this fire.

I usually read most of the NIOSH firefighter fatality reports, and one of the underly-

ing themes of most firefighter fatalities – regardless of the size of the fire department – seems to be breakdowns and failures in the Incident Command System.

In another example, during the Freeway Fire in Orange County, Calif., in 2008, off-duty Orange County Fire Authority firefighters removed a reserve engine from a fire station and self-dispatched to the fire. The engine was lost for more than 12 hours.

A number of ICS principles were violated by that stunt; I never have heard what disciplinary action was taken against the firefighters.

On the upside, after the attack on New York City, city officials initially resisted the deployment of Forest Service Type I teams. The city relented, and within three days, Forest Service Type I Incident Management Teams were operating in Manhattan, Brooklyn and New Jersey.

As a result of the terror attacks, the New York City Fire Department has created its own volunteer Type I Incident Management Team.

Several years ago, in this column I mentioned that the FDNY had sent battalion and deputy chiefs to Montana to

observe project fires. Those fire deployments were the beginnings of New York City embracing ICS and forming their own Type I team. The FDNY Incident Management Team was requested to deploy to New Orleans in September 2005.

At the time, the team was a Type II Team specializing in urban terrorism. The story of the FDNY's experience in New Orleans can be found at: www.fireengineering.com/index/articles/display/255259/articles/fire-engineering/volume-159/issue-5/features/fdny-incident-management-team-supports-new-orleans-fire-department.html.

Although I am having problems getting documentation, it is my understanding that the New York Type I team has deployed to a forest fire in the West since Katrina.

Despite rampant cheating and ethics violations in ICS training, there is good news. Some departments, agencies and volunteers are working hard at being good at using ICS.

My comments should in no way be construed as criticism of the federal resource agencies, all of which lead the way in ICS.

I hope to see many of you in Redding. 🌲

Please Tell Us When You Change Your Address

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

Terminal Velocity

by Ken Wilder (McCall '57)

It was one of those warm, humid days, which is normal for the Deep South in the summertime. I left my home in Camden, Ala., headed for Lumberton, Miss., for an appointment with the Golden Parachute Club. I had been planning this for several weeks and the day had arrived.

I had some apprehensions about this little excursion, considering I hadn't jumped in 45 years. I didn't tell anyone what I was going to do, just in case a yellow streak appeared on my backside. I didn't want to be laughed out of the local watering hole in case things went south.

In any event, I arrived at the airport in Lumberton at my scheduled time of 8 a.m. I checked in and they told me to hang around until they could find their instructors. There were approximately 20 people waiting for things to get started.

It wasn't long before an instructor showed up. There were three of us "NEDS" who had to take several hours of training.

I noticed that people were getting into the plane – a Twin Otter – with only a harness and no chute. I thought that was somewhat strange. Well, now you know I didn't know too much about tandem jumping.

The instructor asked me if I wanted to go tandem. I said, "I didn't come down here for that." He asked me if I had ever jumped before, and I told him I'd made about 80 low-level jumps. Since I was getting proud of myself after that, he informed me that he'd made several thousand. I didn't bring up that subject again.

The three "NEDS" started the training with a mockup of the plane door. The instructor showed us how to exit the plane, and then we had to do the same. This went on for about a half-hour, until he was sure we could exit the plane.

Next came the stabilizing effect once you leave the door. We were on some rack that you lie on with arms and feet out. Well, this lasted about a half-hour and that was enough of that.

Then came the altimeter that's strapped to the wrist, showing the altitude. We all figured we could master that. We then went into the loft, which had several chutes strung out on a concrete floor. A packer was stuffing them into a backpack. **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46), our loft foreman at McCall, would have

never approved of this. I remembered how well the chutes were packed at McCall.

We were also shown how to cut away the main chute in case of malfunction and how to deploy the reserve. I was hoping that wouldn't apply to me.

The last thing we had was a video of malfunctions. Well, they could've waited all day before showing us that as it made me wonder what I was doing at this place.

After the video we had about a half-hour before the instructor said, "Get your chutes on." Well, you stepped into the chute, as it didn't have any leg straps with a snap. Again I was feeling pretty proud of myself and ready to go. When the instructor asked who wanted to go first, I said I would.

As we were getting into the plane, I asked at what altitude we were going to jump. The instructor said 16,000 feet. Wow!

We got up to the jump altitude rather quickly. I was first in the door with my instructors – one on each side. The instructor said when the light turns green, out we go. He also informed me that there was a cloud cover at 6,000 feet and if we opened in the cloud cover, to make a right turn. I think I said, "Okay."

As we waited for the light to turn green, I thought: "I don't have to do this, dummy!" The light turned and out we went.

The first thing I noticed was the wind shaking the hell out of me. It didn't take long to reach 7,000 feet, and I signaled to the instructor that I was going to open the chute.

I reached back to pull out the drag chute and I couldn't find it. I restabilized myself, and at about that time I went through the cloud cover, falling like a rock. Again I reached for the drag chute, and again I couldn't find it. I felt like I was falling at terminal velocity, the wind about ready to rip off my jump suit.

I reached back the third time and found the drag chute higher on the pack. I pulled it out and flipped it up, and in a few seconds the chute opened. It was a rectangular chute and appeared to be okay, but I'd never seen such a thing above my head.

I made a couple of turns, just to check the chute's turning ability; it turned okay. I saw the airport below and turned into the wind slightly to judge my speed. I then made another turn and went down over the

center of the runway, made a 180-degree turn over the loft, and made a very soft landing.

The chute had a lot of forward speed. You have to flare the chute at about 15 feet. You pull down on the turning risers and it reduces the forward speed. Stand-up landing – how about that?

I gathered up my chute and walked to the loft and that ended that. I was somewhat relieved that I was on the ground and okay. This was something I'd wanted

to do for some time; no, it wasn't a death wish. I knew that time was running out for this type of thing, as it had been 50 years – almost to the day – since I'd made my first jump at McCall in 1957.

There is an old saying that the Lord takes care of "fools and drunks." Well, there's nothing like an old fool. I look back on this experience and think of what could have happened. I believe I will leave this to a younger generation. 🙏



Ken Wilder (center) with instructors (Courtesy K. Wilder)

PROFILE FROM THE PAST

Danny On (Cave Junction '46)

Originally printed in the July 1996 issue of "The Static Line."

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)

Dick Courson (CJ-46) sent us several pictures of Danny On. They both trained at Nine Mile, west of Missoula, in 1946, and then returned to Cave Junction. (After 1946 the Cave Junction jumpers were trained at their own location.)

Danny was a former paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division and saw action in Europe during WWII. He was severely wounded at the Battle of the Bulge at Bastogne, Belgium, during December 1944. Dick believes he had an 80% disability rating from the Veterans Administration.

He had a deep fascination for German culture and took German while working on a Forestry degree at Montana State University (now known as the University of Montana). Dick mentioned that he would practice his German on them. There were several times when visitors at the Cave Junction base were startled when this six-foot jumper of Chinese descent would suddenly materialize from behind a tree, singing songs in German.

While at Cave Junction, Danny made his own bow and arrows. Dick said he was quite a craftsman and excelled in photography. He was very much a gentleman with a great sense of humor.

Forestry officials tried to discourage Danny from continuing on as a smokejumper, since he had both a bachelor's and master's degree in Forestry. Around 1950 he left Cave Junction.



Danny On (Courtesy Dick Courson)

We talked to Gordon George, a former Forestry official, who

retired at Pendleton after serving as a timber staff official in Ore-

gon. He was one of Danny's best friends through the years. Both of them were on the Deschutes N.F. out of Bend, Oregon, from 1955-56. Danny went on to the Supervisor's office in Bend, then transferred to the Kootenai N.F. at Libby, Montana. His next change of duty station put him at the Region 1 office in Missoula, and then to Whitefish, Montana. During those years, Danny took thousands of pictures and had them made into slides. January 21, 1979, was a very cold, windy, snowy day at the Big Mountain Ski Resort out of Whitefish. Danny had been skiing with friends that morning and after lunch went back up the mountain by himself. Few skiers ventured out because of the extreme cold. Several saw his car in the parking lot late that afternoon but thought nothing of it. However, when it was seen in the same spot the following morning, people did take note and word was soon spread that Danny was missing.

A search was launched. Cal Tassinari, a retired Wilderness Ranger in the Flathead N.F., now living at Whitefish, was one of the searchers. He told us that each had a radio and a call came in from one of the men, stating that Danny had been found. Cal skied to the location and said one of Danny's arms was sticking up out of the snow, trapped behind him, with a ski pole still attached to his wrist. He had either hit a tree or caught an edge and then plunged down into a "tree well" – a hole under the snow near the base of a tree. It is not known if he was unconscious when going into the hole, but Cal is certain that he suffocated. (The snow in a "tree well" is not compacted and the more one struggles to get out,

the deeper one usually goes.) Danny had only one arm free and his skis were near the top of the hole. Cal did not know if Danny had an "iron mask" as a result of his entrapment – where vapor from one's mouth freezes around the head, cutting off a supply of air. A rescue helicopter flew Danny off the mountain, and he was later taken home to Red Bluff, California, for burial.

In August 1981, a trail was dedicated to him on the mountain. It has two segments – one 3.8 miles in length and the other 5.7 miles. Many visitors at Big Mountain walk it during the summer months. One can either walk up and ride down on a ski lift, or ride up and walk down. There is a scrapbook at the summit house restaurant dedicated to him also.

We talked to nine different individuals about Danny's fate. They said he was a "powder hound" and liked to get off in snow away from the regular trails and ski "out of bounds." He didn't know any fear when skiing and would plunge straight down a course. Danny died doing one of the things he liked to do best.

We also talked to Danny's sister-in-law, Norma, at Sacramento, California. (She was married to Danny's brother, Jon, who passed away four years ago.) She reiterated stories about Danny. She mentioned that his brothers Joe, John and Louis live in the general Sacramento area, as does a sister, Mary Jane. The family has a furniture store in Sacramento and at one time the On family operated a restaurant, years ago, at Red Bluff. She said the family donated Danny's thousands of pictures to the USFS, the National Historical Society, Glacier National Park and the University of Montana.

A number of libraries have copies of the book *Along the Trail, a Photographic Essay of Glacier National Park and the Northern Rocky Mountains*. It was published in 1979. The photos are by Danny and the text was written by David Sumner. It is dedicated to Danny, and the foreword reads, in part: "Danny On, University of Montana forestry graduate and Flathead Forest silviculturist, perished January 21, 1979, in a skiing accident... He was fifty-four years old, a native of Red Bluff, California (South of Redding about thirty miles near I-5), an Eagle Scout and World War II paratrooper... Danny On was known for his generosity, intelligence, respect for people and love of the outdoors... Among us are a few men and women who become legends even as they are friends and neighbors. Danny was such a man." The foreword also states: "This unassuming forester became Montana's best-known wildlife photographer."

At the U of M library there is a set of 21 colored slides that Danny produced on Rocky Mountain Wildlife. He also took pictures for the book, *Going to the Sun: The Story of the Highway Across Glacier National Park*. He was co-author of the book *Plants of Waterton-Glacier National Parks*.

This quiet, unassuming man, who almost died in the service of his county at Bastogne, went on to touch and help shape the lives of many, many people. At the memorial service held January 27, 1979, Dr. Les Pengelly, wildlife biologist at the U of M, stated: "All assembled here have had their lives shaped by Danny. He probably would have been embarrassed by all this attention. Instead, he would have suggested, 'Let's head for the hills.'" 🌲



Practice Jump



Misery Whip Training



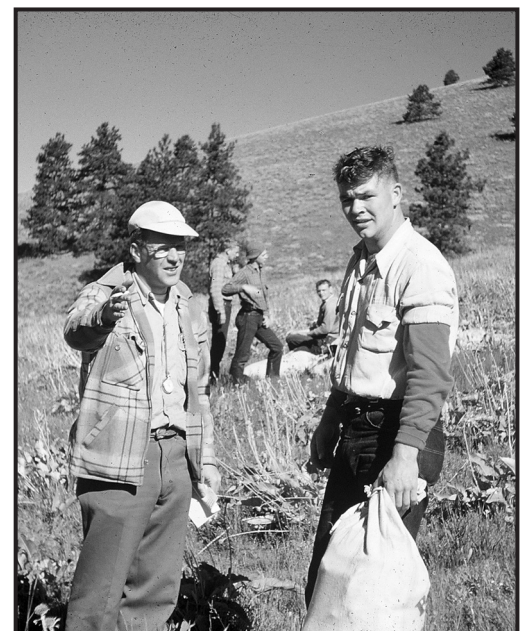
Building Jump Tower



Rookies



*L-R: Wally Dobbins (MSO-47), Jack Nott (MSO-47),
Grover Tyler (MSO-47), Hugh Fowler (MSO-47)*



Al Hammond (MSO-46)



Torture Rack

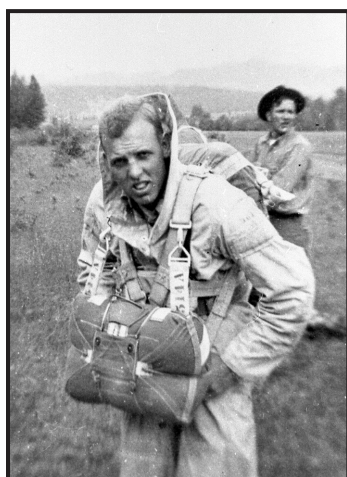


Mann Gulch DC-3

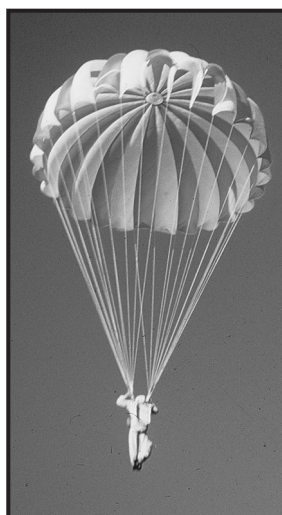


Nine Mile Camp 1947

Photo's Courtesy Wally Dobbins (MSO-47) Collection



Wally Dobbins (MSO-47)



28-Foot Candy Stripe



Al Hammond (MSO-46)



Allen Roll Training



Ready to Jump

Layout & Design by Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

Loren Fessler: The Original Smokejumper/CIA Connection?

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

In November 2009, NSA web master Jon Robinson forwarded me an email from Denis Murrell. Denis is an artist/teacher born in Australia and currently living in Macau (a special administrative region in China). Denis had checked our web site obits and saw that we only had a year of death for former smokejumper **Loren W. Fessler** (MSO-46) and that he could add some more information about Loren. Since the date of death was 2002, I asked Denis to send it on planning to do a short obit.

The information that Denis sent described a man who, after smokejumping, went on to Harvard, graduated with a degree in Chinese Language and went on to become one of *Time* magazine's chief China watchers. Getting information from China at that time was extremely difficult and *Time*, and I'm guessing other government agencies, used people like Loren to find out what was going on behind Mao's borders.

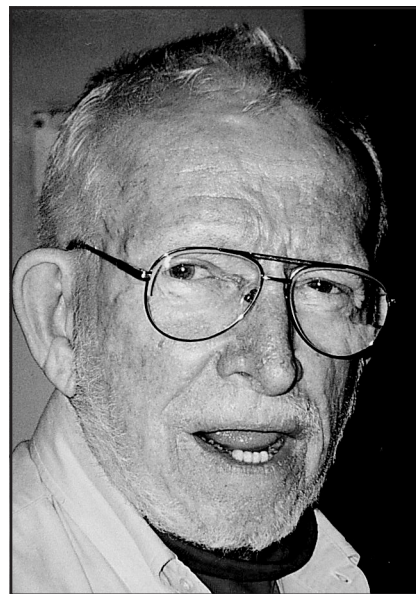
I came across a brief bit of information on the Special Forces Roll of Honour-OSS site: Loren W. Fessler, Sergeant, OSS China, Bronze Star.

From Denis' email: "He also wrote the *Time-Life* publication 'China,' one of a series of books *Time-Life* published about various countries of the world. Loren then went on to a number of other occupations, including some time with Voice of America. After a stint at a university in Anhui Province as a lecturer, Loren bought an apartment in Macau in 1988. His final post was as editor of the *Macau Herald* newspaper. In 1999, Loren underwent hip replacement surgery and did not recover well. This, combined with the quick onset of dementia, caused his friends in Macau to request his family relocate him to the U.S. He was placed in nursing care near Buffalo, NY, and died in early 2002. Loren is buried in his hometown of Thompson Falls, Montana."

Until this time all I knew about Loren Fessler is that he jumped at Missoula in 1946/47. There were 124 rookies in Missoula in 1946 and the majority of them were WWII vets. I asked Denis if Loren was a WWII vet, which

Denis confirmed. He said that Loren had worked with Chiang Kai-shek's forces.

Denis then referred me to Michael Perkins, a Canadian currently living in Montreal. Michael studied Chinese at McGill University and has spent an extensive amount of time in Macao and China.



Loren Fessler 1998 (Courtesy Denis Murrell)

He was a very good friend of Loren and proved to be an additional source of information.

In a Goggle search of Loren Fessler, I came across a brief bit of information on the "Special Forces Roll of Honour-OSS" site: Loren W. Fessler, Sergeant, OSS China, Bronze Star. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was a U.S. intelligence agency formed during WWII and was the predecessor of the CIA.

I mentioned this to Michael and Denis and asked if Loren had ever said anything about his WWII experiences.

From Michael's email: "I seem to recall that Loren said he was in the OSS and sent into occupied France. He mentioned, with no pride or detail, that as a soldier he had killed men in both China and Europe. The memory that Loren repeated most often regarding his time as a soldier was an incident when he parachuted in Kaiping, Guangdong (S. China), and one of his comrades landed in a pond, became entangled in his parachute and drowned. Loren emphasized how young the dead man was. I always found it curious that this incident, among all the others, seemed to stick with him."

Further research by Michael Perkins gave me additional web sites that helped fill in some of the blanks. I still don't know how a young man (20-22) from Thomp-

son Falls, Montana, got into the OSS, but have found out some of what he did once he got there.

The base unit of the OSS was the Operational Group (OG). The OG concept was based on the belief that small groups trained in commando tactics could be parachuted behind enemy lines to work with local resistance groups. The basic OG section consisted of two officers and 13 enlisted men. Loren Fessler was a member of the French OG Emily and the Chinese OG Apple.

Operational Group Emily

Originally scheduled on "D-Day," weather forced postponement of the drop until June 9, 1944. The OG group took off from Algeria and successfully parachuted into France at 0245 on the morning of the 10th. Their mission was to destroy by-pass rail lines and harass enemy movements on two highways. After linking up with French partisans (Maquis), they destroyed a bridge on the night of June 12-13. American arms were dropped and the OG instructed and trained the Maquis in their use. In a coordinated operation with the Maquis, the OG rendered 28 locomotives inoperable. Three downed airmen joined the group during this time.

In July the OG and Maquis permanently closed an important rail line by dropping a 100-meter steel bridge. They repeated this success on another important rail bridge in August. After three months behind enemy lines, the group arrived at Grenoble in southeastern France on September 13, 1944.

Chinese Operational Group

The Chinese OG was established in approximately January 1945. Its mission was to establish and train twenty Chinese Commando units using a nucleus of experienced OSS personnel from OGs in France and England. Each of these Chinese Commando units would have 154 Chinese and 19 American personnel. Only seven Commando units were trained before the end of the war.

Commando Unit Apple

Loren Fessler was among the American OSS members attached to the 1st Commandos. On July 12, 1945, this group was dropped in the vicinity of Kai Ping. Fourteen C-47s were used in the first airborne operation in the history of the Chinese Army. The narrative of this operation

comes in bits and pieces. The flight was over five hours long, cold and rough. Many were airsick. The narrative tells of a jumper landing in a pond and drowning. This immediately stood out as a recollection that Loren related to Michael Perkins on several occasions many years later.

The mission was to interdict road and river traffic, but the unit was immediately discovered and pursued by a force of 500 Japanese. The Commandos attacked fortified Japanese positions August 5 in which they killed 12 of the enemy. The Commandos lost three killed and had seven wounded. On August 13, they placed motor and gunfire on Japanese positions at Takhing. When the war ended the Commandos were moved to Canton and the last Americans were withdrawn on September 28, 1945. It was probable that Loren's experiences with this operation started his life-long love for and interest in China.

Another week into the development of this story, Michael Perkins forwarded an August 1967 interview Loren gave to the *Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, WA). At the time Loren was on Cougar Peak Lookout (Lolo N.E.) with his son Freeman. Loren was on summer break from Harvard where he was working on his master's degree specializing in East Asian affairs. He had resigned his position with *Time* magazine before returning to the U.S.

In the interview Loren made some very accurate predictions as to the evolution of China after Mao's death and the increasing importance of that country in world affairs. Loren mentioned that he spoke four languages (English, Chinese, Russian and French) and, in his career he only knew three journalists who speak Chinese and none who could converse in Vietnamese. He felt that if our reporters knew the native languages, "they wouldn't be led around by the nose like we have in Vietnam."

From this article we know that Loren returned to China in 1948 having developed an interest in the people and country from his OSS experiences.

*I once asked him outright if he
had worked for the CIA. His
reply was coy.*

After getting his first degree from Harvard in 1950, he wanted to return to China but was unable to do so due to Americans being "persona non grata" during the Korean War.

As the OSS evolved into the CIA, did Loren continue his work with the agency? Michael Perkins said, "Loren and I rarely discussed the CIA. However, I once asked him outright if he had worked for the CIA. His reply was coy. He said, 'At that time (60s), if you were a journalist watching China, you were bound to have contact with the CIA. It might be formal or informal.'"



OSS Operational Group Emily (France 1944). Loren Fessler sixth from left in back. (Courtesy Histoire Vivante web site)

Later when Loren's daughter, Patricia, visited Macau, she asked Michael if he worked for the CIA. "This indicates to me that Loren must have discussed his wartime and post-war activities with her," said Michael.

One of the most revealing pieces on the importance of Loren's knowledge of the people and language of China was "A Letter From The Publisher, Dec. 1, 1961" on the inside of that issue of *Time* magazine. In it the publisher related that covering China was the most difficult problem in journalism due to the limited access provided by the communist government. He then says that the burden falls on the Hong Kong bureau and correspondents Jerry Schecter and Loren Fessler, who preside "over a tedious and essential operation akin to wartime intelligence gathering." Both men interviewed businessmen, diplomats, and refugees to get information, this in addition to daily reading the newspapers and listening to Peking radio. The publisher then continues, "Much of *Time's* own Hong Kong study of China is the work of Loren Fessler, 38, who comes from Montana and Harvard, spent years in China before the Communists took over, and is fluent in Mandarin. His filing cabinets are full of data on Chinese politicians and economic statistics."

He savored the written word and the many books and magazines that lined his walls evidenced that.

Parts of Loren's obit by Denis Murrell give a picture of Loren in the 1990s: "My first contact with Loren was in 1991 when he was already a sprightly 67 year-old. He was in the process of buying an apartment in Macau. It wasn't long before he had his newly-built, split-level, three-bedroom apartment on the fifth floor of a building

down near the Inner Harbor. I can imagine Loren now, sitting on his balcony, cold beer in one hand, a good book in the other, and his camera close at hand.

"Loren much wasn't into technology. At one time he bought an electric typewriter. One week later, he was back at his old manual model and trying to sell his new acquisition. He savored the written word and the many books and magazines that lined his walls evidenced that.

"When he went for the fateful operation on his hip, I collected his mail and there were letters from friends all over the world. His stay in the hospital, although it was the beginning of a downhill spiral, was enjoyable for him because he was able to lap up the attention of the nurses who absolutely doted on him. Loren loved women and women loved him.

"Sunday morning lunches at Loren's apartment became a regular thing. His Filipina maid would prepare lunch, Loren would have cold beers in the fridge, and a gang of eight to ten friends would gather around the table to eat, drink, chat and tell jokes. Even after Loren's condition began to worsen after the operation, those lunches continued. Those final lunches were sad occasions because I think we all knew that Loren would not be with us much longer. By that time, Loren was more or less confined to his apartment, and it became clear that his staying in Macau was becoming untenable."

As stated by Denis, Loren's hip replacement surgery in 1998 did not go well and greatly affected his health. Michael Perkins remembered that he was concerned about Loren's health during an eight-month stay in Macao. Loren was losing his independence and friends wanted to move him from his 5th floor apartment.

Michael recounts, "He had a balcony looking directly down on Macao's inner harbor and China on the other shore, about 500m in the distance. Loren would sit for hours on his balcony looking through his binoculars at the Chinese soldiers with their machine guns. He had an eye for detail. As economic change overtook China, high-rise building projects began in the village on the other shore. When a building site went still, Loren would surmise how credit had tightened in mainland China. He was always on the go, heading off to a dinner or a hot date. Loren, pre-hip surgery, was a walking advertisement of how life can still be interesting and fun for a man in his late sixties."

I sent out some letters to NSA members from the Missoula rookie class of 1946. The CPS-103 jumpers had left the program at the end of the war and the 1946 class was extremely large—124 rookie jumpers. Chances that anyone would remember Loren Fessler after so many years were slim. Even so, I received two replies:

(1) **Bob Dusenbury** (MSO-46): "I remember Fessler who rookied the same year I did. One incident I remem-

ber that got a laugh was during a practice jump. Fessler jumped first in a stick of eight men and was the last person to land. I was there and thought he hit an updraft.”

(2) **John “Jack” Dunne** (MSO-46): “I knew Loren and spent time with him as a jumper. There is a man in Whitefish (MT) who taught at the university level in Taiwan and when I asked if he knew Loren, he was shocked. He said that Loren had spent a lot of time with him and his family in Taiwan.”

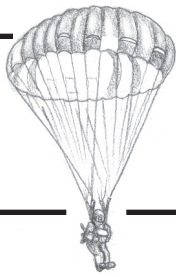
Well now, you see how a simple email to add a few lines to an obit turned into a story about another remarkable person who was one of us smokejumpers for a short stop on his way to a career that could be put into a novel. Google Loren Fessler if you want to get a feel for the number of articles and books he authored. I’m thankful that somehow Denis Murrell found our website and

wanted to add to the obit of a friend. Now we know about a young man from Montana who was a member of the OSS, had advanced degrees from Harvard, was fluent in four languages, was so published that it takes many Google pages to cover his writings, lived outside the United States for most of his life, and was probably one of the most knowledgeable sources of “China information” available to our government and the outside world during the “Bamboo Curtain” years.

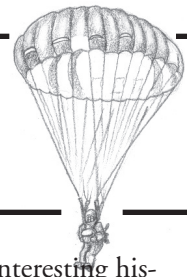
Was Loren Fessler the “Original CIA/Smokejumper Connection?” In my opinion, no. One of the OSS members contacted for this article said that after the war they were all told to go their separate ways and not contact each other again. Loren Fessler is just another of the unique individuals that we have seen come through our history trying to get another fire jump before the season ends. 🌲



Alaska smokejumper Evan Karp at Homer wildfire, May 2009. (Courtesy Mike McMillan)



Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to Alex Theios (CJ-65), Roy Belli (CJ-51), Jack Helle (MYC-54), Wayne Schrunk (CJ-57), Gary Johnson (RDD-69), who just became our latest Life Members.

Jack Helle (MYC-54) was recently honored by Oregon State University by being added to the "Registry of Distinguished Graduates." Jack earned his Ph.D. at the university doing research on Pacific salmon. Jack's 35-year career with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Juneau, Alaska, helped lay the foundation for current salmon fisheries management.

Marty Meierotto (FBX-94) is featured on the cover of the most recent *Field & Stream* magazine. From the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*: "Field & Stream magazine calls Marty Meierotto of Two Rivers 'Alaska's Toughest Trapper,' 'The Ultimate Survivor' putting him on the cover of its annual survival issue. Meierotto says it's a 'cool' honor, but he's a little worried too: 'It's flattering, but at the same time it's a little embarrassing,' Meierotto told the *News-Miner*. 'I'm going to get a lot of ribbing over it.' But Randy Zarnke, president of the Alaska Trappers Association, confirms that Meierotto, 49, is a trapper in the fabled Bush-Alaska mold—complete with bushy beard and ratty outerwear. 'He's doing what he loves and is willing to extend the extra effort to do it,' Zarnke said. 'The physical challenge of trapping in a remote location like that is something he looks forward to and is something most other people would run away from.'"

During the lengthy process of putting together the April issue of *Smokejumper*, I re-established contact with Louise Zanotto, granddaughter of Frank Derry (MSO-40). Louise is now living in Roseburg, Oregon, and has graciously loaned the Frank Derry Photo Collection to NSA Historian Larry Longley (NCSB-72). Larry does a great job for the NSA in recording the oral and photographic history of smokejumping. He is able to restore old photos and then scan them at a very high resolution. The historic photos are returned to the owner along with a disk that contains those restored photos.



Louise related some interesting history about her grandmother, Alta Marie Derry: "When my grandmother and Frank divorced (in late 30s or early 40s), she was left with the Derry Parachute Service in Inglewood, California. My mother was also a parachute rigger during WWII. Alta ran the business for over 25 years. Grandma taught male riggers but never employed one. It was an all-girl operation. Frank had started the business at Mines Field, now known as LA International Airport. Alta's contracts were with Douglas, Hughes, North American and others. She was involved in the X-15 project, and the Air Force consulted with her many times at 29 Palms. I was extremely close to my grandmother until the day she died. My sister and I spent our childhood days at the parachute loft. We were always given little jobs to do, like unpacking the chutes for airing."

Louise also related the fact that Alta Marie Derry and her female riggers had 38 members of the "Caterpillar Club" (where parachutes were used to save the life of a pilot). Many of these were the jet test pilots, including the first supersonic bailout by Chuck Yeager in 1955.

Recently, Bob McKean (MSO-67) was honored by the Mayor of Portland (OR) and the Portland Schools Foundation for his seven years of service as the Superintendent of Centennial School District and 37 years as an educator. During the presentation, the CEO of the Portland Schools Foundation said, "Bob's experience jumping out of planes to forest fires prepared him well for his job as superintendent." Bob retired in June 2010.

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "Wow! Chuck, what an outstanding (April 2010) issue! I just started reading it - the photographs are great. I know some of the articles were printed prior, but what a touch to consolidate them in this issue. I took my copy to the fire class I teach at the high school and showed the boys what our founding fathers looked like, page 36, with Francis Lufkin and crew. Man, talk about stout."

Bill Heacox (MSO-63): "I was shocked and touched to see Earl Cooley's obituary in a recent issue of the Economist Magazine. If you're not familiar with

this publication, it is arguably the world's most respected news magazine, published in too many countries to count and read by nearly all of the powers-that-be. The weekly edition features exactly one obituary, taking up a full page, and usually devoted to the death of a world leader in government, the arts, or other forum of wide interest. It is a signal tribute to Earl that he was so honored, and well deserved in my opinion. I, too, had my first wings pinned on by him; and while I'm sad to see he's gone, I think myself fortunate to have briefly known him."

Jim Damitio (RAC-69)-An email after the passing of **Hal Ewing**, long time smokejumper pilot: "Hal saved my bacon more than once as a rookie spotter. When I would give a correction of 'left' or 'right,' he would sometimes just wiggle the wings a little and otherwise ignore me, usually to the benefit of the jumper in the door. He never said anything to anybody after the flight and nither did I. I learned as much about spotting jumpers from Hal as I did from my instructors, all without a word spoken. I wonder how many other spotters he helped train the same way, and if they even know it."

Troop Emonds (CJ-66)-An email about **Hal Ewing**: "Well, sad to hear that Hal passed. He had a great life. Every time I look out to sea, I think of how Hal spent his time flying planes off carriers all over the world. Such great planes, such great foreign ports, such a great mission. Then after a full and great career in the Navy, he ends up a jumper pilot for another entire career with a substantial degree of characters that he had to intermingle with—put up with, endure—whatever! It was a hell of a ride.

"My suggestion would be we have the memorial service at the Gobi, then have either **Garry Peters (CJ-63)**, **Tommy Albert (CJ-64)**, or **Lee Gossett (RDD-57)** launch a one-man request over the hill and out to sea. Dust the Siskiyou, dust the ocean, where his elements recycle both forest and sea.

"We dumped our dear friend Mouse over the Green Wall on the Siskiyou. Hal would be most satisfied knowing his pals doted over him with unique, and memorable affection. Pizza and beer to those of us to struggle on for a bit longer till we ourselves join our pals into the great beyond."

Jim Lancaster (MYC-62): "Chuck—Just received my copy of the 'special issue.' It is simply outstanding! Many, many, thanks to you and your crew for all your great work. Hope to see you in Redding and Cave Junction."

Sharron Cooley Hackman (Earl Cooley's oldest daughter): "Chuck... You really made an impact

on my life today. I was kind of down in the dumps and I opened the mail and saw Dad's picture, and then I knew it would be O.K. That's exactly the way I want to remember him. You captured the very essence of Dad, the sparkle in his eyes and his quick wit. You did a beautiful job on the issue, and I haven't even read it all through yet. What an issue! I will always treasure it as I am sure other family members will.

(Please pass onto others that I'm very grateful for all the work you put into this.)"

Ben "Snuffy" Smith (MSO-64): "I received my Smokejumper Magazine yesterday and finished it cover to cover by last night. Well done! Super job! This edition will join the other books in my collection regarding Smokejumping."

Tom Decker (IDC-64): "Another wonderful issue of the magazine. I suspect it's mostly due to your hard work and dedication to make it the first class periodical that it consistently is. I especially thought that the cover and articles on the history of Smokejumping were superb, a real effort at logging in the details of the early jumpers' stories. If there is a national award for such work, I think the magazine would be a worthy recipient!"

Dayton Grover (MSO-55): "Many thanks for the great issue dedicated to **Earl Cooley (MSO-40)** and the great pioneers who laid the groundwork for all the smokejumpers to follow. That great sense of faith and integrity they had then in those early days made it easier for all of us."

Pilot **Bob Schlaefli** is a NSA Life Member but his mail to 220 Glenoaks St., Pahump, NV is being returned. If anyone has some contact information on Bob, please let me know.

Loyle Washam (MSO-51)-Relative to the passing of **Larry Looney (IDC-54)**: "Larry was a fun person to be around and, as one of my friends who was a NED and worked with Larry stated, 'He was one of the few old jumpers who treated me with respect during my NED year.'"

Jim Budenholzer (MSO-73): "Thanks for the kind words in your column and for running 'An Interview With A Pioneer Smokejumper-Jim Alexander.' I have passed this excellent issue on to my daughter, who was born in Cave Junction and has expressed an interest in doing her first jump.

"I've had to take off my White's and spend every hour raising financing for re-forestation efforts in Ecuador and Afghanistan. These efforts are keeping me on the ground (sidewalks) where the financing is, as much as I would love to be in America's great forests every summer."

Chuck Pickard (MSO-48): "I was surprised that **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) didn't show up in any of the photos (April 2010 issue Smokejumper) since he and Glenn Smith not only got to Missoula about the same time, they worked hand in hand in parachute design and modification. Waite, I think, has some connection with Eagle Chute earlier.

"During the late 40s it was Smitty who, after hours, made up private outfits for some of us who started skydiving: **Dave Burt** (MSO-47), **Jack Nott** (MSO-47), **George Harpole** (MSO-49), **John Scicek** (MSO-49) and myself.

"Smitty had access to some surplus Army canopies, and we would sneak into the loft in the evenings and do some sewing. He instructed us on delays, wing walking and all the other good things the Derry stunt group used to do when barnstorming. On weekends we would rent the Air Sedan from Bob Johnson and practice.

"We jumped at rodeos, air shows, whatever, including Santa Claus jumps back east. We were sworn to secrecy as to who was furnishing us with the parachutes."

Davis Perkins (NCSB-72): "Great job on the last issue about Earl. I was fortunate to meet him a couple of times. Back in the mid 70s, I was down from Alaska with a booster crew and we had some 'down time.' I wanted to interview Earl for some early illustrations I was doing about jumping. Someone told me to be sure and take some apricot brandy. Spent a couple of memorable hours talking about the old days, and sipping that brandy.

"I've finally retired from the fire business after 37+ years (counting 13 yrs jumping). My fire dept (Belmont/San Carlos FD) had a big party. I was honored to have my old comrade **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65) talk about my jumping days. **Kent Harper** (RDD-75) and **Don Bell** (IDC-69) were also there.

"I'm keeping my paramedic license up and plan to do some volunteer work overseas. Leaving for Haiti April 2nd. My team will be setting up medical clinics on the remote western part of the island. It's estimated that there are over 120,000 displaced people there, so we'll have much work to do. My wife and I are both on the federal DMAT (Disaster Medical Assistance Team). She has just returned from Port au Prince.

"Painting up a storm! If you get a moment, please check out my website www.davisperkins.com. I'm painting primarily landscapes, but have several of my early smokejumper paintings there. Now with retirement, I can finally concentrate on my art

career."

Let's go back in time 53 years. Through the miracle of the internet I'm reading an article from a Southern California newspaper and looking at a photo of a young **Alex Theios** (CJ-65) who has just been selected to the national 14-man Pop Warner Kid's All-American football team. He had just come off a game in which he scored 36 points as his San Bernardino Rams blanked the Redondo Beach team 37-0. At that time, who would know that he would jump at Cave Junction and Fairbanks. Thanks for the good memories, Alex.

I've been communicating with **George Harpole** (MSO-49) on several subjects lately. George pointed out that we did not have an obit on **Danny On** (CJ-46) who was a very unique individual among the 1946 rookies, the majority of whom were returning WWII veterans. Thanks to George, we now have an obit for Danny on our website.

Danny was a professional forester with a Master's degree from the Univ. of Montana. After surviving and being wounded the Battle of the Bulge while serving with the 101st Airborne, Danny died in a skiing accident in 1979. He came from Red Bluff, California, where his parents operated a restaurant. George relates that Danny was well known among his forestry schoolmates for his "break-away" and "long delay" parachute jumps and love for hunting and photography. Danny got a certified antelope kill at 800 yards and was later presented a sharpshooter medal by General Eisenhower prior to the battle at Bastogne. At Bastogne the Germans were concentrating fire at spots where soldiers were grouping together. To discourage other 101st troopers from clumping with him, Danny carried a claymore mine on his back in combat. I've reprinted **Jack Demmon's** (MSO-50) excellent article from the July 1996 issue of *The Static Line* in this issue for more background on this very unique smokejumper. 🦋

My Memories of Flying in The Ford Trimotor

by "Wild Bill" Yensen (McCall '53)

The numbers of us who had the experience of flying and jumping out of the Ford Trimotor are getting fewer and fewer. Therefore, I would like to record some of my cherished memories.

The Ford was built in the late 1920s. It was slow, with a cruising speed of about 80 mph. It had tremendous lift and a short turning radius, and was, therefore, a very good plan for the mountains of Idaho. It had a payload of eight jumpers and gear.

The spotter usually rode in the co-pilot's seat. During a jump run, the steel tubing bar across the door came down, and the spotter had to use hand signals to guide the pilot to the release point.

The door was small and had a small step that the jumper put his right foot on, and he would sit on the other leg. On a two-man stick, the second jumper had to duck under the door and try to hit that little step. That was a good trick even for experienced jumpers. I remember once a jumper missed the step and did about three flips before the chute opened.

I got twisted up so badly my chute didn't open till I was halfway down. It looked like a ball atop a cable of twisted lines. I was still untwisting when I hit the ground.

Another time a guy stood up on the step and ripped



"Wild Bill" Yensen 1955 (Courtesy B. Yensen)

the cover off of his flat pack and dumped his silk in the spotter's lap. The spotter was **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) – my hero – who calmly pushed the silk out behind the jumper, who then got a normal opening. The jump speed was about 50 mph, which was great when you had a flat pack on your back.

My first jump out of the Ford was my third training jump, and the rest of my training jumps were out of the Ford. On my last training jump, I got twisted up so badly my chute didn't open till I was halfway down. It looked like a ball atop a cable of twisted lines. I was still untwisting when I hit the ground.

My first fire jump out of the Ford was northwest of

Warren and **Merle Cables** (IDC-48) was the spotter.

Later that year (1953) I had a very long ride to a fire in the White Clouds with good old **Richard "Paperlegs" Peterson** (MYC-47) sitting beside me. I had the first chute I had ever packed on my back. All the time I was working on that chute, Paperlegs was at the other table giving me advice.

All the way to the fire he needled me with remarks like: "Are you sure you tacked the risers to the backboard right?" and "Are you sure you stowed those lines with no twists?" and "Are you sure you tied the apex loop to the static line with three wraps of eight cord?"

He even said I might have "crystallization of the D-rings." By the time I got in the door, I was scared to death. The chute worked fine and was I relieved!

Shortly after that flight to the White Clouds, I went on a flight to Chamberlain area where two jumpers – both rookies – had jumped a fire in dense trees and could not find their fire. **Reid Jackson** (MYC-49) and

Merle Cables were going to jump into the trees on the fire and hoot the two in. Merle knew that silk chutes hung up better in trees than nylon, so he decided to jump the old Eagle.

The Eagle had main shroud lines that went over the top of the chute and down to the V-ring that attached to the snap on the harness. Two-thirds of the way to the top, there were auxiliary lines that went out to the skirt. This made the chute look like it had a porch all the way around. When the Eagle opened, that porch caught air immediately and the poor jumper got a huge opening shock.

I will never forget watching Merle. He sat in the door and said, "Watch this!" Out he went and the chute exploded open so hard that it jerked his body clear up to the apex! When they brought it back, I got to pack it under Wayne Webb's supervision.

Jackson, **Loyle Washam** (MSO-51) and others sneaked the Eagle on **Gene Ellis'** (MYC-51) back. Gene had said, "Nobody around here is smart enough to put that thing on me!"

When he returned from that jump with the Eagle, he said, "Very funny!"

Another ride I had in the Ford was an early morning patrol. I ate a big breakfast, drank three cups of coffee, suited up, and we took off in the Ford for the Salmon Forest area. We flew and flew, and I found my bladder was about to burst after three hours.

In those days we each wore a cotton harness that had to be so tight it was hard to get into and squeezed your back unmercifully. I finally couldn't stand it any longer, so I struggled to undo my leg straps and zippers. I filled a quart "burp-cup" to the brim – sick-sacks weren't around yet. It had a top which I put on and then threw it out the door.

I heard of guys trying to puke out the open door and painting all hands inside the Ford with yuck!

Five minutes later we landed in Chamberlain. We shut the engines off and stayed a couple of hours. When it was time to go again, we had to get out a cranking handle and wind up the inertia flywheels that would store enough energy to start the engines.

I got to do some of the cranking. In McCall, the mechanic would use a power drill to wind them up.

The next year, in '54, we had a fire down by Reno – the Ball Canyon Fire. When the fire was out they came to get us in the Ford with Jim Larkin flying. There was a convention in Reno that lasted a few days, so there were several DC-6s and Super Constellations sitting around to take the conventioners back east.

The pilots for those planes were around when the Ford flew in. They came over and looked the Ford over and hooted and hollered and laughed to the point that

Jim Larkin got pissed off. We piled our gear in and Jim said, "Pile it all under the wing and get on top of it for takeoff!"

Jim gave the three engines full throttle, popped off the brakes and the Ford leaped into the air and went up at about a 60-degree angle!

We did as he said. He taxied out to the end of the runway, which was about a quarter mile from the hangar where the pilots were watching. Jim gave the three engines full throttle, popped off the brakes and the Ford leaped into the air and went up at about a 60-degree angle! We were about a thousand feet up when we went over the hangar.

Those pilots' jaws dropped and they were probably amazed that a plane could climb that fast. On the way home we flew over U.S. 95 and some of the cars would pass us.

Later that year we got an eight-man fire call and we flew up near Loon Lake. We dropped two on a fire there, and shortly afterward some clouds coming from the east covered them up. We went west, found another fire, dropped two more, and those same clouds covered them up. We went west again and found another fire, dropped two jumpers and the clouds covered them so quickly that Jim Larkin had to drop their cargo by dead reckoning. The cargo almost hit them!

We flew west again and into Hells Canyon. We went down near the river looking for a fire when those clouds from the east suddenly filled the canyon! Mind you, Hells Canyon is a V-shaped canyon 7,000 feet deep and we were near the bottom. Luckily we had burned two hours' worth of gas and only had two of us jumpers left, so the plane was light.

Larkin put the Ford into a tight spiral climb and went nearly straight up! I can remember grabbing the side of one of those square windows and dangling toward the tail. E-bags, cargo chutes, a spotter's kit, and everything on the floor went falling into the cubbyhole back by the door. We came out of the clouds about even with the top of Devil Peak, which is around 10,000 feet high. I doubt if any other plane, built at that time, could have gotten out of that tight canyon in zero visibility!

The next year, I had another new experience. **Del Catlin** (MYC-47) was the boss and he sent me to Bruce Meadow in the Ford, which we had filled with cargo chutes. The pilot was a guy whose name I can't

remember. The pilot and I hauled five loads of materials to Dagger Falls, where they were going to build a bridge over the Middle Fork of the Salmon.

That was my introduction to cargo dropping. We got it all down safely except for a small barrel that hung up in a yellow pine. I've wondered ever since how the hell they got that down. The pilot let me fly it a little on our return trips to Bruce Meadow.

I was drafted in '56 and sent to Germany. I got out in '58 and went back to jumping; the Ford was still our main aircraft. That year we had a fire near the Clayton mine over on the Challis. We took a Ford load over to man it. Merle Cables was the spotter. He did an extraordinary job of spotting.

After two sets of streamers he found the wind was up high, and it was pretty calm near the ground. He carried us about three miles upwind of the spot and gave us a long parachute ride. The spot was big – 40 acres of sagebrush – and we all hit it with no problem. That was my last jump out of the Ford.

The Ford was slow and noisy. Inside it you could hear the engines go “row, row, row,” as the pilot could not get them to run at exactly the same speed. The corrugated tin reverberated the noise. I always felt safe riding in the Ford, especially with Jim Larkin at the controls.

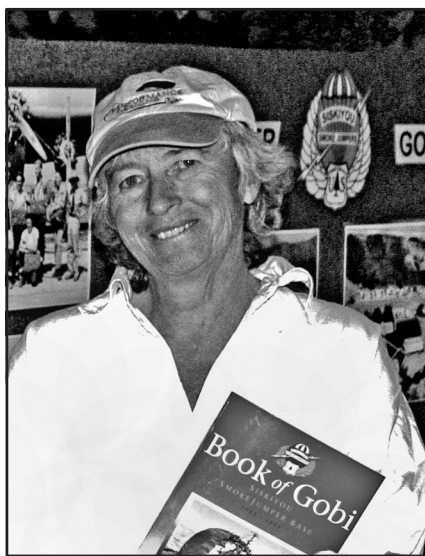
I took two years off because of Army summer camps, and when I came back to jumping in '61 the Ford was gone, as was the Travelair. The Forest Service had gone to faster airplanes – twin Beeches and a DC-3. They could only slow down to about a hundred, so the flat packs we were jumping knocked us silly. D-bags came to the rescue.

One of my most prized possessions is the belt buckle I got at the '84 reunion in Missoula. It says “SMOKEJUMPER” and has a Ford with a guy in the door and a candy-striped chute opening. I like to tell people I have my picture on that buckle. I point to the guy on that candy-striped chute and I say, “See? That's me!” 🍄

Sad News For Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum

Sharon Westcott (Associate) passed away at her home in Cave Junction Friday, April 16, 2010 after a struggle with thyroid cancer.

She was a member of the Illinois Valley Airport Board and an enthusiastic supporter of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum Project. She loved smokejump-



Sharon Westcott (Courtesy R. Brandt)

ers and added them to her long list of friends.

Sharon backed the museum project from the start and spent countless hours defending and promoting the Museum Project to the Josephine County Board of Supervisors. In addition, she exerted untiring effort to plan, maintain, and repair the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in a way that preserved its historic integrity.

Sharon was a widely known ultra-light pilot/instructor and well known in that field. She appeared in and was a consultant for several movies and documentaries featuring ultra-lights including work by National Geographic.

Many of you met Sharon at the Gobi Reunions. She was at the Gobi work project last June where she kept everyone entertained with her energy, cheerfulness, and razor-sharp one-liners.

Sharon was known and respected for her intelligence, insightful problem solving, disarming sense of humor and her big laugh. She will truly be missed around the Gobi. 🍄

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

Donor

In Memory/Honor of

Judith Haugaard	Lloyd M. Haugaard (MSO-62)
Jim Lancaster (MYC-62)	Ken "Moose" Salyer (MYC-54)
Donald (MSO-63) and Paula Sanders.....	Frank Sanders (MSO-63)
Starr (CJ-48) and Stella Jenkins	Forest firefighters killed on duty
Michael Denis Michaelson	Douglas K. Michaelson (MSO-56)
James E. Blowers (MSO-46).....	Buddies long gone
Bill Joyner (MSO-53).....	Bobbie, my loving wife
Bob Nolan (CJ-47).....	Cliff Marshall (CJ-46)
Bob Pell (NCSB-56)	
Virgil Miller (MSO-45)	
Britton Quinlan (NCSB-08)	Fallen smokejumpers and families
Wes Langley (MSO-68)	All MSO-68s who have gone on before us
Doug Stinson (CJ-54)	Howard L. Wolf (MYC-53)
SQ VI.....	Bert Tanner (MSO-68)
Richard Trinity (MSO-66)	SSgt Travis Atkins, U.S. Army
Nels Jensen (MSO-62)	
Jim (NCSB-46) and Emily Allen	All smokejumpers: past, present, future
Jeanene Jukkala.....	Arthur Jukkala (MSO-56)
H. Grace and Kori Moore	C. Gene Wahlstrom, Pilot Tanker 09
Jon T. Klingel (CJ-65)	
Tim (RDD-77) and Cindy Huntington	
Ed Hinkle (CJ-50).....	Cliff W. Marshall (CJ-46)
Jim Lee (MSO-77)	Tom McGrath (MSO-57)

Contributions since the previous publication of donors, July 2009

Donor

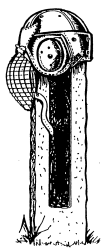
In Memory/Honor of

Wally Henderson (MYC-46)	Wag Dodge (MSO-41)
Jim Cherry (MSO-57).....	John Reed (Associate)
Doc Smith (MSO-59)	Kirk Smith (Mormon Lake Hotshots)
William Moody (NCSB-57)	1939 smokejumper pioneers
Fred Donner (MSO-59)	Tim Eldridge (MSO-82)
Karen Weissenback Moen and Amber Moen.....	Edward James Weissenback (RAC-64)
Pocono Karters	Sara Brown (RAC-03)
Chris Sorensen (Associate).....	Tim Eldridge (MSO-82)
Ronald Stoleson (MSO-56)	Lewis "Bunk" Thoman (MSO-51) and Earl Cooley (MSO-40)
Jeanene Jukkala.....	Arthur Jukkala (MSO-56)
Gene and Linda Monson	Earl Cooley (MSO-40)

Total funds received for the NSA Good Samaritan Fund, as of Dec. 31, 2009, are \$3,300.

Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:

Charles Brown, 2723 Wilderness Ct., Wichita, KS 67226



Off The List

We want to know! If you learn of the 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). We'll take it from there. Any gifts in honor of these jumpers will be added to NSA Good Samaritan Fund and recognized in *Smokejumper* magazine. Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contribution to:

Charles Brown, NSA Treasurer
2723 Wilderness Ct.
Wichita, KS 67226-2526

Charles B. "Chuck" Sigler (Missoula '53)

Chuck, 78, died January 11, 2010, at his home in Columbia Falls, Montana, from Sarcoma Cancer. He graduated from Oklahoma A & M with a degree in forestry and jumped at Missoula during the 1953 season before entering the U.S. Army and becoming a helicopter pilot. Upon his discharge in 1957 he received an appointment as forester in the St. Joe N.F. in Idaho. Chuck later flew as a commercial helicopter pilot before starting his career with the National Park Service. He was Chief Ranger at Glacier N.P. when he retired in 1995.

David F. Barnhardt (Missoula '56)

David, retired Commander USN, died January 21, 2010, in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. He received degrees from Wingate College, Appalachian State and George Washington University. His Navy career spanned 22 years. David graduated from flight school in 1958, had many carrier landings in his A-3, and flew 120 combat missions over Vietnam. He was involved with the Gideons for over 20 years, specializing in prison ministry. David jumped at Missoula during the 1956 season.

John N. Scicek (Missoula '49)

John died January 21, 2010, at his Port Orchard, Washington, home. He jumped at Missoula in 1949-50 before serving in the U.S. Army in the Korean Conflict. John jumped again in 1954. He worked for the Civil Service in Guam, Alaska, and Washington as a high-power electrician.

Marvin A. Amundson (Missoula '47)

Marv died February 5, 2010, at his home in Butte, Montana. He served in the Marine Corps during WWII. After the war Marv graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in forestry. He retired in 1985 as the District Ranger for the Beaverhead N.F. Marv and his wife, Joann, raised close to 200 foster children in the past 18 years. He jumped at Missoula 1947-48, 1950-52 and was an NSA member.

Harvey H. Weirich (McCall '44)

Harvey, 86, died February 16, 2010, at his home in Goshen, Indiana. He worked in the boating industry for 60 years, over 38 with Starcraft Marine of Goshen. Harvey was a member of the NSA and a CPS-103 jumper during WWII, jumping at McCall during the 1944-45 seasons.

Terrence D. McMullen (McCall '48)

Terry died February 4, 2010, in Reno, Nevada. He graduated from Boise High School in 1947 and then from the University of Idaho in 1952 with a degree in business. Terry was a 1st Lt. in the 82nd Airborne during the Korean War. He was a successful businessman in the Reno area for over 40 years. Terry jumped five seasons at McCall and Idaho City.

Robert G. "Bob" Berry (Cave Junction '57)

Bob died February 21, 2010, at his home in Durham, North Carolina. He served in the Navy during the Korean War and jumped at Cave Junction 1955-57. Bob graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1960 and worked for 34 years in the Surgical Private Diagnostic Clinics at Duke University Medical Center. Bob had great memories of his time in Cave Junction and the family suggested that you send any memorial contributions in the name of Robert G. Berry to National Smokejumpers Association Good Samaritan Fund.

Warren C. Shaw (Missoula '43)

Warren died February 27, 2010, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Warren was one of the original CPS-103 jumpers and jumped in Missoula during the 1943 season. He was retired from the Oklahoma Highway Dept. where he was highly regarded as one of the top land surveyors in the state.

Dawson Kelsey (Redding '95)

Dawson died February 14, 2010, near Redding, California. He was born in Red Bluff (CA) and moved to Redding in 1985. Dawson jumped at Redding 1995-2001, NIFC 2003-05 and transferred to Fair-

banks in 2006, where he had been jumping since that time.

K. Rolland Adams (Missoula '63)

K. Rolland died May 31, 2009, from Huntington's Disease. He graduated from Doylestown H.S. in Ohio, where he won the state meet in the pole vault. After serving in the USAF he attended the University of Montana and graduated with a degree in Forestry. K worked for the USFS in Durango and Pagosa Springs, Colorado, before transferring to the Nine Mile R.D. in Montana, retiring as Fire Management Officer in 1991.

Joseph H. Coffin (Missoula '45)

Joe died February 21, 2010, in LaVerne, California. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers and jumped at Missoula during the 1945 season. Joe moved to California from Indiana in 1923 when his father was appointed dean of Whittier College. Joe graduated from Whittier in 1941. Throughout his life, he was involved in peace functions, community and with the First Friends Church.

James W. Stephens (Missoula '79)

James died February 27, 2010, in Ogden, Utah, at the age of 57. He attended West Point Military Academy and Macalester College. James received pilot training at Sowell Aviation in Florida and later did Paralegal training at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas. He jumped at Missoula from 1979-88.

Elon H. Eash (Cave Junction '45)

Elon, 87, died January 22, 2010, in Archbold, Ohio. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers.

Lewis E. Berg (Missoula '44)

Lew died March 1, 2010. He attended DePauw University, majored in math and received his Master's from Syracuse University. Lew was a member of the CPS-103 smokejumpers during WWII as well as working in soil conservation and as a mental hospital attendant. He spent 1946 in Darmstadt, Germany, with the American Friends Service building a neighborhood center. Lew taught in Georgia and Indiana before moving to Parkville, Missouri in 1955. He taught mathematics at Park College and Maple Woods Community College before retiring in 1986.

James W. Dawson (Missoula '53)

Jim, 77, died April 3, 2010, at his home in Tallahassee, Florida. He graduated from the University of Colorado and later earned his Masters degree from

Syracuse University. Jim served with the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division and then as a foreign service officer with the U.S. Dept. of State. He was awarded the Medal for Civilian Service for his efforts with USAID while serving in Vietnam. After retiring from USAID, he was the director of finance at the Lee County Public Health Dept. Jim jumped at Missoula in 1953 and 1956.

Mark A. Kroger (Redding '73)

Mark, 64, died March 29, 2010, in Boise, Idaho. His brother, Paul, relates that Mark died of complications related to a surgery to fuse his left ankle and that he was suffering from many physical ailments related to his many years of smokejumping. Mark jumped at Redding 1973-78, Fairbanks 79-85, and NIFC 1986-93.

Larry G. Looney (Idaho City '54)

Larry, of Boise, Idaho, died February 16, 2010, at his winter residence in Palm Springs of leukemia. After serving in the Coast Guard he graduated from the University of Idaho with Bachelors and Masters degrees in 1958. After serving as a teacher, principal and superintendent in various school districts, Larry moved to Idaho in 1964 where he worked in the Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene school systems. In 1968 Larry was elected as a State Representative from District Two and served two terms in the House of Representatives. Larry was appointed Commissioner, Dept. of Revenue and Taxation, Idaho in 1975 and moved to Boise. He retired in 1993. Larry jumped at Idaho City 1954-56, McCall 1959-61 and 1965.

H. Lee Hebel (Missoula '44)

Lee died March 17, 2010, in Pennsylvania. He was a CPS-103 jumper at Missoula for the 1944-45 seasons. Lee also had CPS work in hospitals prior to his time as a smokejumper and the cattle boat shipments to Europe after the war. Lee graduated from Susquehanna University in 1948 and Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1951. He served Lutheran congregations for 38 years during his career. In 1974 Lee was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity by Susquehanna University for his commitment to rural church ministry.

Mary Barr (Pilot)

Mary, who in 1974 became the first female pilot for the Forest Service, died March 1, 2010, at her daughter's home in New Orleans. She learned to fly a Piper Cub in 1944 and moved to New York to attend aircraft mechanic's school during WWII. Mary served as

a FAA Pilot Examiner and Accident Prevention Counselor in addition to her career with the USFS. Gary Johnson (RDD-69) said that Mary flew jumpers for a short time at Redding. In 1964 she was one of the first four women to compete in the Reno Air Races. Mary continued to fly for pleasure until age 75.

Mary flew for the USFS as a lead plane pilot before

moving to the Regional Office in San Francisco as Aviation Safety Officer. She then went to the Washington Office as National FS Aviation Safety Officer before returning to California as Regional Aviation Officer in Sacramento until she retired. Mary was inducted into the International Women in Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame in 2001. 🌲

Grasping at Straws

by Norm Pawlowski (Cave Junction '57)

During the first 3/4 of the 20th Century, the Applegate Valley and surrounding mountains of Southern Oregon were open range. In the late 1940s, it was my responsibility to track my family's cattle in these hills. One might think that would give an 11-year-old enough time out in the wild. But alas, what else do kids have to do in an area of poverty, out in the countryside, not yet out of the Great Depression? My friend, Charlie, lived three miles away. Charlie had access to some Geological Survey maps, as his father was a surveyor. He was continually the instigator of seeking and climbing the highest mountains. One evening, while we were planning a conquest of more distant mountains, his father approached us and offered some words of experience and guidance. Amongst his stories was one where he was running through thick, young Fir when he fell over a steep incline. He broke his fall by grabbing at young Fir trees, and when he would pull out one by the roots or break off a branch, he would grab another. All right, a good story. If I ever find myself falling off a cliff, or whatever, I will just grab a branch or small tree and break my fall enough to grab another. No problem.

Fast-forward 12 years ahead to 1960. Cave Junction's Twin Beech was sent to Redding with a full load of jumpers (four plus myself) in response to a call from Region 5. We sat in Redding a few minutes, then we were told to go to Sonora and wait there on standby. I figured when a fire call came in, I would drop my four jumpers, then return to Redding with the Twin Beech and wait for more jumpers. Within a half-hour after arriving in Sonora, to my surprise, in walks **Warren Webb** (CJ-54). Warren had moved to Redding in 1957, when the Cave Junction base was split and about half of our guys went to Redding to form the new base there.

Warren says, "Suit up, I'm going to drop all five of you in Yosemite."

Me, "We only have four firepacks."



Norm Pawlowski 1957 (Courtesy N. Pawlowski)

Warren, "That's alright, there are tools already on the fire."

Since I carried my jumpgear in the back of our Twin Beech, I suited up and Warren crammed all five of us into another Twin Beech he had brought in, ignoring the fact that a Twin Beech has a load limit of four jumpers. We did not stop to think about how I

was to get my gear out of the woods with no packboard. A packboard was a significant part of a firepack.

Jumping Yosemite was rare, even for Redding guys. The flight over Yosemite was breath taking. The fire was not that big, nor hot, and I could see a bunch of parachutes on the ground, which caused me to wonder why drop more? Warren threw out a pair of drift streamers and, without watching them much, turned to us and said, "Find a spot between the trees."

Drifting over the trees in a candy-striped, FS-2 parachute (which I recall had a forward speed of about 6 mph), I could see some potential spots. I picked the one where Warren had put the drift streamers, glided over the top of a big Ponderosa Pine, and turned perfectly into a long, narrow opening between the tall Pines. As I cleared the top of a big Pine and was gently settling into the spot, I proudly praised myself, "Damn, you're good at this."

I had no more finished the well-deserved compliment to myself when the tail of my chute caught the end of a bottom branch on that big Pine. I gave a couple of big bounces, trying to break loose before the canopy lost air, . . . no cigar. Thirteen jumpers on that fire, and I was the only one to hang up in a tree. Embarrassing. The final step of the standard letdown procedure was to drop my flat, 110-foot nylon rope to the ground. To my surprise, it uncoiled completely, with a short section flopping out on the ground. That bottom branch was deceptively high and the tree deceptively big. Warren, watching from the Twin Beech, free fell a set of climbers with climbing rope.

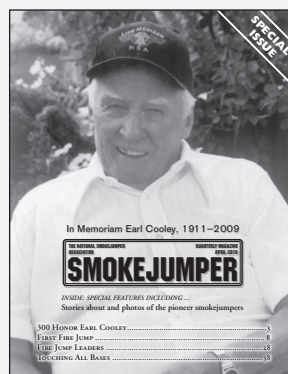
I joined the crew on the fire, which was already completely lined with hot spots all knocked down. The first eight guys had really gone after it. My four colleagues and I were damn near useless. Within two hours, a ground crew showed up, and with the fire under control, it was time to gather our gear before dark, and I had a tree to climb. Donning the climbing gear dropped by Warren, my suspicions were confirmed; there was no way a 15-foot climbing rope was going to fit around that big Pine. There is no going back without one's chute, and as dark was approaching, a degree of urgency set in. My pride was on the line. At this point, my CJ. colleagues abandoned me, leaving only Forrest "Buster" Moore (RDD-57) as my only ground assistant. Buster was one of the Redding guys who trained with me in Cave Junction in 1957. Surveying the situation, next to that Pine was a younger, thickly branched Fir tree, its top about two-thirds of the way up to the bottom branches on the offending Pine. Remembering the "falling story" by Charlie's father, I speculated that one could climb the adjacent Fir tree and oscillate the top over into the Pine, where maybe I could do something. If I were to fall, trying to transfer to that Pine, or if the top were to break out of the Fir, I could twist around in the air and grab a branch that would pull me further into the Fir, where I could grab more branches. Easy as pie.

Squeezing through the branches, I went up that neighboring Fir wearing climbing gear and carrying Buster's 110-foot letdown rope around my neck. At the top, I could not get that Fir to oscillate, but when I got to the very tip-top, my weight caused the top to bend over, putting me where I could reach out and touch the Pine. Even at that height, that Pine was close to three feet in diameter, and I was not going to be able to reach the sides from that Fir or swing a climbing rope around it. Bark on a Pine that old has deep ridges in it, two inches or more deep. Reaching out with a leg, I put a spur into the Pine, stuck my fingers into a bark ridge right in front of me, gripping it like a handle, and pulled myself over onto the side of that big Pine, letting the Fir flop back. There was nothing I could do at this point but to start

climbing, holding onto nothing but uneven bark ridges, and occasionally grabbing some short, dead stubs when they became available, scurrying my way up that Pine. When I reached live branches, climbing was easy from there on. As I stood on the eight-inch diameter live branch holding my parachute, I looked down and there was Buster with his neck at a 90-degree angle looking up with his mouth wide open. Bending one's neck that way will do that to your mouth. I untied the dangling climbing rope and dropped it to the ground. Dragging up that climbing rope had proven to be a useless burden.

Without a thought about defacing a tree in a National Park, I pulled out a folding saw from my rear pocket, climbed halfway out this big branch, and cut into several offending forks. With Buster pulling on my letdown rope like he wanted to pull the whole tree over, these branches let out a big "CRACK," and the whole business went crashing to the ground. I dropped one end of Buster's rope to the ground, to which Buster tied to the other end my rope to give a 220-foot rope. I then draped this double rope over a branch above where I stood. Buster tied the other end of my rope to an innocent tree at ground level. From there I made the usual repel back to the ground, and we recovered the double rope just by snaking it off the upper branch. All's well that ends well. Estimating from the letdown ropes, that bottom branch was about 90 feet up. I thought nothing about it all, as I was confident that should a handful of bark give way

Copies of "Special Edition" **SMOKEJUMPER** Available



Special Edition, Issue 68, April 2010

Members have been inquiring about obtaining additional copies of the April issue of *Smokeyjumper* magazine. This issue honored **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) and the other pioneer smokejumpers and contained many historical photos.

If you want additional copies, please send a check payable to NSA for \$6.00 per copy, which includes postage, to: Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln, Chico CA 95926

during the climb, or should a dead stub break off, that neighboring Fir was a good insurance policy.

Fast forward again to the next fire season, where early in the season a fire request came in for two men on the Umpqua N.F. **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) was the spotter. Boucher was about the fastest and best spotter of anyone at our base. It seems he made decisions faster and got the jumpers out of an airplane more quickly than anyone. In fact, Boucher was a fast decision maker on about most any subject. When we would arrive at a fire, he would pop out of the co-pilot seat, with decisions already made. The Twin Beech would be lined up for the drift streamer pass, and those drift streamers would be gone within seconds. Boucher was uncannily accurate at doping out the wind. While the streamers were falling, he would show the jumpers the jump spot while hooking them up in the door. For this jump, the spot was a large area of smaller, re-growth Douglas Fir, Christmas-tree-size stuff all packed together, surrounded by huge trees. Then it was back to efficiency, and we were gone out the door in an instant. I can only speculate as to how he would get the plane lined up so quickly. Even though there were only two jumpers for this fire, Boucher would not make a second pass. It was always a two-man stick out of that small-door Twin Beech, this time with the two tallest guys from Cave Junction. We exited that airplane like experts.

The Umpqua N.F. was noted for its large trees. Specifically for the Umpqua, we carried extra 220-foot letdown ropes in the spotter's pack, which could be exchanged for a jumper's standard 110-foot rope in the jumper's leg pocket. No need here, these were small trees. The spot was surrounded by really big trees, but we should have no trouble hitting the spot. Jumping into small trees is typically a "feather-bed" landing. I steered away from my jump partner (**Gary Welch**, CJ-60) with no particular concern for where I landed in this featureless zone. Settling down in what appeared to be a patch of closely-packed Christmas trees, my decent came to a halt. Damn, I didn't want to hang up, so I gave some big bounces, trying to break loose, . . . no cigar. I contemplated just popping (unfasten) my Capewell's and dropping to the ground because I just HAD to be close to the ground in such small trees. Big trees cannot be that closely packed together. Looking down, the branches were so thick, I could not see the ground. I remembered our training and rules: "If you can't touch the ground, you must make a letdown."

It was only my orthodox respect for the rules that caused me to pull the end of my letdown rope out of the jumpsuit's leg pocket, threading it through the parachute's risers, when I heard a loud CRACK, and immediately I was on my way down. This is what I wanted,

so I just relaxed. But then, I kept falling further and faster than I expected, picking up speed, and the tree trunks started growing larger. "This is not good." I started grabbing at the branches passing by, while also surprised that my chute was not tangling in all these thick branches and trees. My first few grabs were wasted on flimsy branch ends that broke off without resistance. The tree trunks were growing quite large, the bark color was changing from green to dark brown, and the branches were now getting bigger. I kept grabbing at branches, my open hands making contact midway up branches, but when I closed my hand, nothing seemed to happen. It seemed like a bad dream, there was no effect from my grabbing. I could not get hold of anything. As the tree trunks turned large and the bark turned very coarse and rough, the tree trunks became devoid of branches. There was nothing I could do, and my last thoughts were: How could these be such large trees?

I hit the ground with such force that pain shot through my entire body with my legs and everything else completely collapsed. I thought that I had broken both legs, both knees, and hard telling what else. But before I could analyze those thoughts, something hit me on the helmet harder than I have ever been hit before. As I started to get up, I looked down at the doeskin gloves covering my hands. My gloved hands were filled with Fir needles and branch tips from the treetops. My conclusion was that I had opened and closed my hands so quickly that branch tips from the top of the trees never had a chance to clear, and my palms were so full of these Fir tips and Fir needles, they prevented me from gripping larger branches. While popping out of my jumpsuit, I noticed a strange object lying on the ground. It was my parachute filled with about two wheelbarrow loads of stove-length pieces of cordwood. Yes, I did hear a lot of loud popping on the way down, and it must have been my parachute breaking off tops and cleaning branches. That is what had hit me on the helmet.

In my opinion, I had lain on the ground about 15 seconds before popping out of my jump gear and going directly to the objective of this jump, a small fire. Gary was already there and already had significant line built. I couldn't figure it out, and I asked Gary how he beat me to the fire. I asked Gary if ground pounders were in the area and had built line prior to our jump. "How did you beat me to the fire?" "How could you have built so much line?" I had steered to a closer spot, and no one beats me anywhere. Gary seemed confused by my questions. Today, I wonder if I had lain on the ground (maybe unconscious) longer than I realized.

Well, now, let me suggest to you that grabbing tree branches is near worthless to a falling human. But, if one is falling, what other choice does one have? 🙄

Submarines and Forest Fires

by Mark Corbet (La Grande '74)

I recently read a book about Japanese attacks on North America during World War II. One of the chapters gave extensive details about Imperial Submarine I-25, one of several that carried one or more small airplanes on its deck, inside a small watertight hangar.

Just before sunrise Sept. 9, 1942, I-25 surfaced off the southern Oregon coast near Brookings. A small aircraft carrying two 170-pound incendiary bombs was quickly assembled and launched. It flew inland from the coast about 10 miles and dropped the bombs on the Siskiyou National Forest, then returned to the submarine.

Recent rain and morning fog had left the forest so damp that the bombs ignited only a single small fire. Nearby lookouts saw the smoke and a couple of forest personnel were able to handle the fire easily.

When the military got word of the bombing, a flood of military and FBI experts were sent to evaluate what had occurred. Newspaper and radio accounts of the episode caused a great deal of concern among the locals, and demands for more protection along the west coast were pushed up the line to Washington, D.C.

This was early in the war and there was considerable concern along the west coast that Japan might be planning an invasion of the mainland. Barring that, could more fire bombings be expected? Would the forests be set ablaze the following summer? Might the Pacific Fleet need to be located closer to the mainland to prevent further attacks? America had been bombed and something had to be done.

You may wonder: how does all of this relate to smokejumping? In 1941 the nation's only smokejumpers, three squads of eight men each, were based at Nine-Mile, Mont., Big Prairie, Mont., and Moose Creek, Idaho. A squad of eight was added at Seeley Lake, Mont., in 1942.

A new base was planned in 1943 for McCall, Idaho, not far southwest of Moose Creek and consistent with the grouping of jump bases during the previous two years. However, one additional base was established that year. For some reason it was located a great distance from the other five bases.

The new base was located at Cave Junction, Ore., more than 500 miles from any of the other bases, but just 23 miles from where that Japanese plane had

dropped fire bombs a few months earlier.

No records have yet been found to explain why a smokejumper base was placed in southwestern Oregon that year. However, history seems to suggest that when the demands for protection of the public and the national forest along the Pacific Coast were pushed far enough up the line, Oregon's Cave Junction smokejumper base might well have been created to help address those concerns. 🌲



Marty Meierotto (FBX-94) featured on the cover of *Field & Stream's* annual survival issue. (Courtesy Mike McMillan)

“Animal Ed” Stories

Following are some tales about Ed Weissenback (CJ-64), who has been missing in action in western Laos since Dec. 27, 1971. The Air America C-123 on which he and three other men were working was shot down on that date by enemy artillery over the “China Road,” just north of the Mekong River.

Friends and family gathered at the Eagle Point National Cemetery in southern Oregon Sept. 11, 2009 (Smokejumper January 2010), to honor and remember Weissenback. Former Oregon smokejumpers who attended the service included Charley Moseley (CJ-62), Charles “Chuck” Yeager (RAC-65), Lee Gossett (RDD-57), Tommy Albert (RAC-64), Jim Hawes (RAC-66), Wes Brown (CJ-66), Gary Buck (CJ-66), Jerry John (CJ-62) and Al Boucher (CJ-49).

Although not able to attend, Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64) passed along the following story:

“**W**hen Ed showed up at Cave Junction in ’64, our rookie year, he had a new road bike with him ... one of those small-tire 12-speed jobs. I don’t recall seeing one before that ... they weren’t much of an item in Alabama in the early ’60s.

“A few of us were surprised that the skinny little tires didn’t go flat when he mounted and sat his fireplug ass on the tiny butt-crack seat.

“There was a roadhouse restaurant down the Redwood Highway – just over the Oregon-California border at Patrick Creek – that we went to when we had a few bucks to spend. Before he transferred to Redmond, Ed decided he would get

a little exercise one Sunday and ride his bike the approximately 35 miles from the base to Patrick Creek and have a meal of fresh trout.

“You may recall that there is a long, winding downhill stretch through the Cascades before you get to Patrick Creek at the bottom of the hill. As Ed headed down that hill, he bent low over the handlebars and really got his 12-speed missile moving.

“He said that as he rounded one of the turns he came up on an ol’ miner driving a 1950 vintage pickup truck. Ed said he went around the ol’ truck like a bullet and pulled into the roadhouse shortly thereafter at the creek.

“When Ed got back to the Gobi his eyes really sparkled with pride when telling this story ...

“As Ed told it, the ol’ miner drove into the parking lot behind him at the roadhouse and pulled up as he was going in the door and said, ‘I just had to see what went by me back thar. I’z a goin’ over 50 (mph) down that hill when ya went by me like I’z a-backin’ up. You live ’round here, boy?’

“Ed said, ‘no sir, I’m a smoke-jumper at Cave Junction.’ The ol’ man slowly shook his head as he mumbled, ‘Well! That explains it!’ and drove off.”

Kirkley added this:

“I also recall when Animal Ed ate that 72-ounce steak in Portland. The steak – plus all the trimmings – had to be eaten within one hour to get it free.

“**John Manley** (CJ-62) was with him when he ate it. As you may recall we had steaks

every Saturday at the Gobi, and the week before Ed went to Portland to attempt eating the 72-ouncer, he downed six or seven 12-ounce steaks to practice. From that point on there was no doubt in his mind that he could do it. What a character – Animal Ed. He will be forever young, robust and intrepid in the hearts and minds of all who knew him.”

Here is Manley’s account of Weissenback devouring the steak:

“He was a trip for sure. I did witness the big dog devour that 72-ounce side of beef at the Country Kitchen in Portland, and they had already trimmed any fat off of it.

“I had a 12-ounce steak and about six beers while he was doing his demolition job. When the waiter delivered it and took the “before” photos, Ed whipped a knife off his belt, stroked it across his boot a couple of times and went to work.

“It was a job, too. He was sweating like he was climbing a steep trail in the middle of a hard packout on a hot sunny day. That night we stayed at my mom’s house in Tacoma, and he dazzled her with his stories and charm. The next morning he wasn’t real hungry, but managed to put away a half-dozen eggs, potatoes, etc. for breakfast. Mom never forgot about Ed and was as sad as the rest of us when he cashed in so early in life.

“Later on I was home from Laos and spent a day and evening with Ed and Karen in Seattle when he was on his way over. He was really a special edition.” 🍄

“Grey Eagle” Teaches Students About Conservation

Adapted from the Salem, Ind., “Leader-Democrat.” Copyright 2010.

Music is just one of several ways for Joe “Grey Eagle” Wright (MSO-58) to teach elementary school students about water conservation and respecting Mother Earth.

Wright and business partner Lawrence “Two Feathers” Lawyer – a former science teacher – have spent the past 10 years presenting an Earth education program to children. They use traditional Native American methods, such as drumming, to convey their message.

A descendant of the Cherokee Nation of Native Americans, the 74-year-old Wright had a five-year stint

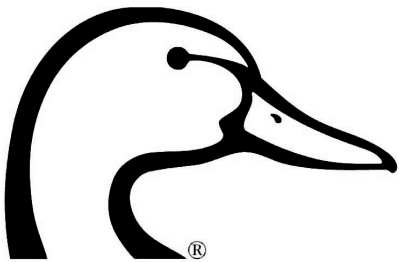
as a smokejumper before working as a conservation consultant for the State of Indiana. He now lives in Bargersville, Ind., some 20 miles south of Indianapolis.

“We are focusing on teaching the kids about water and how to conserve it because they are the future leaders of this country,” Wright said. “It’s a way to not only pass along the knowledge of water conservation, but also get students excited about saving the Earth.”

Among other things, Wright explained to students how the forest acts as a watershed to store water for trees, plants, animals and streams. They concluded the lesson with a song by Alabama, titled “Pass It Down,” encouraging students to save and share water, leaving more for later. 🦋

Persistence, Ducks and Ole

by Jim Phillips (Missoula ’67) and John Holtet (Missoula ’61)



W.L. “Ole” Olsen is a former smokejumper. He doesn’t know many former jumpers and most do not know him. Ole trained and only jumped one year in Cave Junction in 1950.

Why, then, is this one-time jumper important in smokejumper hierarchy of years jumped, jumps made, bases jumped from, jumped out of, and legendary jumper fires? Ole Olsen represents one of the things we respect in those who have done so many “jumper things.” He persevered.

Oh, how Ole persevered! He had a career as a Forest Service engineer and an avocation as a carver of ducks. He carved replicable wooden ducks, usable as decoys. However, as Ducks Unlimited learned, he also carved collector’s items.

Ducks Unlimited will honor Olsen in August for

having donated carvings responsible for garnering more than \$1 million for that organization.

Remaining constant to authenticating, replicating and merchandising his carved and painted ducks, Ole was generous in his affection for those who would protect and nurture habitat for the wild beauty of the living creature. Ole donated the product of his study, art and labor so we all can have an opportunity to view and admire the waterfowl.

One quality of the smokejumper is perseverance. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, no wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

The smokejumper does it with all his or her might. Ole Olsen was selected to be a smokejumper in part because he exhibited a mighty drive to accomplish something. He did so by allowing his innate quality to mature in the jumper program and bloom in attics, bookcases, fireplaces, boats and bobbing in waterways across this nation.

Congratulations, Ole. 🦋

You can reach Ole Olsen by e-mail at wlmolsen@peoplepc.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Chuck:

I am writing this letter in response to the Isle Royale National Park Bridge commemorating **Roger Roth** (MYC-94) article written by **Cecil Hicks** (NCSB-62).

My brother was Roger Roth. The article touched me because my brother is not forgotten and his memory still continues in the smokejumper world.

Some of my brother's greatest and most positive experiences took place working on the trail crew and building bridges on Isle Royale. My family and I were thrilled when a bridge was built and dedicated in his honor. Now, some 15 years after my brother's death on Storm King Mountain (South Canyon Fire '94), a smokejumper writes about his life. Thank you for publishing Cecil Hicks article (*Smokejumper* Jan. 2010).

On the anniversary of Roger's death in July 2009, my wife Staci, along with mother Carol and father Wally (ages 72 and 75, respectively) hiked the rugged trail on Storm King Mountain to pay our respects to the 14 fallen

firefighters. Our climb reminded us that time with loved ones is so valuable and to not take a second for granted.

The way that I began to cope with the devastating loss was to do something to keep those fatalities from happening again. As a result of the deaths on Storm King Mountain, I decided to spend my life to honor Roger in a way that would be like building bridges as well.

By improving fire shelters and developing fire barrier curtains for engines, I hope to give firefighters a chance of surviving a fast-moving flame front. Hence **Storm King Mountain Technologies** was born and our work continues to save lives in burnovers.

Many wildland firefighters – especially in the smokejumper community – have been supportive of our efforts, and I cannot thank these individuals enough for their kindness and wise counsel over the years. Thank you again for the article and a great publication.

—Jim Roth, Camarillo, Calif.

“Leap of Faith” DVD – the CPS Smokejumpers

by Dick Flaherty (Missoula '44)

Richard Hostetler of Goshen, Ind., produced a DVD in 2006 about the Civilian Public Service Smokejumpers of World War II.

The project was initiated when his friend **Harvey Weirich** (MYC-44) – who had served in the CPS unit – decided to skydive at the age of 80. The DVD program is an hour-long film using a good bit of footage taken by CPS jumper **Lester Gahler** (MYC-43), who had purchased a 16-millimeter movie camera prior to his being drafted and brought it with him when he joined the CPS unit.

The first 40 minutes has audio as the dubbed-in voice gives an accounting of the U.S. Forest Service experimenting with the concept of using parachutists to fight forest fires. There are also current (from 2006) interviews of some of the conscientious objectors relating their draft experiences and their involvement in making the decision to volunteer to be smokejumpers.

The last 20 minutes is a silent presentation of the original Gahler footage as he edited it, with some text explanations, for the Forest Service to use in interpreting the program to the public.

Besides an extensive coverage of the early toughening-up training program, there are close-up shots of the Eagle and Slotted Irvin chutes in use, and some excellent views of the Ford Trimotor doing landings and takeoffs.

You may have noticed in the “Off The List” column that Harvey Weirich just passed away Feb. 10, 2010, and Lester Gahler died back in 1990.

The producer of the DVD, Richard Hostetler, is in very poor health and has no spare copies of the DVD available at this time. The possibility of getting additional copies for sale is being explored. So if you're interested, send me a message at trf@flahartyfamily.com. 🙏



Alaska smokejumpers jump to early season wildfire out West, May 2009. (Courtesy Mike McMillan)

Hell of a Hole

by Dirk Chandler (Redding '64)

I don't know what **Bob Connor** (RDD-64) and I did wrong to promote the wrath of somebody, but we did.

On an extremely hot afternoon, one of the bosses told us to grab a couple of shovels and fill in a hole out by the training area. When we got to where the hole was located, we about dropped our drawers.

I checked with Bob and neither of us could remember the exact dimensions, but the hole was approximately 10 feet long, eight feet wide and at least six feet deep. We had no idea what the hole was intended for.

There were no protective barriers around the hole. If somebody had fallen in, Bob and I would have had to just bury him because he would have probably been dead.

We started to fill in the hole and, after about a half-hour passed, we had made no appreciable difference in the level of the hole. We were soaked in sweat and not particularly happy. If we had all of the jumpers at the base helping us, we might have filled in the hole in a

day or so – maybe.

We happened to be adjacent to the Forest Service heavy-equipment depot. I looked around in exasperation and noticed a grader that belonged to the McCloud District, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, where I worked. Evidently it was there for repair or repair had been completed.

I asked Bob if he thought he could get it started; he said he thought he could. We climbed into the cab, and Bob was able to get it started.

The grader had a huge plow in the front that was primarily used for plowing snow. Bob maneuvered the grader into position, and I worked the plow lever.

I don't recall how many passes we made to push the huge mound of dirt into the hole, but it wasn't many. It might have taken about 15 minutes or less.

We returned the grader to its original position and spent the rest of the day applauding our efforts. It just shows what a little luck and jumper ingenuity can do to help in a desperate situation. 🦉

Earl Cooley Bowled With The Pros

by D. Ross Parry (Missoula '58)

In the early 1960s, **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) was one of the best bowlers in the Forest Service – at least in the Missoula area.

At that time I was also very enthused with bowling. I bowled in some of the same leagues as Earl. We bowled together, or against each other, in the Moose League, the Forest Service League and the Scratch League.

At that time, Earl had a pretty doggone good alley in his basement. It was an old-style alley where a pinsetter was required. There were a few times when he would invite me and my wife for a bowling get-together. He would hire a neighbor kid to set pins, and he and I would bowl. Mostly, it was much to the amusement, criticism and ridicule of our wives.

Earl and I traveled together to a few bowling tournaments around the area. I never earned enough in prize money to pay for the entry fees, but I think Earl

did a bit better – anyway, it was fun.

Sometime in the early 1960s, there was a professional bowling tournament in Spokane, Wash. Our local bowling establishment sponsored a “few” trips to bowl with the pros in Spokane. For a fee, you could enter and if you did well or better than most, you would earn an opportunity to go to Spokane and bowl with the pros in the pro-am event.

I entered and had a good series and qualified for the pro-am. However, I was in last place. I held that position for more than a week. On the last day of the qualification period, Earl entered. He bowled a really good series and knocked me off the list. It broke my heart.

Later, Earl told me that if he'd known that he would eliminate me from the qualifiers, he never would have entered. I absolutely and sincerely believed he meant it – but Earl Cooley bowled with the pros. I didn't. 🦉



Slingload picked up from Rock Slough fire, Upper Yukon Zone, July 2009 (Courtesy Mike McMillan)