

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2012

# SMOKEJUMPER



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## Message from the President



by John Twiss  
(Redmond '67)  
PRESIDENT

I WAS ASKED recently: "What do you guys and gals do at the National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors meetings besides drink beer?"

Good question. I remember the evening beer drinking quite well; it is always the best part – but I had to think about the actual meetings.

Seriously – the board meets twice a year, spring and fall, for a day and a half. We usually have about 15 board members in attendance who come ready to report out from assignments taken on at the previous meeting.

The meetings usually begin with a presentation by Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management fire leadership and smokejumper base managers. We try to stay current and learn of the emerging issues facing today's jumpers. We ask where and how we can help.

The next subjects usually revolve around money and membership. How many members do we have and how are our finances? Who are the new Life Members? You don't have much of an

organization without members and a solid base of funding.

That discussion usually leads to reminding ourselves of our mission: "The NSA, through a cadre of volunteers and partnerships, is dedicated to preserving the history and lore of smokejumping, maintaining and restoring our nation's forest and grassland resources, being an advocate – where appropriate – for the smokejumper program, and responding to special needs of smokejumpers, pilots and their families." We also consider why we exist, as well as better ways of raising membership and funds.

Membership is about 1,700 jumpers, pilots and associates – with 264 Life Members – and our net worth is close to \$500,000. Not bad for a bunch of nitwits who jump out of airplanes!

We listen to presentations on our smokejumper history program, smokejumper database, Smokejumper magazine, expanding trails and facility program, website development and NSA merchandise program.

Each of these presentations and discussions is led by very capable volunteer board members I am so thankful to have. They assume the responsibility for the program, don't whimper and do a great job.

Want a busy job? Try being the NSA treasurer, magazine editor, or membership coordinator. Charlie Brown, Chuck Sheley and John McDaniel, you are saints. Well, maybe that's going too far.

Perhaps my favorite part of the meeting – next to the social we

have on Friday night to which we invite every smokejumper and pilot within 100 miles of our board meeting site – is the discussion on the philanthropic part of our mission. What smokejumper, pilot or family member needs some help? Can we do more with our Scholarship and Good Samaritan

programs? Whom do we need to recognize for his or her smokejumper or NSA leadership?

We conclude each meeting on Saturday afternoon with an endorsement of new board members, a good-bye and thanks to vacating board members and a critique of the meeting. You

can read the board minutes (and get the future meeting dates and locations) on the NSA website.

Interested in rolling up your sleeves and becoming an NSA board member? Give any of us a call. We also welcome your visit and participation at any board meeting. ☺

# The Resurrection of Aunt Clarey's Remedy

by Major L. Boddicker (Missoula '63)

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

The 1960s was a decade famous for hippies, the Beatles, Woodstock, Haight-Ashbury, and general chaos and rebellion.

Most 1960s jumpers were too busy doing responsible things to be hooked up with any of those phenomena. We were more into Maggie's Bend, the Rex Rooms, the Heidlehaus, the Ox, Talon's, the Gold Strike Saloon, and the Montana Club – establishments for gentlemen. Maggie's Bend was USFS-approved, proven by the fact that Forest Service trucks were parked there on Friday afternoons in 1962 and 1963.

To give you an idea of the intelligence and quality of the entertainment at Maggie's, LeAnn had a master's degree in English literature – so I was told.

It was a time of transition in smokejumping. Light down bags replaced paper sleeping bags. Frozen-fresh meals that we cooked in boiling cans of water replaced Forest Service canned rations. Those meals were better than what some of us ate at home. The D-bag parachutes, a great relief, replaced the standard deployment parachutes. Small Homelite chainsaws replaced misery whips. Jumping was so much more enjoyable in 1968 than it was in 1963.

The average 1960s jumper, before 1965, graduated in 1960-62. In 1966 *Time* magazine named the 25-and-under generation the "Man of the Year" because, as a group, we were mature, squared-away guys who set up goals and went for them in socially acceptable ways. Well, I won't argue with that. I'm not sure I set up goals. I'm not sure I knew what a goal was other than a football score.

The average post-1965 jumpers were more in tune with mischievous instigators who were amazing at coming up with off-the-cuff, outrageously funny stunts. Hell-raisers might be putting their behavior in a more realistic context.

When I terminated in late August 1964 at Grang-

eville, my general thoughts of my esteemed compadres were they were mature and squared-away guys, full of fun and energy, but responsible and sensible.

When I returned to Missoula in 1968 and entered the jump list, hit the Missoula bars and nightlife, all I remember thinking was: Where the hell did these guys come from?

My 1963 trainee buddies had moved up into squad leader positions or were gone. There I was in the midst of this new generation of jumpers, the old man at age 26 and still a private. What did I do? When in Missoula, do what the Missoula jumpers do? No way!

Fortunately, 1968 was a very busy summer, so I did not spend much time in Missoula getting into trouble.

Being married with three little kids, Jan and I rented a small house just north of Lolo, Mont. Since I was married, I was not carousing in Missoula during my nighttime hours and was available by phone most of the time. **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) knew that and took great pride in calling me at the most inopportune times to announce I was needed immediately to load up for a ground-pounder fire somewhere.

When I straggled into the loft at 5 a.m., he would be there with a big grin on his face, as if to say, "Oh, sorry – did I interrupt something?" Well, the overtime was good in 1968.

The crew would grumble and get our gear ready, then sit around the loft and wait for two hours before we

loaded into the DC-3 and headed for some gawdawful place and fire. It was hot, which was a good thing because they left the door open in the DC-3 so the rabble-rousing guys could barf out the door. They regularly bombed Utah, Nevada, and Idaho on our way to Arizona, California and Oregon, which was much better than dropping that load into their helmets.

Of course, not all late 1960s Missoula Jumpers were hell-raisers, but they are easier to remember than the quiet guys who read the Bible and said the Rosary as we prepared to fight hell's fires.

We had lots of nicknames for each other – which may or may not have had meaning – like the Kibbie Let-Down Kid, Digger, Butch, Great Gray Whistling Squirrel, and Denny Big Log. The Bear and Bo-Dick-Her were the most-used nicknames for me.

All jumpers remember how legends start among jumpers. Usually some innocent problem arises and someone brilliantly comes out of the ranks and solves it. The jumper thereafter has been remembered for his ingenuity.

There were brilliant moments that are associated with jumpers, which allow me to instantly remember their names during these years of my fading memories.

This brings me to my story. This story is rotten, totally improper, and I would not repeat it except that it portrays real MSO jumper history as it was, over 40 years ago. I am sure nobody else will tell it because it

## Elections for NSA Board of Directors

### Chuck Sheley, Election Committee Chair

**T**he Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at various places in the Pacific Northwest. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2012.

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

Election timeline and procedures:

1. Jan.-Feb. 15, 2011, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 15.
2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
3. Ballot sheet inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
4. Ballots must be received by May 20.
5. New board members to take office July 1, election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

Please call, write or email for your filing papers. My contact information is on page three of this issue. The time to act is *now*!





*Boddicker's inspiration for the trombone pump enema: Clara (Davis) Noeller, circa 1947, when she was applying her remedy for "worms and fidgeting" to great nephews and nieces. (Courtesy M. Boddicker)*

takes someone with credentials like mine to remember that this had some sliver of significance.

It started as a personal experience in my youth. There was a crazy old great-aunt in my family by the name of Clara (Davis) Noeller (a.k.a. Aunt Clarey). She had homesteaded with my great-uncle at Powell, S.D., in 1908 on a farm that bordered the wagon road between the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation and the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

Indians passed there frequently and would stop and beg for food and water for their horses. Aunt Clarey said she would feed them when she had food and would chase them out of her house with a broom when she didn't. This was 18 years after the first Wounded Knee Massacre. The Sioux called her "the crazy woman with a broom," which she knew in the Lakota language and was proud of the name.

We kids hated to see her come. She got some weird, damned pleasure out of torturing us. As all kids were then, we would run, jump, scream, and fidget, which to her indicated we had worms. And – you guessed it – her remedy for that was Ivory soap in very warm water squirted up our small butts with a rubber tube attached to a hot water bottle. That sure as hell got the worms out. You can understand why Aunt Clarey was not our favorite person.

Now Boddicker, what the hell does that have to do with smokejumping? I'm getting to it; just hold on.

My very first fire after new-man training in 1963 was in Yellowstone Park, a large pounder fire. We fought it valiantly, as usual, under very nasty conditions.

It was very cold at night, and we were bivouacked in a cattail swamp. During the day it was very hot, and we cut line in a type of grass that was like cutting high-quality carpet (very dense). Our hands were solid, bleeding blisters after the first six hours. We chopped pieces out of the line with the ax head of the Pulaski. It was miserable with a capital M.

On the fire were several esteemed overhead (EOs). I liked all of them. One of them was growing grumpy and standoffish. The longer we spent on the fire, the grumpier he got, and he would go off by himself and set up his camp to avoid us.

One night, a bunch of us were sitting around the cook fire, telling stories, and someone asked what was wrong with esteemed overhead No. 1. The discussion dropped to a whisper because nobody wanted to have EO hear our conversation. He was a tough SOB.

After 47 years, I don't exactly remember the conversation, but it went something like this:

"He gets plugged up on fires; can't s—; the longer the fire, the more plugged he gets and the grumpier he gets," older Jumper No. 1 said.

“What do you mean, he can’t s—?” exclaimed Jumper No. 3.

“How bad is it?” Jumper No. 2 asked.

“Well, I have been there and it ain’t funny. You would use a corkscrew, if you had one, to fish the damned turd out,” said Jumper No. 1.

“Why does he get plugged up? These Forest Service rations sure keep me regular,” remarked Jumper No. 3.

“Well, I suppose he’s not drinking enough water, plus nerves – just getting your system thrown out of whack will do it,” I said. At the time I was taking parasitology and wildlife management in college and was educated in that sort of stuff: scatology – the study of poop.

“Well, I feel sorry for him. He really turns into a bear after four or five days being constipated,” said Jumper No. 1. “Wish there was something we could do for him.”

“I just happen to know how to help him,” I stated flatly, recalling my least-favorite great-aunt Clarey’s child-abuse efforts toward my small bottom.

“Oh, bulls—,” said Jumper No. 3.

“Let me tell you how; then you tell me if we should suggest it to EO. I don’t have a clue how he would take it. I sure don’t want to piss him off!” I exclaimed in a whisper.

“Shoot, man. What can it hurt?” said Jumper No. 2.

“Well, we heat up a couple of pints of water and chip up a bar of fire-pack soap in it, and stir it well. Then we pour it into our trombone piss pump. He bares his butt, bends over, someone squirts a couple tablespoons of the soapy water up his butt. I guarantee he’ll s— like a Christmas goose. What do you think?” I described. I wondered what Mr. Trombone would think about using his piss pump that way.

“For Christ’s sake, who would do it?” Jumper No. 2 asked.

“Whoever knows EO best. That’s not me,” I said.

“Well, bulls—. You know how to do it. You do it!” exclaimed Jumper No. 3.

“Well, what do you think?” I asked. “Let’s vote – all in favor of suggesting this to EO, give me a signal.” I think I got five instant bird signs, which meant “yes.”

“Okay, now – who is going to ask him?” I asked. “Not me.”

“Well, how about we very diplomatically bring up the topic in conversation from here, loud enough EO can hear us? You know – talk about being plugged up and we all have the problem now and again, and what we do about it. You know, like we don’t know he’s having the problem. If he wants us to do it, he’ll come over and ask for help and nobody gets in trouble. We’ll be sort of smokejumper heroes,” said Jumper No. 1.

Jumper No. 1 was a teacher, older – a real diplomat.

So, that is exactly what we did, very diplomatically



*The trombone fire pump and ingredients for the remedy for fire fighter’s constipation, circa 1963. (Courtesy M. Boddicker)*

and seriously without four-letter words: repeated Aunt Clarey’s recipe for worms and constipation just loud enough EO could hear.

Very shortly EO sauntered over to the campfire with as much dignity as one can have, trying to walk around carrying a five-day log.

“Hey, guys – I overheard your discussion about having a cure for being plugged up,” EO said quietly. “I am really plugged up and I would like to try your remedy. It sounds like it should work,” he said.

“I’ll get the water and soap ready and get the pump set up,” I offered. “Jumper No. 1 would probably be the best for applying the soapy water.”

“Yeah, I’ll do it if that is okay with you,” Jumper No. 1 said to EO.

“Just take it easy. If I remember right it only takes a couple of tablespoons full,” I instructed.

So, on a gorgeous and cold starry night, beside a clear and rushing Yellowstone Park stream, Aunt Clarey’s medical procedure was applied with great dignity and skill to a full moon, so to speak.

It took just a few minutes after injection when the desired effect was obtained, resulting in a smiling EO and a feeling of relief for all of us. Who knew when it would be our turn?

As I wrote this story, I wondered if I had any evidence of the story in my notes or letters to my wife shortly after it happened. No luck. I remember the story was widely circulated among MSO jumpers at the time.

In a letter to my wife from Alaska in 1969, I mentioned that a jumper on an Alaskan fire had been seriously plugged up. He had given himself an enema with



a piss pump, which was a widely admired feat that was duly recorded in the jumper oral history. I wonder where he got the idea.

Missoula smokejumpers of the 60s were exceptionally multi-skilled. We learned lot of lessons we have carried through life.

Now I'm sure you jumpers have two questions:

Is this a true story? Come on guys, could Boddicker dream up something like this out of the blue? It is true!

Who was the esteemed overhead? I will take that secret to my grave. Besides, I only think I remember who it was; I'm not sure. He was a tough SOB. I can't remember any of the other jumpers who were there. If you were there in 1963 on the Yellowstone pounder fire, send me an e-mail or letter. ☿

*Major Boddicker can be reached at PO Box 999, LaPorte, CO 80535 or [critrcalln@larinet.net](mailto:critrcalln@larinet.net).*

# Guy Believed Religion Needed To Fit A Person's Cultural Understanding

by Thad Wilson

*(Copyright 2011, The Kansas City Star. Reprinted with permission.)*

Soon after I graduated and became a registered nurse, I volunteered to work at La Buena Fe clinic in Honduras. In a remote part of a poor Central American country, a few nurses handled all the health care needs of 5,000 people.

I found myself conducting minor surgery, delivering babies, diagnosing and prescribing—none of which was covered in my basic nursing education. To say that my faith was tested on a daily basis would be an understatement.

While there I met the most amazing man I have ever known. His name was Edward “Ed” Guy (MYC-60), and he lived life on the edge – first as a smoke-jumper in McCall during 1960-65 and again in 1969, and then as a missionary and activist in Latin America. To my knowledge he never owned anything besides his Bible. We would give him new boots and clothes, which he promptly gave to the poor.

We saw Ed only about once a month because he spent most of his time walking from town to town, sharing the good word. When he did stop by, the scenario was often the same. He would ask for some medicine, usually for an ill friend in the mountains who couldn't walk to the clinic. Then he would eat a meal large enough for an army.

We would then sit for hours discussing the intersection between religion and sociopolitical issues. Ed taught me that the two cannot be separated.

“Preaching salvation to a people suffering under an

oppressive regime is counterproductive to the message of Jesus,” he would say. While I readily agreed with this philosophy, I was challenged by his take on religion. I grew up believing that religion was something into which someone fit. Ed believed that religion had to fit into a person's cultural understanding to be relevant.

I was, at times, shocked by the way he conducted church services or responded to the poor mountain people of Honduras. At the same time, I was awed by the way these people responded to a faith that was within their understanding and cultural beliefs. Ed taught me that God isn't a middle-class white American, but a being that understands and meets peoples of all cultures within their cultural world.

Though he passed away in 2000, he continues to influence me to this day.

*Thad Wilson is one of 13 contributors writing the Faith Walk column. Write him at [faith@kcstar.com](mailto:faith@kcstar.com). Thad is looking for more stories about Ed Guy.*

*Off the List, “Smokejumper”, January 2002:*

**Edward E. Guy (McCall '60)**

*Just received a note from John Guy who informed us that his son, Edward, passed away on September 21, 2001, from a heart attack while living in Guatemala. Mr. Guy said that he was glad that Ed was able to attend the reunion in Redding, where he was able to visit with many old friends from McCall, and that his time at McCall was one of the happiest times of his life.*

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# BLAST FROM THE PAST

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## Historical Article Details Untimely Death Of Smokejumper- Trained Parachuting Doctor

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)

IN THE MISSOULA paper dated October 27, 1942, there was this headline: "Dr. Leo Martin Killed by Crash of Trainer Plane!"

The story read: "Captain Leo P. Martin, 39, of Missoula, Mont., and his pilot instructor, were killed Monday night in the crash of a commercial trainer plane near Walla Walla, Washington.

"Striking a power line, the flying school plane crashed in flames, witnesses said.



"Captain Martin was head flight surgeon at the Walla Walla Army Air Force Base.

"His wife, the former Bernice Hagens of Missoula, and her parents, witnessed the accident that took Dr. Martin's life.

"Dr. Martin became nationally prominent when he took parachute training under the direction of Missoula smokejumpers in 1940. His training was soon put to practical purposes when he flew to remote regions to give assistance to injured persons.

"National medical journals credit Dr. Martin with being the first surgeon in the United States to include parachute training as part of his training, and he was the subject of articles in a number of magazines on the basis of this unusual accomplishment.

"He was a native of Coram, Montana, where he attended school before going to Gonzaga in Spokane for his pre-medical work. He graduated from Creighton University in Omaha 15 years ago.

"He later was involved in a medical practice in Chicago. Among several locations in the west where he worked as a doctor was Philipsburg, Montana, prior to setting up his practice in Missoula. He will be deeply missed." ♣

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## Dave Russell: The Man Up Front

by Mike Marcuson (North Cascades '64)

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**D**uring 37 years of flying and dropping almost 9,400 smokejumpers and megatons of para-cargo, accumulating more than 12,505 flying hours in various type of aircraft in not so ideal flying conditions, and maintaining over 52 years of marriage, the above numbers are all big, and Dave Russell has earned them.

Hands up all personnel employed with the USFS/BLM between 1967 and 2004. If you jumped from an airplane, received air cargo, talked to the lead plane on retardant drops, flew to or from a project fire or, as a government employee, you were flown to or from a

government function, Dave could have been the man up front, left seat.

There should be lots of hands in the air. As many years as Dave flew us folks, there must be hundreds of stories about his exploits. Here are a few of mine from my Forest Service career.

Those of us who are older folks might well remember when back in the 1960s, at Winthrop, there was a long, dark-haired fella (how come he had long hair when the rest of us had 'standards'?) who would run, do push-ups, pull-ups, or some other of those gut-ripping, bone-breaking exercises we smokejumpers were doing.



Remember that same dark-haired fella running towards the airplane and not the hangar when the siren went off for a fire call? Dave was always as gung-ho as we smokejumpers to get into the air and reach that fire. Well, after almost 37 years of flying in the mountains, dropping smokejumpers and their cargo, coast to coast, north to south – including Alaska – and flying so many different types of “jump ships,” that dark-haired fella is now a silver-haired fella (yes, he still has his hair).

We smokejumpers could rely on Dave to get us out there and get our cargo on the ground so our part of the job could start. Dave was exceptional at seeing the same jump spot as the spotters, reading the wind and then lining up the aircraft for the drop, and maybe most importantly, hitting the spot on cargo drops. He never had to buy much beer for a bad drop.

Dave was always ready to add his input to a new project or an evaluation of new jump aircraft. During the off-season Dave learned to sew and joined us year-rounders at the sewing machines.

We would move the loft equipment to the cook shack, mainly because it had heat, and convert the mess hall into a sew shack for all the repair and building of equipment. Dave took to this project quickly, and in no time, he'd upholstered the interior of the R-6 personnel aircraft. He also worked on developing the “square” cargo chutes and long-line deployment systems.

Dave started his career in 1967 at Winthrop as co-pilot to Ken Cavin on the DC-3 (Ken, by the way, is retired and living in Redmond after his own illustrious flying career). Dave was hired as summer pilot in 1969 and flew R-6 Beech 18s.

We old guys still turn our heads to the sky when we hear that twin-engine Pratt & Whitney sound ... there is no echoing sound like it. On the ground, we knew when we heard that aircraft sound that good things were coming our way – paracargo, or more help.

I flew a lot with Dave during my career (1964-76) as a jumper, squad leader and training foreman. We had some heart-thumping times dropping jumpers and cargo.

In 1969, I was a squadleader trainee, just back from the military. During a small fire bust, **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40), also known as “Pappy,” asked Dave and me to take a load of paracargo up Eight Mile Creek and drop it to a fire ground crew. I was pretty excited.

The instructors, namely, **Terry McCabe** (NCSB-58), **Dick Wildman** (NCSB-61), **Bill Moody** (NCSB-57), **Keith Fitzjarrald** (NCSB-63), **Don Fitzjarrald** (NCSB-62), weren't there to show me “how to”; this time was my first “go-it-alone.” Dave and I loaded up the Twin Beech with water, food, tools and proceeded to fly up to Eight Mile Creek. When we located the fire on a ridge top, we did some figure eights, and dropped that paracargo



*Dave Russell (L) with co-pilot summer 1978 at NCSB (Courtesy Larry Longley)*

right on the ridge.

As we flew back to NCSB, the fire boss called on the radio and said: “Jumper ship, that was a good drop” – we thought so too – “but it was the wrong fire! We did not request any cargo.” WHOOPS!

As it turned out, there was another fire in the same drainage, but we dropped on the first one we saw. So the ground crew delivered the paracargo back to the base, and Dave and I flew it back up Eight Mile Creek. That time, we dropped it on the right fire.

We got to talking afterward and agreed that we actually had thought it strange that they would want a paracargo drop on that first fire, as there were plenty of roads around there. Pappy never said much about it afterward, but there's no doubt what he was thinking about us: “ROOKIES!”

Of course I have always blamed Dave for that mistake – just as he has always blamed me – but needless to say, it was a good lesson learned. Remember, in those years we did our locating using the township, range and section method – which wasn't the easiest to do at times – or we used geographical locations, as with Eight Mile Creek ... right, spotters?

Another time, Dave and I were taking the Twin Beech and four Redding Retreads – remember the retread program? – guys from the districts around Redding who would report for spring jump training, make the practice jumps, and go back to the districts until needed. We did that with a few fellas near NCSB.

Years later, looking back on those times, I have to admire those guys. They would be called to report for jump duty, having only done practice jumps in the spring, and then be sent out to various jump bases to end up jumping into some really treacherous situations. By that, you all know what I mean: high winds, rough

and rocky terrain, bad fire conditions – and raw nerves.

This particular fire trip for Dave and me was up Lost River, and thinking back on it, I am really not sure why we jumped in some of those places, but we did. This small fire was up the side of the canyon in a small, level clearing, and the smoke was going straight up.

Dave and I and the jumpers all saw the spot, and I explained: “There is no drift, no wind; it will be an easy jump; open up and spiral to the spot and call us when you’re down.” But all they could focus on was the terrain, rocks and cliffs.

Dave made the final turn. There were two jumpers ready and over the spot, and I turned and slapped one on the shoulder ... but he turned to me instead, wide-eyed, and asked, “*Now?* You want me to go *now?*” It was too late.

“No, no, not now,” I said. “We’re way past the spot,” and I put the strap back on the door. Dave turned and looked back, knowing we were far past the exit point.

“What’s going on?” he asked. So Dave and I had a quick conversation, and then I talked to the jumpers and we lined up to do it again. Success this time; both jumpers jumped out and landed exactly where we all wanted them.

Dave became a full-time USFS pilot in 1970, stationed out of NCSB until the end of 1979, flying the DC-3 and/or Beech 99. I was detailed to R-8 in the spring of 1972 with **Mick Swift** (CJ-56) and the Cave Junction crew – I’m not sure how I got in that group as the only outsider in the detail – but Chris Hanes, R-8 head pilot, brought the Beech 99 to Tri-Cities, Va., as a potential jumpship; you know, get there faster, more men on the ground!

We proceeded to put in a static cable and did some jumps. “Fast” is right; that thing could cover the ground. I said it was so fast it burned a hole in the air. When that R-8 Beech 99 came to R-6, Dave was the pilot selected to “learn” that aircraft and evaluate it for a jumper aircraft in the mountains of the west. He flew to every jump base in R-6, and all jump personnel on those bases jumped the Beech 99. Dave was happy he was flying a great aircraft, and we were happy to be getting jumps.

After R-6 evaluation completion, he flew the 99 to Missoula to deliver his report to MEDC, which was for the final approval of the Beech 99.

A lot of us remember using the Beech 99s for the next several years in R-6 and R-4. I remember because it was so fast it actually scared some jumpers who were used to the Beech 18. The old Beech 18 would just roll with the gusts – but that Beech 99 aircraft really bounced around in winds.

From 1980 through 1983, Dave transferred from NCSB to Redmond, flying the Twin Otter for four years.

After Redmond, Dave went into R-4 McCall from 1984 to 1992, now dropping jumpers and cargo with the Beech 99, DC-3, Turbine DC-3, Twin Otter, Kingaire 90, and Aero-Commander, plus flying the Beech Baron as lead plane for tankers on retardant drops.

While based at McCall, Dave retired in March 1992 after 24 years with the USFS where he had earned the title of Assistant to the Deputy Regional Air Officer. There must be numerous Dave Russell stories from jumpers and pilots working in R-6 and R-4.

Dave’s smokejumper dropping career did not stop after retiring, however. He became a contract smokejumper pilot with the USFS/BLM during the summers of 1992 to 2006, after which Dave closed his log books, took off his sunglasses and started real retirement.

Here is where and what he flew as a contract pilot after USFS retirement, until finally closing his log books. Dave’s log books are very concise, and every aspect has been noted: where, who, what, when – all of that information. If ever you ask for some special information, just give him time; he will find it and more.

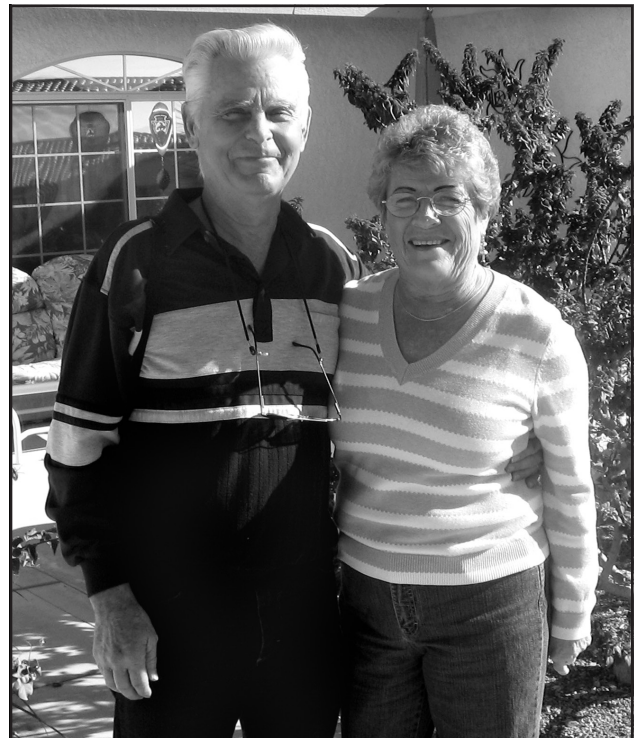
1992 – out of Redding USFS flying Twin Otter

1993 – did not fly jumpers; contracted to fly fish out of Alaska with DC-3

1994 – out of West Yellowstone USFS flying the Twin Otter

1995 – out of NCSB USFS flying the Twin Otter

1996-98 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the EMB 110



*Dave and Nila Russell 2008 (Courtesy Larry Longley)*



1998 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the EMB 110  
 1999 – out of Boise USFS flying the Twin Otter  
 2000 – out of Boise USFS flying the Turbine DC-3  
 2001 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Turbine DC-3  
 2002 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Casa 212  
 2003 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Casa 212, but ended jump season in Missoula  
 2004 – out of Fairbanks BLM flying the Casa 212  
 2005-06 – qualified for dropping jumpers but was not required. (Dave wanted to retire after 37 years continuous full-time flying, so he accepted employment 2005-06 as an “on demand” relief captain.)

During his contract flying and USFS/BLM flying, Dave flew and dropped jumpers and cargo out of every smokejumper base in the western U.S., including Alaska, and all of the Region 8 bases in the East. In 1974, he flew the USFS R-6 Beech 18 and NCSB jumpers Bill Moody, Don Fitzjarrald and Phil Cloward – head of Fire Control for the Okanogan National Forest – to Whitehorse, Yukon, at the request of the Canadian Yukon Territory Forestry and participated in a presentation of the smokejumper program.

While there, Dave and the crew completed several demo jumps around the Whitehorse area. That demo helped set up the contracts for the private Canadian companies’ International Forest Fire Systems (IFFS) from 1975 to 1977 and Kusawa Contracting Ltd., known as Yukon Smokejumpers, from 1978 to 1995.

We smokejumpers would think this amount of flying would be enough. But Dave had other places to fly, so over some of the “off-seasons” he continued to fly in various places. He contracted to the International Red Cross in 1995 out of Geneva, Switzerland, where he flew the Turbine DC-3 in war-ravaged Angola, West Africa.

His stories of flying those mercy missions, while living in those really remote airfields, show his love of flying and, as well, his real love of service to others. Dave reports that several times while delivering humanitarian supplies, bullet holes appeared in the fuselage of the aircraft he flew. It’s likely that bullets were fired by both sides of the conflict; each side thinking the airplane was working for the other side – Red Cross symbol or not, painted on the aircraft.

While in Angola, Dave also flew the four-engine DeHaviland Dash-8 on those missions, which he states is an amazing aircraft.

In the off-seasons of 1997 and 1998, Dave and Nila, his wife, traveled to the Republic of Maldives, off the east coast of central Africa, where he flew tourists to various islands in the Twin Otter on floats. At slow tourist times in the Maldives, Dave and Nila had the opportunity to be tourists themselves and hop a ride on one of the aircraft to get out to one of the exotic island

resorts for sun and sand.

But Dave’s eyes really light up when talking of what is probably his favorite off-season job. In 2000 and 2001, he flew the hydraulic, ski-equipped Turbine DC-3 from Oshkosh, Wis., to Antarctica, working for the National Science Foundation and flying to all the international bases on the icy continent.

If you ever have the chance, be sure to ask Dave about some of his pictures and the flying conditions down under when, during a severe wind storm, he had to start engines and fly the Turbine DC-3 on the ground with one wing tethered, because the winds were so severe the aircraft would want to fly itself.

He can relay some fascinating stories of flying rescue missions, or of flying scientists out in the Antarctic to gather meteors from the surface of the ice.

First, Dave is among the elite for flying smokejumpers and paracargo, then among the elite for flying in Antarctica. Not many pilots can put those feathers in their caps, and you would have to put those feathers in Dave’s cap yourself – because he does not thump his own drum. Ask Dave what his favorite airplane is of all the aircraft. Check out his e-mail address: [dc3tpilot@hotmail.com](mailto:dc3tpilot@hotmail.com).

Dave also had two employee suggestion awards in his career. The first was in 1976, when he submitted the Fire Behavior Report to the Region 6 office. I was lucky to work with Dave on finalizing that suggestion.

The Fire Behavior Report was a phonetic letter-and-number system used to describe fire behavior over the radio and, if requested, the report could be accurately repeated and a record saved. All fire personnel found problems repeating word-for-word fire conditions from memory or due to radio malfunctions. The pilot/spotter could transmit the FBR report, and the dispatcher would mark the letters and numbers on their report and determine the action taken.

The second award, in 1982, and also submitted in Region 6, was for the use of the Long Range Navigation (LORAN) system to locate and plot forest fires using longitude and latitude. To test the LORAN, Dave had to acquire and install the units in the aircraft, but thanks to his engineering, this was not difficult. The LORAN has since been replaced by the GPS.

So how did Dave get into the USFS? Well, in the summer of 1958, Dave owned and flew his airplane, a military trainer – Interstate Cadet – into the Methow Valley. Dave was hired on an engineering contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a topographer to stake and build a road into Slate Peak, in the heart of the Cascade Mountains (flying time out of NCSB about 15 minutes west).

Slate Peak was to be one of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) point radar sites constructed in the 1950s and

60s and would become a USFS lookout station. That contract, and the fact that he flew his own aircraft in the Methow Valley, led Dave to meet Francis Lufkin, who started many of us on smokejumping careers.

When R-6 needed pilots, Francis contacted Dave and the history started. Upon arriving at the Methow Valley in 1958, Dave was single, but he soon met Nila Lundgren – a local rancher girl from Winthrop – wooed her, married her and flew her out of the valley.

In those 34 years of dropping smokejumpers and their cargo, ferrying fire and administrative personnel, moving tourists from island to island, flying mercy missions in Africa and scientists in Antarctica, Dave and Nila managed to put together more than 52 years of marriage (no small feat in itself these days). They raised two sons, Brett and Les, and daughter Debbie, became the grandparents of six, planted and harvested fruit crops, and built several houses. Congratulations to them.

Dave and Nila also owned and flew their own aircraft to many places in North, Central and South America. There are some good stories of some of those flights, too; such as the time he had to dead-stick land his amphibian on the Okanogan River when his fuel line disconnected, after which one of his passengers caught a Greyhound bus instead of flying again.

During deployment to the many jump bases Dave was working in the summer season, he usually flew the aircraft. Nila would hook up the tag trailer and head out cross country to meet Dave at the jump/retardant base.

Nila, like many of our companions, has some stories of her travels to and from jump bases. No doubt she has traveled a few hundred thousand miles on the nation's highways. The couple now reside part-time in Winthrop, Wash., and in Lake Havasu City, Ariz., and while traveling north and south, spend time visiting with family.

If any of you are “snowbirds” – northern folks heading south in pursuit of good weather in winter – or “desert rats,” or just want to stop by to visit them, then you have to travel through Western Arizona, along the Colorado River on U.S. 95, just south of I-40, and you will travel through Lake Havasu City. This is where Dave and Nila reside from late September to May.

They both like to visit and share travel stories and experiences, and always have beer in the fridge. Dave always had a camera close by or around his neck and has a great collection of photos, so if you stop to visit him, you'd better take a sleeping bag – because once he gets his pictures out and starts into them, the memories will flood your mind.

He has some great pictures and videos of forest fires and the action and sequence around dropping retardant, smokejumpers and paracargo. My interest was piqued when I viewed just some of his fire bust pictures, from

1970, when NCSB hosted more than 170 jumpers from all bases.

There's the picture showing five or six jump DC-3s and Beech-18s parked around and across from the administration shack; or the one showing the plane flying over Lake Chelan, Wenatchee National Forest, during that same bust, where you can see five major smoke columns in the picture and you are with Dave in the Beech 18 and just four jumpers! Photos like these instill adrenaline rush memories.

For many years Dave was curious as to what it was like to be under a parachute, so in 1986, while dispatched to Coolidge, Ariz. to fly lead plane, he ventured over to the local skydiving school. Raising his hand, he took some ground training, and he has entered into his log book three static-line jumps.

I had visited with Dave and Nila at other NCSB functions, but you know reunions: folks travel a long way to get there, tears are flowing, there are hugs – and never enough time to visit with all the people. The events flash by, and you are still looking to talk some more “remember whens ...” Nevertheless, it was at the 2007 NCSB reunion at the Saturday dinner that I really reconnected with Dave and Nila.

It was great to reminisce about our ventures in the past and what we were doing now, and to learn that they and we were RVers and lived part-time in Arizona. It had been a while since we'd last met; I had left USFS/NCSB and emigrated to Canada in 1976, to train smokejumpers in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. I'd also started an industrial sewing business catering to cargo/rescue gear and had lost contact with almost all of my smokejumper associates.

Now my wife, Mary, and I are retired RVing snowbirds. In the course of our travels, we decided to catch up on some of my past, and we stopped in to visit the Russells in Lake Havasu City. My only regret is that we should have done it sooner. We have since become very good friends and look forward to our time together. Of course, Nila and Mary have to use the big shovel to clean up after us.

Quote from Dave Russell: *“I can honestly say I cannot remember a time that I did not enjoy working with the smokejumper group. They are well-respected and highly professional. Their dedicated attitude towards firefighting and smokejumping during my 34 years will always be the highlight of my lifetime.”*

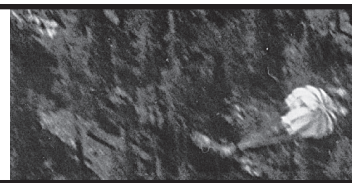
*“I will always say: Remember that it was ‘the men in the back’ who really coordinated the aircraft jumper missions that produced an excellent team for successful and safe mission.”*

Quote from Mike: *“I say it takes a good man up front to finish in the back.”* 🍌





# THE JUMP LIST



*The Jump List is intended to bring you up-to-date on your fellow NSA members. Send your information to Chuck Shelley; see his contact information on page 3 of this magazine.*

**W.H. "BILL" BRANDT** (Missoula '47)

**Now living in:** Corvallis, Ore.

**Jumped:** MSO 47

**Since jumping:** Graduated from University of Montana with a bachelor's degree in Botany in 1950, and from Ohio State University with a Ph.D. in Botany in 1954; worked as research biologist at the B.F. Goodrich Research Center in Brecksville, Ohio, until 1956; joined the science faculty of Oregon State University, retiring from there in 1990; while in Oregon, active in Republican politics, civic theater, the Santiam Pass Ski Patrol, art collecting, singing groups, and two terms as president of the Oregon State Chapter of the American Association of University Professors; spent a week on NSA's Trail Maintenance Project at Beaver Creek in the Flathead National Forest in 2007; spent six years on the board of the American Historical Print Collectors Society; published a book, *Interpretive Wood-Engraving: the Story of the Society of American Wood-Engravers*, in 2009.

**STARR JENKINS** (Cave Junction '48)

**Now living in:** San Luis Obispo, Calif.

**Jumped:** CJ 48, MSO 49

**Since jumping:** Joined **Dave Burt** (MSO-47) in June 1950 to parachute into Glen Canyon – before the dam was built – to take a float trip in an inflated life raft for six days down the Colorado River, visiting Rainbow Bridge on a side trip en route; make it through in fairly good shape; got married and taught high school English and history for five years in Albuquerque, N.M. (my home town at the time); then joined U.S. Forest Service in the Albuquerque Regional Office as writer and photographer for four years; had attended Stanford University in 1951-52, and completed a creative writing thesis and got a Master's degree in English seven years later; with this degree was able to teach in college and was accepted to do so at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo; main career was 27 years of teaching English.

**Starr says:** "I've written and published two books of interest to anyone concerned about smokejumping. They are *Smokejumpers*, '49: *Brothers in the Sky* and *More Than My Share – An Adventure Memoir*. There are many aerial-forestry and park-ranger adventures in the second

one. I'll send a signed copy of each of these books to anyone sending me a check for \$30 for each book. I'm age 85 now. I've been retired for almost 23 years! Both my wife Stella and I are grateful to still be in reasonably good health and able to walk around and do things. We had our 60th wedding anniversary in August 2010 and to celebrate took our first cruise to Alaska to see some of that great land. While in Fairbanks I was able to deliver gift copies of both of those books to the BLM smokejumper base at the airport through one of the young jumpers – **Jason Schroeder** (FBX-08) of Truckee, Calif. – who came over to our tour to pick them up. They were given to honor **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65), longtime Alaska jumper and author of *Jumping Fire*, the greatest smokejumping book so far written."

**HAROLD "HAL" WERNER** (North Cascades '48)

**Now living in:** Spanaway, Wash.

**Jumped:** NCSB 48-51, CJ 55, RDD 57

**Since jumping:** Following 1957 fire season, returned to Brigham Young University in Utah and completed bachelor's degree in Physical Education; was able to finance education costs after receiving GI Bill thanks to serving in the Korean War, 1951-55, as well as track and field scholarships as javelin thrower on BYU track team; set conference record and toured Europe with team; competed against future Norwegian Olympian Egil Danielson; also set personal best record with wooden javelin in Finland at 232 feet, 10 inches; returned to Washington State, where I grew up, in 1958 and completed a master's degree in Physical Education at Washington State University, with thesis being the first done on the West Coast about the technical aspects of analyzing javelin throwing success; after receiving teaching certificate, began career of teaching and coaching that continued from 1959 until 2010; first teaching assignment was in junior high for classes in reading, mechanical drawing and physical education; as I think back on those responsibilities, I realize that starting out being associated with that age level of young people taught me how to deal with the attitudes that affected these curious individuals, as they certainly taught me patience.

**Hal says:** "On the aspect of the athletic development, I am always reminded of a certain skinny individual who was classified by his classmates as being a 'sissy and

*Jump List continued on page 45*



## Wilderness Canoe Base – A Memorable Gathering With Fantastic Company

by **Fred Donner** (Missoula '59)

**W**ilderness Canoe Base 2011 was a combined Forest Service and church camp project involving jumpers, wives, associates and WCB staff. **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57), **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) and **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) – all NSA board members – brought their lovely wives, respectively Judy, K.G. and Marceil. (Note that I didn't say these were lovely couples – only that the wives were lovely.) Jim Cherry and Chuck Sheley need no introduction to readers, but I will add that they are two obsessive and compulsive characters. Jim is determined to eliminate invasive balsam fir in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, while Chuck left no stone unturned looking for dirty dishes as chief dishwasher. (My wife should have such a husband.)

John McDaniel, a retired Navy pilot, once the air boss on a nuclear carrier, had led our first Eastern states volunteer crew in West Virginia in June. John is a native West Virginia redneck, but he wore shoes for this project.

**Ed Schlachtenhaufen** (associate), now a retired Lutheran pastor in Wisconsin, was a junior high school, high school, forestry school, and seminary classmate of Jim Cherry. It seems that retired Lutheran pastors come in pairs like Roman Catholic sisters.

**Jack Heiden** (CJ-54) was an orthopedist in Madison, Wis., for 42 years until he tired of night calls. He is now a part-time Veterans Administration hospital doctor.

**Robert Miller** (MSO-61) retired from a career with the Alberta Forest Service after a short stint tiring of regulations in the U.S. Forest Service. He brought his friend, **Charles Paul** (associate), a retired copier repairman. Both Bob and Charles have extensive Habitat for Humanity experience, which proved useful.

Ed and Charles, as associate NSA members, were new, but all the jumpers had many previous projects. All the men, except one 60s kid, were in their 70s. (I didn't ask about the ages of wives. Contrary to popular opinion, I am not totally uncouth.)

I was on my fifth project and second Boundary

Waters project, coming easily from our second home in Minnesota. I was acclaimed by voice vote to write this report, mine the only “nay” vote. **Scott Belknap** (MYL-83), **Jack Atkins** (MSO-68), **Richard Trinity** (MSO-66) and WCB staff member Christian Bane will be adding their separate report on the Forest Service project completed.

None of this would have happened without the outstanding work of Drew Heinonen, WCB manager. Drew was a WCB canoe guide for three years before he became manager. After graduating from a Lutheran college, Drew studied lutherie and became a Lutheran luthier. Those jumpers who never finished school and never learned to use a dictionary can have someone look up these words.

### What is WCB?

WCB is a Lutheran church camp begun in 1956. During his active pastorate, Jim Cherry was WCB director for 10 years from 1973; thus the obvious connection as to how NSA got to WCB for now the second year.

It is located on Fishhook Island and Dominion Island at the end of the Gunflint Trail, about 58 miles northwest of Grand Marais, Minn. The Gunflint Trail is one of the longest school bus and postal routes in the country. About half of aptly named Fishhook Island is in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).

Main base on Fishhook is reached by watercraft from the Gunflint Trail in summer and by vehicle over ice in winter. The rustic timber, open-air chapel and other buildings on Dominion Island are reached by a magnificent cable-suspension bridge from Fishhook.

WCB has been partially destroyed by fire at least three times in its history. The many buildings, some of them massive, are scattered over approximately 40 acres on Fishhook and accessed only by rocky trails. Every single item that comes to either island is hand-carried to its destination. This includes heavy timbers, cement and steel, as well as all food and supplies.



There are no wheeled vehicles on either island. Electricity and telephone come by submarine cable from the mainland. Propane comes via the only under-water propane supply system in Minnesota. An electrical system supplies treated lake water for consumption and a propane-powered system supplies untreated water to a system of fire sprinklers.

The six outhouses at WCB are the eighth wonder of the architectural world. Since the rocky terrain does not lend itself to conventional digging, another solution was required. Each outhouse sits atop four six-by-six pillars extending ten or more feet in the air.

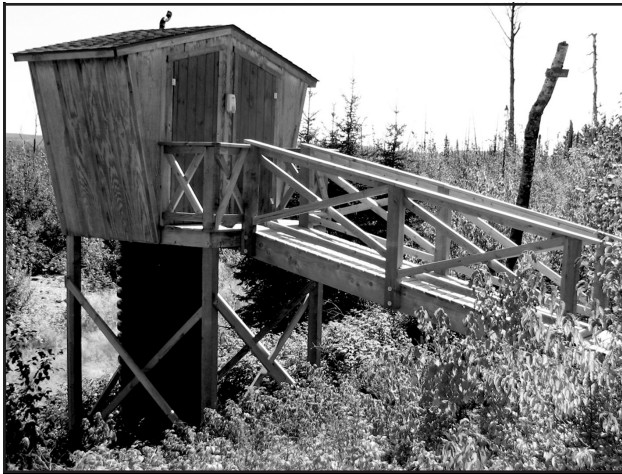
Each one is actually a duplex with two doors sharing an inside wall. An elevated wooden walkway reaches to the nearest rocky outcropping. The receptacle is a huge, vertical culvert pipe, perhaps five feet in diameter and at least 10 feet high. One does not go after dropped objects. The one pictured was inspired by Dr. Seuss.

## What did we do?

We were the only occupants of camp, arriving after the summer camping season and before fall and winter



*Top Row L-R: John McDaniel (CJ-57), Marceil McDaniel, Fred Donner (MSO-59), Jack Heiden (CJ-54), Ed Schlachtenhaufen (Assoc.), Charlie Paul (Assoc.), Jack Atkins (MSO-68). 2<sup>nd</sup> Row L-R: Scott Belknap (MYC-83), Chuck Sheley (CJ-59). 3<sup>rd</sup> Row L-R: Richard Trinity (MSO-66), K.G. Sheley, Judy Cherry. Bottom L-R: Jim Cherry (MSO-57), Christian Bane (WCB), Robert Miller (MSO-61). (Courtesy J. Cherry/J. McDaniel)*



*The duplex outhouse (Courtesy Fred Donner)*

retreats begin. The first day came wet, windy and cold and delayed the launching of the canoe crew. The second day was a little better and the canoeists departed. The rest of the week was warm, autumn shirt-sleeve weather, considerably raising morale.

For those of us who stayed at WCB, a principal project was “fire-wising” the many wooden structures. We were not “fireproofing” the camp by removing trees but trimming trees to chest height and removing ground clutter for about 10 yards around each building to reduce ground level fuels. We also cleared brush from fire sprinkler heads to get better water dispersion, if needed.

Another major project was removing high scaffolding from a newly constructed outhouse and carrying the heavy lumber to the dock for recycling. Bob and Charles, our Habitat veterans, with help from Ed and Jack, stained the faded exterior of the dining room and main lodge “Pinecliff” and somehow seemed to keep clean doing it. They also replaced some window frames, worn handrails and steps.

The aforementioned lovely ladies planned meals

with considerable help from Drew, the only WCB staffer present. Jim Cherry, as he usually does, brought lots of Iowa meat and vegetables and honey for the larder, telling us all how good Iowa products are. Everyone pitched in with kitchen and dining room chores. As “*a propos*” for a church camp, table grace was said or sung at every meal.

## Did we have fun?

Happy Hour arrived at 4:30 each afternoon in the Pinecliff lodge near the fireplace adjoining the dining room. We watched the “Smokejumper” DVD, a good experience for the associates and Drew. Drew took us on several water trips exploring Seagull Lake surrounding Fishhook and Dominion Islands.

Most evenings were spent around the Pinecliff fireplace. Luthier Drew and Christian entertained us with a musical program our last evening.

John and Marceil were sleeping upstairs, the only nighttime occupants of Pinecliff, and they were overrun by mice the first night. Five-gallon buckets, half-full of water with peanut butter bait suspended on rods across the top, were deployed the remainder of our stay. The “mouse count” of the mice drowned the night before was a featured announcement at breakfast. I suggested keeping a cat in Pinecliff and not feeding it too well.

Entertainment was furnished after lunch each day in the form of Ole-and-Sven and Ole-and-Lena jokes. This was to introduce Minnesota culture to the various non-natives present. Drew is a superb raconteur with same. You can Google “Ole and Sven” or “Ole and Lena” to get some of the flavor for yourself.

Once again, as I never tire of saying, we disguise our NSA projects as patriotism and public service, when actually we are reliving the best job we ever had with the greatest bunch of people we ever knew. 🙏

# From Telephone Wires To Tangled Antlers – The Little Trout Creek Fire

by “Wild Bill” Yensen (McCall ’53)

**G**ene Dickey (MYC-54) and I jumped this fire Sept. 2, 1954. Gene and I were sent to Chamberlain, Aug. 21, on a 10-day project to take down and roll up telephone wire.

Radios were coming in, and the old phone system

never worked very well because the storms that set most of the fires blew trees and snags over, which took down the wires and then the phones wouldn’t work. Also, the wires were dangerous to the elk, as they would get their antlers tangled up in the wire



and die of broken necks or starvation.

They flew us to Chamberlain in the Travelair, and we were packed out to a campsite somewhere down Chamberlain Creek where we went to work. We would have to climb the trees that had wires attached and get the wire down and the insulators off.

Once we got about a quarter-mile down, we would cut the wire and attach one end to a reel and wind it up; then we'd put it on the trail so the packer could find it and take it back to Chamberlain. During my first three years of jumping, I went on several projects to bring in the wire.

On the day we were supposed to go back to McCall, we returned to Chamberlain only to see the Travelair coming our way. It brought us jump gear, so instead of going back to McCall to clean up, we had to suit up and go jump this fire.

I was not very happy about this. The fire was right on the rim of the Salmon River on a west-facing slope. I was also disappointed that they brought me the elephant bag and jump gear belonging to **Miles Johnson** (MYC-53), but I got it on and we jumped.

It was about 1400 and we had about an acre of fire, so we set to work; we had it lined by dark and mopped up by about midnight. We were in the sun, which beat down all afternoon, and we really busted ass to get the fire out. Needless to say, we did a lot of sweating and drank a lot of water.

The next morning we got ready for breakfast and found we had used up all of our water, so we couldn't make coffee. In those days, we each only took a quart canteen and a gallon tin can that usually rusted, so we would change our water every few days when we were in camp in McCall. The canteen I used that year was a World War I issue stamped 1917.

We really needed to find some water. The nearest water we could see was in the Salmon River, way down there about three quarters of a mile and 4,000 feet below us. We looked in all the draws up the river and found no water.

We returned to camp and drank all the juice we had and then went downstream. Two ridges to the west, we came upon the Trout Creek Fire that had burned the year before. We followed the old fire line down some distance and found two five-gallon tin cans; one was half full of water. It was pretty rusty, but it was wet and we were thirsty!

We drank our fill, then filled our canteens and gallon cans and went back to camp. By that time it was late afternoon, so we checked the fire and didn't find any smokes. We sacked out, two very tired young men.

We packed up our gear the next morning and carried it to a trail that led down to Chamberlain. It

was pretty cold and I was glad of it, because I stepped over a log and nearly stepped on a rattlesnake that was coiled up under a small bush. On a hot afternoon I might have been bitten. I still have the snake's rattle.

As we thrashed through the bush with those blasted elephant bags, we came upon a little clearing that was covered with bones. In the middle were two bull elk skulls with tangled-up antlers. I was bummed because I had run out of film and they were much too heavy to pack.

I could imagine those two bulls fighting and getting locked up. One probably broke the other one's neck, got pulled down, and then probably starved to death. I saw two skulls with tangled antlers in a museum in Vernal, Utah, years later.

We met the packer on the trail. He took the elephant bags and put them on the mules; we then walked the rest of the 17 miles back to Chamberlain. The Travelair was there waiting for us, so we loaded our gear and flew away. It was so late that it got dark on the way back to McCall, and we had to land with the runway lights on.

Gene and I were very happy to be back in McCall, as we had been gone for two weeks. We went to the kitchen and got fed, checked our mail, and then we did what smokejumpers do – we went to the Yacht Club and had a beer. That was the end of the season for me, so the next day I terminated and headed back to college for my senior year. 🍷

## Interested In Being On A Trail Project Next Year?

The projects for the summer of 2011 were completed with over 150 participating in a week-long "vacation" on 19 projects in eight states.

The West Virginia project headed up by **John McDaniel** (CJ-57) was the first west of the Mississippi and involved a crew of 15 individuals, nine of them from the eastern states.

If you live in the east and are interested in organizing another project, contact John. He can help you. The projects for 2012 will be identified in January with the list posted on the website along with signup information.

If you have questions about the Trail Program, contact Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) at 406-251-1306 or [frederi920@aol.com](mailto:frederi920@aol.com).

# THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

HAVE YOU HEARD of the Waldron Creek Fire? I hadn't until an article in the *Great Falls, MT Tribune* in September.

**Dr. Charlie Palmer** (MSO-95) is writing a book on the fire which occurred on the Rocky Mountain Front, 30 miles west of Choteau, Mont., Aug. 25, 1931, and resulted in the deaths of five men fighting the fire.

The five men killed fighting the fire were Herbert Novotny of Great Falls; his friend Frank Williamson of Great Falls; Hjalmar G. Gudmundson of Arborg, Manitoba; Charles Allen of Pittsburgh; and Ted Bierchen of Chicago. Novotny was an African American while the others were white.

In the course of his research, Palmer discovered that Novotny – who is buried in Highland Cemetery in Great Falls – did not have a headstone. Palmer got a headstone donated and arranged to bring Novotny's family back to Great Falls to dedicate his headstone.

On Sept. 25, 2011, 80 years and one month after he lost his life fighting the Waldron Creek Fire, we gathered on a hot, windy, red flag day – a day probably much like Aug. 25, 1931 – to honor and remember Herbert Novotny.

His daughter attended, along with other members of his family; Charlie Palmer and his family; a local historian; members of the Great Falls African American community; and City Commissioner Bill Bronson. I was also present, as were members of the Raynesford-Kibbe Volunteer Fire Department, who brought a Type 6 engine and drove 40 miles to be there and pay their respects to a brother firefighter and his family.

Hymns were sung, prayers were offered up, and Bronson read a proclamation. It was a touching and meaningful ceremony.

Novotny's new marker reads: HERBERT NOVOTNY 3-9-07 – 8-25-31 GAVE HIS LIFE FIGHTING THE WALDRON CREEK FIRE "WE WILL REMEMBER"

Afterward, Novotny's daughter, Palmer and I joined others who walked up the hill from Novotny's grave and paid our respects to his friend, Frank Williamson. While that section of the cemetery has been maintained fairly well, Williamson's headstone has weathered to the point that it is nearly unreadable.

Of the men lost on the Waldron Creek Fire, only Frank Williamson and now Herbert

Novotny have headstones. Gudmundson and Allen are buried in unmarked graves in the Choteau Cemetery. Bierchen is supposed to be buried in St. Henry's Cemetery in Chicago but his grave has not been located.

A tip of the hard hat to Malisani, Inc. of Great Falls, the monument business which provided Novotny's headstone; Roy and Diane Volk of the Best Western Heritage Inn; and Palmer for making this event happen.

Palmer mentioned at the ceremony that the next step was to get markers for the men buried in Choteau. I personally would also like to see Williamson's marker re-sandblasted. I don't know if he has any family in the Great Falls area.

There is much more to this story, but I will let Palmer tell it. In the meantime, has anyone been able to locate the burial site of **Pfc. Malvin Brown** (PNOR-45)?

A tip of the hard hat to 7-year old Rachael Peterson of West Riverside-Bonner, Mont., who was one of the first people to report the West Riverside Fire which broke out on the evening of Aug. 22, 2011.

"We were playing Barbies on the porch and I heard a 'poof,' like a firework. Then I saw smoke and so I said, 'Uh oh – I should tell Dad,'" she explained.

Good job, Rachael!

The arson fire eventually went to 3,800 acres. No arrests have been made. ☹



# Going Full Circle: A Jump Home

by Cameron Chambers (North Cascades '04)

I woke in the sterile hotel room at 6 a.m. – day five of a boost and sore after a three-day fire on the Lewis and Clark. By seven I stood in front of the box for roll call.

I grouped in among the 20 other jumpers at the Missoula Aerial Fire Depot (ADF) between lockers hastily strewn with Kevlar jumpsuits and nylon parachutes. The pungent odor of stale fire smoke hung in the air. Everyone was bleary-eyed and zoned, some from a hard night in downtown Missoula and others from the fatigue that busy weeks of fire season accumulate – most from both.

Standing among the walls of records, the ops guy rambled the morning briefing – a predictable oration on the day's weather, fire reports, extra safety conditions, and whatever else got spouted that day.

Thirty-five years earlier, my father stood in the same spot getting about the same briefing. It was my first boost to Missoula, the duty station of my father's jump career. I'd been to the base several times – as a curious kid – for interviews, but never as a jumper with a chute hanging on the rack. And while a hungover 7 a.m. briefing is too early to piece together a major insight into the father/son jump connection, I found myself falling back to childhood memories.

There was the burn pile at the ranger station heaped head high with red needles, where I learned to drop fire from a drip torch. Lunches with Old Mike, the groundskeeper, and scavenger hunts in the back forty for discarded treasures.

These were the memories of a child euphoric with his forest playground. Then I recalled my high school days in suburban Helena, thinking my father a moron for sticking with the Forest Service.

I'd watched him move through the ranks, move the family for promotions, get passed up for promotions, and grow frustrated with the agency once studied as a model of efficiency.

As he moved up, he found himself inadvertently moving from the wood of the forest to the hard-planed wood of a sterile government desk. In the office environs, he was a man of action ground down by the lethargy of bureaucracy and politics. I watched for two decades a losing battle of a principled man fighting the standstill of productive forestry practices.

I recalled a vow made as a high schooler, among living room stacks of topo maps and legal briefs 400



*Cameron Chambers on last jump July 2010. (Courtesy C. Chambers)*

pages thick, not to follow my father into the misery of a green uniform. But there I was at the AFD, eating my words in place of the breakfast I skipped. Seven years into a Forest Service fire career and a permanent position later, I stood poised in the same exact position of my father.

After just seven years with the agency, it was clear the bull-nosed efficiency of "Pinchot's Boys" – for which the Forest Service staked claims on competence and land – no longer existed. I saw an agency riddled with problems, both self- and congressionally imposed, striving to cope with changing times and the changing values of Americans.

It lacked a true sense of itself or even what type of metamorphosis it would accomplish, given the opportunity. It seemed as if every year a new management philosophy, program or paradigm came down the pike. The agency expended its limited time and resources on implementation, only to disregard it the next year when the latest-and-greatest, end-all-be-all policy arrived. And despite two generations of observations, I broke my high school vow and laced my crusty boots for another day.

An hour after the morning briefing, the shrill sound

of the siren echoed through the concrete walls. Smokejumpers hustled to get their 85 pounds of gear on in the right order. As I hung my reserve parachute in place and grabbed my helmet, I overheard the spotter say “the Lolo.” It was short for the Lolo National Forest and was, coincidentally, where my formative years were spent while my father served as the Superior District ranger.

The plane was off the ground into the dense smoky air that has become summer in Missoula. Crammed next to each other, we tried to steal glances out the boxy windows of the Shorts Brothers Sherpa, hoping to be the first to glimpse fate as if a fractional second head start might somehow prove an advantage.

Out the left side windows, our fire burned mid-slope. It grew from two acres the night before to 15 that morning. The local fire staff wanted the 10 smokejumpers to bolster the efforts of the local firefighters already on the ground and corral it before it became any larger. Their real concern was that the fire might spread to the nearby town of St. Regis, the location for the Superior District ranger’s government housing.

Too focused on the tight, steep jump spot into which I was trying to maneuver my parachute, it didn’t occur to me, but as I made my way from sky to earth I could easily see the brown shingled roof of my first home. It was there that I got my first feel of fire and I’m sure the culprit that led me to sign up for a Forest Service fire crew during college summer breaks.

I lived in that brown-shingled house in the summer of 1988 when I was 6 years old. For me that was just old enough to start remembering, and those images of ’88 stay with me longer and stronger than most.

The fire of 1988, and probably the decade, was the Yellowstone Park Fire. It burned 793,000 acres of America’s favorite national park and, to this day, continues to maintain such a preponderance of importance that many forget that the rest of the Western United States was on fire as well.

While my father was called to Yellowstone, along with 15,000 other firefighters, there were also lines of yellow school buses and rows of yellow-shirted firefighters outside our front window.

They had been brought in from places like Harlowtown, Hardy and Big Sandy to deal with our local fires. They came in every evening around 8 o’clock to eat hot food out of big white buckets and fall asleep in disheveled rows of rectangular, yellow government sleeping bags.

Sometime between that summer’s catching of turtles and building of forts, the images of my father discussing plans for the Yellowstone Fire on the NBC

Nightly News and haggard, black-faced firefighters on my lawn must have stuck with me.

For an impressionable adolescent in a forestry community, it all seemed so heroic. It was the closest thing I had in real life to the GI Joe cartoons I watched every Saturday – uniformed men carrying dangerous-looking tools and talking in gruff, Copenhagen-lipped voices.

The blood-red sunsets of smoke-filled skies and images of 200-foot flames shooting from running crown fires solidified my notions that those firefighters were going to battle. They were real American heroes, and of course, I wanted to be one.

On the ground safely, we 10 smokejumpers made our way to the fire to begin constructing our rudimentary fire line. Using chain saws and Pulaskis, we chopped, dug and scraped what looked like an ill-used trail to stop the advance of the fire.

Aided by the weather, and gallons of sweat, we managed to line the fire and contain it. With numerous other fires in the area, we hiked out of the fire by 8 p.m. to get picked up at the nearest road and shuttled somewhere to rest in preparation for another fire.

As I sat in the back of the green truck motoring down the road, the landscape felt familiar. When the truck took a left turn over the rusting yellow cattle guard, past the St. Regis Work Center sign, I had the distinct familiarity of being home.

A half-mile up the road on the left, past the big old warehouse and the caretaker’s trailer where I ate lunch with Old Mike, was my first home. I’d bounced over that cattle guard and past that sign on foot, bicycles and wagons several hundred times before, but I was back bouncing over it as the one thing I had idolized while I had been there – a firefighter.

Walking around the short loop of the compound’s road system, the grass was longer and less cared-for than I remembered, our house painted a new color, and the trees thinned. It was, after all, a government facility, and they don’t tend to change much. It all appeared about as it had 20 years earlier when we made the same loop in the ’72 Dodge pickup and headed out over the rusted yellow cattle guard for my father’s promotion in Helena and the last time as residents of the St. Regis Work Center.

Even seven years into a fire career, I’d never conceded to it as a career. While I love the work, the people, the excitement, and give it my all, I hinged my complete commitment to the job on the fear of it becoming a career – becoming my frustrated father. When I worked seasonally as a temp, I convinced myself it was just an indulgence of youthful fantasies.

I planned to put my business degree to use and utilize those internship contacts from college. I saw



myself joining the world of Corporate America where common sense, hard work and performance were measures that still meant promotions. Of course, those plans drift away little by little – like fire smoke into a dark sky – every year they wait. Those idyllic notions of both the business world and the Forest Service become increasingly tempered by time.

That leaves me standing in my 10-inch leather fire boots on the lawn of my first home, looking so much like an image of my father that I can't deny it any longer. Being home has brought the eye of reality back upon me and I am undeniably confronted with the fact that I am becoming my father.

There are all sorts of counter-arguments I can, and do, make to keep me living in ignorance and bliss. We have different personalities; we could take different paths within the agency; it was just the time period of the 80s; and on and on. The simple truth, however, is that the agency is as static as the work center I'm standing in, and I'm on the verge of becoming a lifelong part of it – just as my father has, and not too different



*Cameron and Dwight Chambers Missoula 2010 (Courtesy C. Chambers)*

than the paint-peeled warehouse down the gravel road.

Standing on my first front lawn, surveying the small work center, it's easy to get a feeling of proprietorship. If only from a longer history with the compound than the others assembled, it wells a sense of pride and ownership.

Surveying the grounds, I get what must be but a small shiver of the feeling my father received standing in the same place – looking out not only at the small compound of his charge, but the miles upon miles of National Forest for which he was directly responsible.

It's an undeniably enchanting feeling. Add to this a steady paycheck, generous retirement funding and educational allowances, and it starts to make more sense why my father still wears green jeans to work.

For my part, jumping is hard to beat and the old Forest Circus is still less messed-up than most government agencies. From inside the fence I see what kept my father going through the frustration.

While there may be impenetrable bureaucracy littered with mind-numbing irrationality, the government pays good money to play in the woods. Hard work, yes, but the toys are big, cool and expensive. More than one firefighter has remarked that it's not dissimilar to getting paid to be a kid again.

There's a reason senators, astronauts, mountaineers and a slew of successful Corporate America-types say fighting fire was the best job they had. There's been more than one time I looked around and thought I can't believe someone's paying me to do this.

And that's why I'm still in it – “living the dream,” as the old smokejumper saying goes. Most smokejumpers, however, didn't watch their fathers climb the ranks and see both the frustration and the favorable.

The thing about sleep – and to some degree, life – is that it's done unconsciously, leaving the door open for dreams to drift into nightmares. And waking at midnight in my yellow government sleeping bag on the lawn of my old home, it's hard not to read the big yellow rectangle as a gigantic caution sign.

To causally slip down the hereditary path or to fight the fire of momentum? It's a question with no right answers. It's a question best answered by another old smokejumper favorite: “Hard sayin', not knowin'.” 🦋

*Cameron Chambers jumped for three more years before taking a job with the Seattle Fire Department. He now believes all agencies are riddled with bureaucracy, but gets to wear a blue uniform.*

*Dwight Chambers (MSO-66) lives in Helena, Mont., where he retired as the Helena National Forest Litigation Officer in 2008 after 38 years of service. He jumped at Missoula in 1966 and 1967.*

# Another View of The Higgins Ridge Fire

by Roger Siemens (Missoula '59)

I especially enjoyed Ross Parry's (MSO-59) article in the January 2010 issue of *Smokejumper*. It was a story very close to my heart. I was also on the Higgins Ridge Fire in 1961 and, as I read the words, that day was brought back to me like it was yesterday.

I would like to add just a little to Ross' article, but more importantly, share the Missoulian newspaper articles that I saved for 50 years about the fire and helicopter rescue.

As a brief introduction, I started jumping in 1959 while attending the University of Montana and continued jumping until I graduated in 1964. There were not many Wildlife Biologist jobs available at the time, so I accepted a transfer to the Sula Ranger District of the Bitterroot NF. Herb Oertli (MSO-48) had been the District Fire Control Officer for several years and wanted to return to jumping, so we swapped positions. I continued with the Forest Service until retirement in 1994 as District Ranger on the Jefferson Ranger District, Deerlodge NF.

Now, on to the story. Ross Parry was the squadleader for the initial eight-man crew out of Grangeville and jumped the fire the morning of August 4. I was a member of the 12-man backup crew out of Missoula that consisted of Fritz Wolfrum (MSO-53), Don Dobberfulh (MSO-58), Neil Walstad (MSO-61), Darrel Peterson (MSO-50), Don Gordon (MSO-59), Andy Geair (MSO-61), Jim Elms (MSO-59), Monti Leraas (MSO-60), Jack Saunders (MSO-61), Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61), James VanVleck (MSO-61) and myself. Fritz Wolfrum was the foreman of our crew and took over the fire after we landed and tied in with Ross and his crew.

The fire continued to grow that afternoon and things got worse fast! After Fritz realized that we were in big trouble and unable to contain the fire, he told us to "wet ourselves down the best we could, tie something over our face and to follow him." We did! After



Rod Snider (Courtesy Roger Siemens)

going through the fire and into the burn near the ridge top, we had major problems with smoke, lack of oxygen and falling trees as the fire had exploded in all directions. We could hardly breathe due to lack of oxygen, but then, like a miracle, the wind would shift bringing in fresh air.

These conditions continued throughout the afternoon.

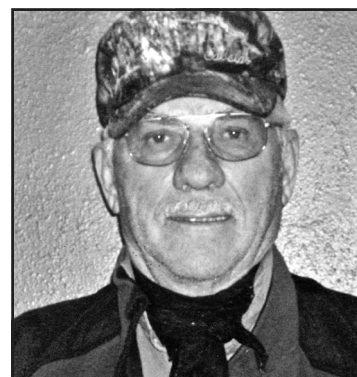
Helicopter pilot Rod Snider (NCSB-51) and Ranger Bill Magnuson had been circling the fire for some time looking for jumpers. Not finding anyone, they started searching inside the fire and eventually spotted our orange fire shirts hunkered down near the top of the ridge. In spite of very high winds, heat and smoke, Rod Snider was able to land. This was my first helicopter ride, but I did not have a chance to get inside. Rod started hauling us out four at a time, two inside with him and two outside on the cargo racks. The last thing I remember him hollering to us was "do not let your hard hats fly into the rotors." So I climbed onto the rack, placed my hard hat under my chest and held on for dear life.

Engineers later reported that considering the altitude, heat, wind and weight, it was not possible for Rod's small helicopter to perform as it did. But it did! The helicopter may have performed beyond its capabilities, but Rod's skill, experience and cool head prevailed and made it happen.

The Helicopter Association of America recognized Rod's work by awarding him the "National Pilot of the Year" award in 1961. The *Missoulian* covered the rescue and award in two articles in August 1961.

Rod, Fritz and Ross were highly experienced and talented leaders. They made all the right decisions in a matter of seconds, under extreme conditions. If they had made a wrong decision (i.e. try to out run the fire or start a backfire), we would not be here today. Thanks Fritz, Ross and Rod. 🙏

*Roger and his wife, Rita, live near Silver Star and can be reached at 5655, Hwy 41 North, Silver Star, MT 59751 or at (406) 287-5638.*



Roger Siemens (Courtesy R. Siemens)

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## LETTER TO EDITOR

# “Should I Stay or Should I Go?”

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by Charles Palmer (MSO-95)

In the July 2011 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine, the “Message from the President” asked what others think about the current tendency for smokejumpers to stay in the program longer than they may have done in the past. John Twiss’ (RAC-67) thoughtful column inspired me to weigh in on the matter.

Obviously, there are pros and cons to each philosophy. With a higher turnover of the smokejumper population, as in the past, there seems to be a greater likelihood that those individuals leaving the jumper ranks will migrate to other positions of influence, whether that is within other fire organizations or somewhere else in the public or private sector.

The clear downside is that you are losing some of your most experienced and trained folks when this happens. On the flipside, career smokejumpers – or at least people who jump for longer periods of time – probably possess a broader array of firefighter/smokejumper-related skill sets (rigger certifications, fireline explosive qualifications, task force/strike team leader experience or even division supervisor qualified, incident commander Type 3, etc.) and hold a more extensive institutional knowledge of smokejumping, theoretically making them more capable operators.

One of the main challenges is that if they never leave the smokejumper organization, personal and professional growth may plateau because those individuals are not being exposed to different occupational cultures and philosophies.

The “easy” answer is that there needs to be some sort of healthy balance between retention and turnover. To answer the eternal question of the band “The Clash”: Some should stay, while others need to go.

But how to actually put this theory of balance into action and in what percentages? Those are the hard questions. One potential solution is that of recently retired Missoula base manager Edmund Ward (MSO-80), who highly encouraged individuals who were looking to move up through the smokejumper ranks to take their talents outside the jumper unit for a couple of years before seeking that promotion. A great example is current Missoula base manager Mike Fritsen (MSO-95).

If hiring considerations were given to individuals who did just this, then it would lead to a greater circulation of personnel in and out of smokejumping.

Another approach could be more extensive training opportunities for current smokejumpers. Training is the lifeblood of any organization, but unfortunately, budgets for it are often cut at the first sign of fiscal distress.

National fire managers need to resist this negative trend. Training leads to IQCS red card qualifications, and it is these qualifications that will help jumpers as they attempt to migrate into other positions. Smokejumpers themselves can and should take a more active role in their own education, whether that be a general quest for knowledge and growth, or more specific in the form of certificate programs, college degrees, or EMS qualifications (e.g., emergency medical technician-basic).

Support from a wide variety of sources, both financially and socially, would be of great help as jumpers attempt to do this. Perhaps the National Smokejumper Association can start a scholarship fund for current jumpers who want to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities.\*\*

Regardless of whether a person stays in the smokejumper organization or leaves, if we all continue to do whatever it is that we can to support the profession, it will stand a much better chance of continuing to exist as an occupation.

Maybe you jumped for a couple of seasons and moved on to something else, and now the best way for you to support smokejumping is through a life membership in the NSA. Maybe you are a former jumper and now a natural resource manager who is in a position to utilize smokejumpers in some way on your forest or district, be it suppression or project work of some type.

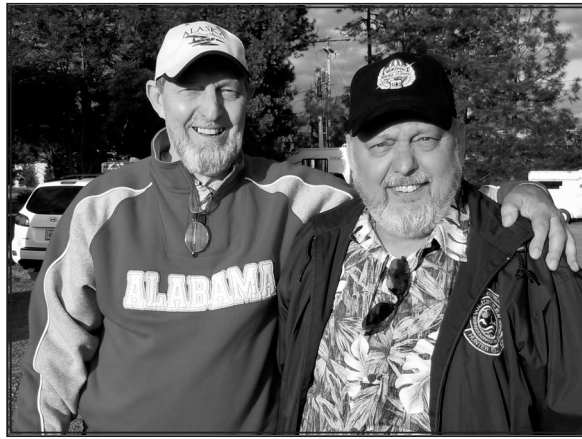
Or lastly, maybe you are a current jumper and the best way you can support the program is to continue to set the example that smokejumpers are indeed this “elite” force of fire professionals. Whichever category you find yourself in, do whatever you can to make a positive impact on smokejumping as a whole. 🍄

*\*\*The NSA has instituted a scholarship program for active jumpers and members of the association, or direct family members of active NSA jumpers. This is the first year of the \$1,000 awards for students committed to obtaining advanced education. This year’s recipients, **Joseph Philpott** (NIFC-09) and **Matthew Castellon** (MYC-08), were featured in the October issue of “Smokejumper.”*





*Dain Smith (CJ-73) & Roddy Baumann (CJ-70)*



*Charley Moseley (CJ-62) & Larry Lufkin (CJ-63)*



*Ray Osipov*



**Gobi Reun**

*Photo's Courtesy Doug*



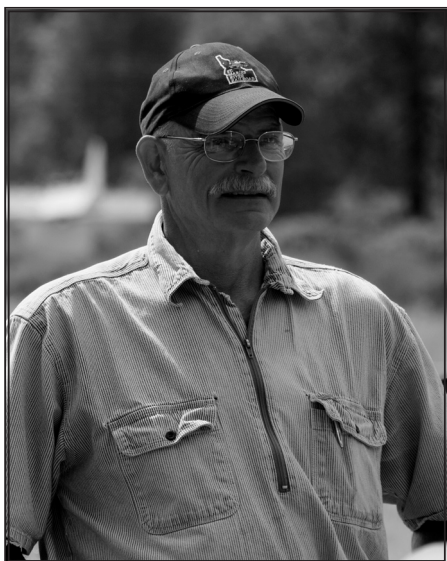
*Jerry Reid (CJ-58) & Mike Cramer (CJ-59)*



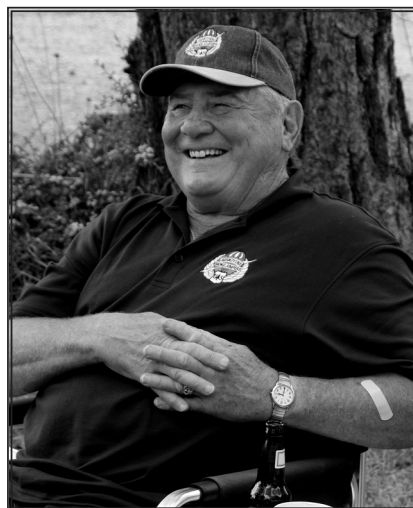
*Steve Baumann (CJ-73)*



*John Manley (CJ-62), Chuck Sheley*



*Gary Mills (CJ-66)*



*Dick Wessell (CJ-56)*



*Jerry Howe (CJ-65) &*

*Layout Design: John*





*ich (CJ-73)*



*Jim Cramer (CJ-58) & Hugh Rosenburg (CJ-59)*



*Dick Courson (CJ-46) & Troop Emonds (CJ-66)*

## Union 2011

*Beck (CJ-70) & Others*



*(CJ-59) & Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)*



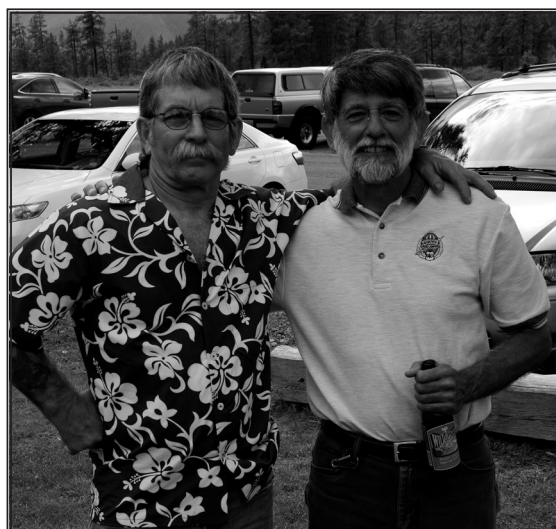
*Mike Hardy (MYC-75) & Ken Swift*



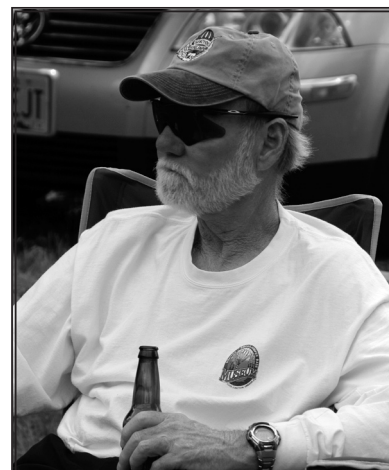
*Gary Buck (CJ-66)*



*Jim Allen (NCSB-46)*



*Willi Lowden (NCSB-72) & Stan Collins (MYC-67)*



*John Robinson (CJ-65)*

*ny Kirkley (CJ-64)*

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# THE ENEMY WITHIN: LASSITUDE AND INEPTITUDE IN THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

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by Les Joslin-Editor OldSmokeys Newsletter

**B**etween 1962, when I first worked in the U.S. Forest Service, and 2005, when I resigned from the Forest Service – during the late 1960s to late 1980s while I served as a naval officer – the Forest Service changed profoundly.

It changed from a small, poorly-funded, “can do” outfit to a bloated, poorly-funded, “won’t do” outfit. It changed from an outfit of people who prided themselves on accomplishing work in the field to an outfit of people who settle for collaborating and computing in the office. It changed from an outfit that knew what it was about to an outfit that doesn’t care what it’s about.

I think the Forest Service has become what it has become, because it has changed from a constructive and cooperative command-and-control culture, in which the district ranger was captain of his ship, to a confused and counterproductive collaborative-and-cajole culture, in which the inmates run the insane asylum.

Good leaders and those who would be good leaders grew up and thrived in the former culture, but are driven from the current culture. And – with notable exceptions – the outfit is left with those who can’t and won’t. It’s been that way so long that hardly anyone remains to recall the days the outfit could and did, and almost everyone perceives the current malaise as normal.

This enemy within – this syndrome of lassitude and ineptitude to which the state of the National Forest System and the Forest Service bear witness – represents a clear and present danger to the National Forest System the Forest Service was established to manage for the citizens of the United States and their posterity.

This clear and present danger represents the most significant challenge to those who would lead.

Yet, those who would lead and should lead won’t lead.

And the enemy within advances.

That’s heartbreaking. ☹

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## Even Nature Can’t Force These Jumpers To Quit

**W**ith 1,730 jumps between them, **Walt Wasser** (MYC-79) and **Dale Longanecker** (RAC-74) have demonstrated an “iron man” character that’s remarkable, even by smokejumping standards.

Mother Nature couldn’t force out these guys, each of whom is 57. It took a different kind of power to ground them – the U.S. Forest Service and BLM, which mandates retirement at this age without regard for one’s physical condition or ability.

Each leads in a different category of total jumps made. Wasser has the edge in fire jumps with 395, compared to Longanecker’s 362. Longanecker holds the standard for total jumps with 896, over Wasser’s 834.

Wasser – who goes by “Wally” – started in McCall and jumped there his first eight years before joining the Boise BLM in 1987. He also has at least five fire jumps in each of his 33 years in smokejumping – including 24 in his best year, 1994 – and has notched more than 2,700 sport jumps.

Longanecker began at age 19 in Redmond, jumping there through the 1976 season before transferring to North Cascades, close to his boyhood home of the Methow Valley in north-central Washington.

His older brothers, **Dean** (NCSB-68) and **Ernie**, (NCSB-70) jumped for six and five years, respectively, before moving on to other pursuits. ☹

### Get Your Smokejumper Magazine Electronically

NSA President **John Twiss** (RAC-67) has suggested that we look at the possibility of sending *Smokejumper* magazine via email in a format that can be downloaded and printed from your home computer. If you are interested in receiving your magazine via the internet, please drop me an email: [cnkgsheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkgsheley@earthlink.net)





*A Meeting of Old Smokejumpers in Spokane June 2011 L-R: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64), Bob Sallee (MSO-49), Charley Moseley (CJ-62), T.J. Thompson (MSO-55), Ted Putnam (MSO-66).*

## Staying Connected Thanks To Old Memories

by LeRoy Cook (Cave Junction '64)

She doesn't run like she used to but she accesses time like no other, 61 years young. I guess you could say she's a time traveler. For reasons known only to me, I like to sit in her and smell her or hang my arm out the window as she takes me for short adventures.

Sometimes we go to the ice cream parlor or just around the block for some fresh air or to visit a friend; when Naurine comes, she sits a little closer like she did when we first dated.

It's my way of remembering another time in this short and fragile life; ancient memories near and gone when living was simpler, and we all lived closer to the land.

Some things are triggers that transport us to our lion days. Without thinking they pull the trigger, stalling our brains on marooned, shipwrecked memories.

I stay away from Fourth of July celebrations. Fireworks transport me quickly back to Southeast Asia. I hate it; best to go fishing on the Fourth. Old cars – or for that matter, such things as old bamboo fishing rods and paper shotgun shells – connect old men to their youth, a time when living was different.

Little things can create such powerful memories; instant transgressions. The mild odor of a road-killed skunk is my doorway back in time to rural Missouri. I like the smell.

If you've grown up on the land, many sights and sounds bring pleasant memories. The call of a faraway dove, the rustling of corn in the wind, or barn swallows circling, hawking insects in the evening's hazy glow.

We each have them. Pleasant memories! Memories that often represented effort, hard work, or something we loved to do. Yours may be spring's lingering scent

of purple lilac, shoo-fly pie, or the call of an owl on a moonless night.

I used to talk with Clint, my son, when he was young; we'd go outside and lie on the grass in the evening and watch the sky turn dark. The beagles (Troop and Jake) would join us, lying close to keep us warm on the cold ground. The moon's jeweled light would push back the night as clouds slithered like ghosts in the fading light.

Sometimes the stars joined us; at times we'd even have meaningful conversations. I loved those talks. Now pocketknives have become pocket phones. Perhaps a good thing, but modern living – like modern farming – can at times be not as close, upfront and personal.

As in my youth, young people need to have a sense of place and a way to connect to Earth's tawny breast.

The world is always changing; most of us now must live in cities. Today's rituals and rhythms belong to our everyday world, flashes of time connecting the swiftness, abruptness and profusion of modern life. Some live as close to electronic impulses as they do the tempo of the seasons.

We are disconnecting with the land. Small farms were once the backbone of America, farmed by lean, lantern-jawed men who talked straight and shaved once a week; their bib overalls with a smudge of country. More than ever we should not forget those who guided us down our pathway. Seeds of goodness and love were sown all across America.

Older folks don't change as fast as those younger, and with today's fast pace, much of society now seems so divided and less understanding. Perhaps this is why it seems harder to keep family and friends connected.

Forgive me; I must work harder at embracing change. It's not my fault; sometimes I can't help myself. Friends, relationships and connecting are intensely personal.

The strongest is Love. Connection equals participation. The way to connect is to get out on the land and do things together.

Talks are easier outside! A place where life is easily understood and living growing things hold fast, rattle, and make noise in the wind.

Besides, life needs a few rough edges, and if you are going to make men of boys, you must go deeper than intellect, teaching something else. You can't find dirt roads in the city. Dusty trails force you to slow down, look around, get out in the open air where the wind blows the stink of urban suet off.

I wish I had stayed closer to some in my past. Seasons and time never stop.

We all toss the dice in the privacy of our minds, and for those without a connection to someone else, winter can easily be a wall of isolation. After the holidays, the world will get on with its affairs. Contacts and acts of Love today will be someone's memories in their older, judgmental years.

Yes, Christmas is a good time to try to get closer, but it only comes once a year. I hope this next year will bring you many connections – places of memories or a memory of places ... good memories!

Merry Christmas! 🍷

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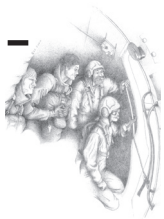
## New NSA Life Members

Since January 2011

*Thanks for your support!*

#	Name	Base	Year
251..	Bill Long.....	Cave Junction .....	1955
252..	Dick Tracy .....	Missoula .....	1953
253..	Bob Kersh .....	Associate .....	
254..	Bob Smee.....	Missoula .....	1968
255..	Steve Anderson .....	Missoula .....	1963
256..	Lonnie Dale .....	Missoula .....	1969
257..	Gary Lawley.....	Missoula .....	1957
258..	Chauncey & Christy Taylor .....	associates	
259..	H.B. "Doc" Smith .....	Missoula .....	1959
260..	Brian Thomas Miller..	Redding .....	1985
261..	Gene Hamner .....	Missoula .....	1967
262..	Richard Andrews.....	Redding .....	1968
263..	Ashley Court.....	No Cascades .....	1963
264..	Ken Perkins.....	Redding .....	1977

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# Touching All Bases



## Redmond Base Report

by Josh Voshall (Redding '03)

As of Sept. 23, 2011, the Redmond Smokejumpers have jumped a total of 50 fires for 261 fire jumps.

The dry spell ended on Aug. 3, 2011, with a load of 10 jumpers out of the door, making it the latest start in Redmond history. Our next round of fire season started again on Aug. 24, 2011, in the region with 48 fires and 247 fire jumps made. During that time, we had North Cascades, Redding and the Alaska Smokejumpers boosting here to help out. To those bases, thanks a bunch for the help, both in the field and rehabbing at the base.

Earlier in the season, we said goodbye to **Mark Gibbons** (RAC-87). When Big Ernie made jumpers, he made Mark harder than steel. He was a great asset to the Redmond program, full of knowledge and great abilities, especially to teach newer jumpers the ropes. If you know Mark or knew of him, you know that he loves being outdoors and being with the "Bros" every chance he gets. Thanks again, Mark, for your insight and showin' us the ropes!

During the beginning of the season we boosted eight jumpers to Alaska for three weeks. Also during this time four climbers detailed to Worcester, Mass., for three weeks in search of the infamous Asian Longhorned Beetle. Both groups had good times and positive experiences, except for a little poison ivy in Massachusetts.

With the slow start to fire season and early season proficiency jumps to do, **Marcel "30 plus Doughnuts" Potvin** (RAC-07) thought it would be a great idea to eat as many doughnuts as he could while keeping a tally up on the ops board downstairs in the ready room.

The history behind it goes something like this. Since we provide doughnuts at the jump spot, some jumpers who are watching their jump weight chose to pass on these delicious, deep-fried doughy morsels. The leftover doughnuts are brought back to the base to feast on by those who have just PT'd.

So, since it was the shortest and possibly the worst



fire season ever, Marcel had this grand idea that every time there were doughnuts brought back from the jump spot, he would have at least one or possibly two. Since we didn't jump a fire out of RAC until the beginning of August, he ate roughly 30 doughnuts, which were tallied in place of fire jumps, and gained a bit of weight in the process.

Marcel is now trying to get under the 200-pound mark and also trying to get his cholesterol down to a manageable 200 milligrams per deciliter. I know I had to ask about that last part.

The next time you see Marcel, you can decide the true "weight" of the story.

We had a few old faces return to the base this year. After spending some time

in Redding, **Erin "Kate" Springer** (RAC-08) came back as did **Jessica "Jesse" Haury** (RAC-08). Jesse spent the last year on the Bend/Fort Rock District of the Deschutes National Forest. **Casey "Pinto" Kuska** (RAC-08), yet another familiar face, came back for another good deal detail. **Armando "I Don't Want Pringles" Lara** (RAC-10) is joining us again from the Fremont/Winema National Forests, and **Dustin "Mondo, I Got Pringles" Underhill** (RAC-10) came back from the La Grande Hotshot crew.

One new face who joined the ranks of the RAC jumpers was **"Mean" Dean Chambers** (WYS-06). Dean was on loan to us from West Yellowstone for the season, and I hope he had a great time here, even though he did have to stay in the barracks. As a side note, I do believe Dean is in the running for the jump hog this year, meaning he's had the most jumps this year out of Redmond. Good goin' Dean. I meant that sarcastically!

A few of jumpers who moved on from the "Best Base on Earth" were **Mike Leslie** (RAC-97), who went back to North Carolina to be with his family. **Katie "KT" Scheer** (RAC-08) made the move down to Redding. **Nate "Young" Robinson** (RAC-08) found a job on a Fire Use Module somewhere in the United States. **Tye "Tye Bo" Taber** (WYS-06) found his way to Rawlins, Wyo., as a helicopter manager and heard he's havin' fun.

**Laura Brown** (RAC-10) and **Tommy "The Total Package" Parker** (NCSB-07) transferred to McCall this past season. Thank you all for being part of the Redmond family and hope to see you in the future.



There was some overhead movement this past off-season and season. In the operations department, **Gary “What’s Happenin” Atteberry** (RAC-97) slid into the assistant foreman position, while **Ray “RFR” Rubio** (RAC-95) took the spotter position. **Justin “Woody” Wood** (RAC -01) became the newest member of the ops department as the new squadleader, leaving **Jeff “Heffe” Robinson** (RDD-86) detailed as the operations foreman position.

The loft supervisor position is detailed to **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91) with the guiding hand of **Tony “TL” Loughton** (RDD-83) not too far behind as the assistant loft supervisor.

In more loft news, **Geoff Schultz** (RDD-01) and **Jason Barber** (RAC-05) are detailed into the squadleader positions, while **Brandon Coville** (RAC-00) is in Sisters, Ore. as a fire operations guru. **Tony “The Meat” Sleznick** (RDD-92) is flying for some obscure airline in Alaska hauling who-knows-what for cargo.

The training department went through a few changes as well. When **Mark Gibbons** (RAC-87) retired, the assistant foreman position was vacant and **Josh “The Other Josh” Cantrell** (MSO-97) filled it. **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC-01) filled the vacant squadleader position behind Cantrell. Congratulations to those who moved up in the ranks and who also detailed and got some great experience in the process.

So, onto another subject in which I like to call “baby news.” Starting off, **Aaron “AA” Skillings** (RAC-05) and his wife, Erin, had a girl named Charlotte. Marcel Potvin and his wife Anne welcomed Lily Rose soon after. And rounding off our list, **Dustin “Misfit” Underhill** (RAC-10) and his wife, Alicia, had a girl named Harley. There was a big push to have girls this year and they all succeeded.

In the world of marriages and engagements, **Dave Keller** (RAC-04) and Roma recently married in Idaho. Congratulations to Dave and Roma. **Peter Hammett** (MSO-06) and longtime girlfriend Kristy are planning on getting married in March on Mt. Hood. He has yet to invite anyone from the base, so I’m sure it’s okay to crash the wedding!

So there you have it. Some fires were jumped in a short period of time and a willing individual ate doughnuts. Some people moved on during the season and some people came back, because, of course, it’s good to be a jumper.

Well, I hope all you jumpers out there, young and old, had a fun time and had the best deals of your lives. If you came through Redmond, I hope you had a great stay. Have a safe and festive rest of the year and as they say, “See you on the big one.”

# North Cascades Base Report

by **Nan Lea Floyd** (Redmond ’00)

The fire season of 2011 carried with it historical significance. Most noteworthy, perhaps, is the retirement of the venerable **Dale Longanecker** (RAC-74). After 38 years of wearing Nomex – although Dale was jumping since before the advent of government-issued, fire-resistant clothing – Dale made his last official pass as loft foreman through the iconic Quonset hut at the end of 23 Airport Road on Sept. 29, 2011.

There are no numbers to quantify how many miles of Kevlar he has stitched or steering line he has replaced. His jump record attests to the longevity of this Methow Valley native’s smokejumping career: 362 fire, 534 practice, for a grand total of 896 jumps.

A small armada of media flocked the base on Dale’s last day. With cameras watching and the bros – along with his biological sisters and brothers, **Dean Longanecker** (NCSB-68) and **Ernie Longanecker** (NCSB-70), cheering – Dale center-punched the jump spot for his last official parachute ride as a paid Forest Service employee.

You might not see Dale driving his Toyota Prius on the commute to work anymore, but you’re still likely to see him grooming or skiing at the Loup Loup, tending his garden, or scanning the sky for celestial objects.

**Michael Noe** (NCSB-99) happily and humbly accepted the offer to fill the void Dale leaves behind as loft foreman, indicating that his feet might not be big enough to fit the imprint that his predecessor and mentor has made at NCSB, but he feels honored for the chance to try.

As the rain descended upon the Methow Valley, pushing over the Cascades in early autumn of 2011, an esoteric debate erupted among some of the crew: Could this season-ending weather event truly be called season-ending if there was never a season to begin with?

Humor assisted in adding levity to the situation, but the fact remains that 2011 will go down in the annals as being NCSB’s worst fire season on record. Casa 09 dropped jumpers on a total of six fires out of NCSB.

A cool, wet spring that pushed well into summer left the Methow Valley looking remarkably green for much of the fire season. Combined with a lack of flash in the sky, the business of smokejumping was not only delayed, but also significantly reduced.

As ears waited to hear the siren sound (offering relief from interminable base 8s, weekends off, and flat wallets), hands kept busy with a variety of projects. Beside the usual array of building and grounds upkeep, includ-

ing a major facelift for the weight room, the snookies lovingly oversaw construction of a new garden behind the mess hall.

The homemade welded gate entry and lawn furniture proves yet again that the talents of the GS-5 and 6 smokejumpers go beyond swinging Pulaskis. Not only is the “People’s” garden an excellent lunch spot, but also rows of raised beds produced a sizable vegetable harvest, some of which was donated to the local food bank.

Base manager **Daren Belsby** (NCSB-86) sanctioned the development of a new spot to replace “Boesel’s Wilderness” for the nigh, convenient practice jump. Instead of the cow-dung-infested field behind the paraloft, jumpers now vie for a 60-foot diameter circle filled with gravel to test their accuracy. Thirteen jumpers have already proven that it’s possible to get everyone on the load inside the landing zone.

Jumpers also helped the local district with numerous tasks. **Matt Desimone** (RAC-97) reveled in a tiny taste of fly fishing-like ecstasy (minus the fly rod), wading along the Methow River while helping Fisheries out with stream surveys. Additionally, jumpers went out cutting saw line for Range, doing repair work and supply delivery for the lookouts, assisting Recreation with trailhead and campground maintenance, and caging cones of White Bark Pine for Silviculture.

While some waited out the coveted Alaska boost, which was never to be, a few trickled down to the Southwest on single-resource orders, and 10 jumpers made Worcester, Mass., a month-long home in June, climbing trees for the Animal Plant Health and Inspection Service.

Searching hardwoods for the destructive Asian Longhorned Beetle by day required an additional search of body parts for ticks by night. The blood-sucking pests attached themselves to many a jumper, in certain cases requiring sensitive extraction, giving new meaning to the saying: “Trust your jump (climbing) partner.”

A mid-August lightning storm finally provided some dazzling hope that the fire season would be salvaged. Unfortunately, out of some 400 strikes that pounded the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, NCSB responded to only a couple of fires.

Thankfully, the picture wasn’t as grim across the border in Oregon, and the majority of the base eventually found itself on the road between Redmond and Redding for the latter part of August and early September.

According to **Scott Wicklund** (NCSB-91), the jumps were of epic proportion with every leap out of the plane door entailing a face-off with some prominent mountain. **Justin Cook** (NCSB-10) embodied the essence of *carpe diem* and deferred returning to school for the fall semester in order to catch the late bust.

He reports, though, that his dropout status will be

short-lived, and in January he will continue his studies.

The small crew left behind at NCSB kept its spirits up, eating waffles and performing invaluable public services. On Labor Day, for example, they collected numerous plastic ducks floating down the Methow River at the finish line of an annual fundraising event for the local Kiwanis Club. Good deeds are sometimes rewarded, and the following day the powers above sanctioned the release of the hostage load to Redmond.

Other news of record: The brood of NCSB offspring continues to grow. **Dan Ryen** (NCSB-08) welcomed daughter Naomi to the world at the beginning of June, and **Charlie McCarthy** (NCSB-04) became a first-time father with the birth of his son, Cane.

**JT Sawyer** (NCSB-07) and Michael Noe are both going to be changing diapers for a second round this winter.

On a connubial note, **Fidel Verduzco** (NCSB-09) will, no doubt, be flashing his signature Colgate smile when he marries his fiancée in November.

## West Yellowstone Base Report

by **Chris Boyer** (West Yellowstone ’11)  
**Ernie Walker** (Redding ’01)

The grizzly bears weren’t the only ones busy in the greater Yellowstone area this summer. The West Yellowstone base saw more action than it has in recent years accommodating boosters from Missoula, Grangeville, and Alaska during a bust that began in mid-August and lasted through September.

The base hosted 20 jumps and sent out five pounders. Two mixed loads even jumped a fire within the Yellowstone National Park boundaries for the first time since 2009. During this chaotic time, there were many individual jump milestones reached at the base. **Bobby Sutton** (MSO-91) hit 300 jumps, **Mark “Captain Awesome” Belitz** (WYS-01) with 250, **Ernie “E-dog” Walker** (RDD-01) and **Cindy Champion** (WYS-99) reached 200 apiece, **Nick “Mongo” Stanzak** (WYS-05) and **Jason Gibb** (GAC-04) each achieved 150.

**Ward Scanson** (FBX-07) and **Joe “Sock” Rock** (WYS-05) each jumped 100, while **Robert Smith** (MSO-07) reached 50.

The base added four new rookie detailers this year with **Derek “Ric” Wittenberg**, **David Day**, **Rob “Don’t Call Me Tim” Thibault**, and **Chris “Pillow Boy” Boyer**.

West Yellowstone now has 10 individuals jumping the Ram Air system, with Rock and Jason Gibb being the 2011 graduates of the New Man Ram Air program. **Billy Bennett** (WYS-98) became a permanent as the

official tanker base manager.

It took a while for things to get going, but the jumpers were busy with project work in Red Lodge and Michigan. Early in the season, the base sent ten jumpers down to the satellite bases in Region 3, as well as sending three to Alaska. They also kept up their currency with weekly practice jumps and tested the FS-14+ parachute canopy.

Immediately after rookie training, the exhausted rookies were met with the task of handcrafting a "Little Wooden Fire Engine" that was to be displayed at multiple museums across the western United States. They also participated in assisting with the Junior Smokejumper Program, a program designed for children to raise fire awareness.

Similar to the relentless honey badger, the base never hesitates to lend a helping hand, as evidenced through the early start date of our plane to assist with the fires in Alaska and even drop paracargo to our forest radio technician for a radio repeater repair mission.

Noteworthy of mentioning was the stellar performance of **Jason "Doggg" Hill** (WYS-07), who topped the charts with 11 jumps and deserves the title of Jump King of 2011. This year also marks the final year for the man, the myth, the legend, a genuine honey badger himself, **Hardy Bloemeke** (MSO-77). He rookied in 1877 or 1977 and has contributed to the base in recent years as the training foreman.

Hardy will forever be known for his passion and knowledge for smokejumping, his sense of humor, as well as his flamboyant PT attire. After his retirement, he plans on flying air attack missions when it doesn't interfere with his skiing. His final fire jump was with Cindy Champion on the Gallatin National Forest.

On a lighter side, **Eric "Buddha" Held** (WYS-06) became engaged to Shannon Hubbard at the beginning of the summer and plans on marrying in the summer of 2012. The base also hosted a group of Swedish foresters who visited in July.

It was an exciting and eclectic year in West Yellowstone, culminating in a successful end of the year party that involved a raffle, rookie skit and the destruction of three party piñatas. Each smokejumper at the base can look back with fond memories of 2011, the year of the honey badger. 2012 will definitely have high expectations for the smokejumpers of West Yellowstone.

## McCall Base Report

by **Derek Hoban** (McCall '02)

The Cabela's catalogs are distributed throughout the break room, loft and bathroom stalls, but before we turn in our Pulaskis and bent shovels for rod, rifle and Ruger

Red Label 20s, let's take a look back at the good and less-good fortunes that we shared here in McCall 2011.

Spring '11 saw some preseason work opportunities on the Region 8 burn module details as well as some March and April fire assignments to Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. Spring also saw the venerable **Fred Pavlovic** (MYC-89) hang up the whites for good as he has retired down to New Mexico.

Fred leaves with 153 fire jumps and 404 total jumps, 579 different cardboard splints demonstrated in refresher, and a legacy of modernizing the medical procedures and equipment as the base's first-aid program coordinator.

Also grounded for all of 2011 was another old warhorse – the DC-3. At press time, the future use of the DC-3 has not been determined and is pending review by the regional and Washington offices. In the absence of the "Doug," a third Twin Otter was hired under contract for the 2011 fire season, which led to the return of pilots Eldon Askelson and Mary LaMoy under contract for the summer.

New Smokejumper Pilot Supervisor Bill Mank led reorganization and rebuilding of the McCall smokejumper pilot program. With the help of instructors Buster Delmonte and **Nels Jensen** (MSO-62), Bill and Matt Disch received their smokejumper captain qualifications, while they and, previously certified, Capt. Allan Baum all received their backcountry flight certifications this summer. Bill is feeling good about the new faces and direction of the pilot program and is looking forward to keeping his core group of pilots together here in McCall for many years to come.

Big Ernie and Ops Foreman **Chris Niccoli** (MYC-95) spent most of the early summer dispatching smokejumpers to contend with the dragons that plagued the southern U.S. from Arizona to Florida and just about all points in between. Multiple booster assignments to Silver City and Albuquerque and single-resource assignments throughout the South and Southwest kept McCall's jumpers on the road and out of a fourth consecutive year of heavy June rainfall in Idaho.

By the end of June, **Damon Nelson** (RDD-97) had already honed his tan in Georgia, Florida, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico, while Silver City detailers **Dennis McCoy** (MYC-83), **Kai Friedrichs** (GAC-99), **Keith Suemnick** (MYC-07), **Bennett Childs** (MYC-07), **Dan Booth** (MYC-07), **Kurtis Ryan** (MYC-08) and **Pete Dutchick** (MYC-09) all returned to McCall lonesome, ornery, and mean with enough overtime to kill lesser men and tales of big rocks, angry winds and warm Buffalo Bar beer.

Mid-season saw enough salt leave McCall to jerk all the moose west of Miles City, as **Jim Duzak** (MYC-84), **Larry Wilson** (MYC-84) and **Pat Withen** (BOI-79) all



retired in July and August. Having raised the pursuit of the Good Deal to an art form, Duzak retires to the sun and surf of the California coast with 142 fire jumps and 300 total jumps and aspirations to join the U.S. Seniors Moto-cross tour.

While giving up his summer job, Withen will continue his college professorship back in Virginia having made 196 fire jumps and 403 total jumps out of Boise, Cave Junction and McCall. Pat's looking forward to buffing out his van, spending time with his Bitterroot Hotshot son, Damien, and relaxing with a couple of cold ones on the dock, rather than holding that line with dirt, during his future summers in McCall.

As McCall's training foreman from 2002 to 2011, Larry will be remembered for the high training standards that he maintained for himself and the base, as well as his mentoring of McCall's Ned class of 2002 – widely considered to be the greatest rookie class in smokejumper history.

Larry retires with 148 fire jumps and 459 total jumps, and the respect and gratitude of the many jumpers with whom he has worked and mentored during his career. He's looking forward to finally finishing multiple house projects in his retirement and to "shaking out the cobwebs" throughout his golden years.

To replace the salt lost, new Head Ned trainer "Lunchless" Todd Haynes (MYC-02) has offered up three new Neds for Big Ernie's pleasure, and by all accounts Neds Patrick Romportl (MYC-11), Lucas Dixon (MYC-11) and Steven Gonzalez (MYC-11) acquitted



*Mike Cramer (CJ-59) still falling timber near Yoncolla, Oregon (Courtesy M. Cramer)*

themselves well during their first season of smokejumping. While Romportl and Dixon impressed many with the versatility of their skit performances, it was Gonzalez who took home the coveted Golden Spatula award at the annual year-end T-party.

Another title went to the young guys, as **Colin Lannigan** (MYC-10) won the hotly contested 2011 MFTC title belt by pumping out 29 pull-ups, 115 push-ups, 82 sit-ups, and running his mile in 8:40, dethroning all-time champ **Eric Messenger** (GAC-00) in the process. It's back to the training room for Mess this winter.

Year's end? Not without mentioning the great August Siege of '11, which saw the base jumped out for eleven consecutive days.

Newly qualified spotters **Matt Summerfield** (MYC-01) and **Matt Huber** (MYC-02) performed admirably moving bodies and cargo out the door amidst the intense heat and fast action of dirty August, and multiple good deals were had by all.

No one found more good deals in 2011 than this year's jump kings, Dan Booth and **Bob Charley** (MYC-93), who set the frantic pace with 10 fire jumps apiece. Up in the air, nobody does it better or more often than the legendary **Michael Cooper** (MYC-86), who added eight more this year to his fast-growing McCall record of 273 fire jumps.

Overall, McCall jumpers executed 238 fire jumps in 2011 with 53 of those coming out of Silver City. Assistant Loadmaster Jarrod "Shaq" Sayer (MYC-95) performed his 300th jump in August, while **Kevin LaBella** (NCSB-91), making up for all of those years he left

early to teach school, took all of the early and late season detail assignments that he could. As this year's overtime hog, Kevin is making Goldman Sachs look laissez-faire in their wealth-accumulation efforts. Beers on Kevin this winter if you find yourself heading through McCall!

Under the direction of Loadmaster **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98), who is revolutionizing the utilization of paracargo in the state of Idaho, McCall delivered 31,349 pounds of cargo this summer, including dropping more than six tons of supplies in support of non-jumper fires on the Boise, Salmon-Challis and Payette National Forests.

In training, Assistant Foreman **Jeff "Big Sugar" Schricker** (MYC-98) stepped into the void left by Wilson's departure and shook out what few cobwebs remained.

McCall smokejumpers completed 53 fire courses, 24 task books, and 1,638 mandatory online training sessions in 2011. Big Sugar himself ate seven food boxes and most of a fresh food drop – all on just two jumper fires for the season.

In the loft, after a lengthy search, **Todd Franzen** (MYC-98) was hired to fill the assistant foreman position, and he seamlessly forged a dynamic, pedal-down management team with Loft Foreman **Brett Bittenbender** (MYC-88). For the season, 1,536 parachutes were packed in the loft, 117 chute repairs were made in the sewing room, and five senior and two master riggers were newly certified.

New Assistant Operations Foreman **Matt Galyardt** (MYC-02) has the base grounds looking better than ever after several months of winter research led to the purchase of a brand new Snapper riding lawn mower for the base. **Jeremy Cowie** (MYC-06) and **Kyle "Good Times" Esparza** (MYC-10) put that mower to good use in a summer-long, dandelion-eradication battle from which they emerged the victors.

And finally all of the above happened as the smoke-jumper base itself underwent a months-long remodel that included a new roof, HVAC, insulation and carpet installation throughout the building. The McCall base has never looked so good – and who'd expect any less under the steady hand of Base Manager **Frankie Romero** (MYL-89). McCall smokejumpers – come on up and visit us in 2012!

## Missoula Base Report

by **Court Wallace** (Grangeville '04)

The 2011 Missoula season started out differently for each of us. If you were lucky enough to get to Region 3 early, chances are you will be eating prime rib all winter

long, as opposed to hamburger.

The season was filled with the usual duties: training new jumpers, fuels/RX work, GETA (Google earth group), climbing on the East Coast, NATICK work, jumping, pounding, boosting, manufacturing ... and even though June, July and the beginning of August were relatively slow out of Missoula (IA Jump operation wise), the activity picked up on Aug. 22, and life as a jumper became good.

The overall numbers for Missoula in 2011 were 31 fires jumped (first jump Aug. 10), 193 jumpers out the door, two boost requests received (one from Region 5, one from Canada), seven boost requests filled (two to Albuquerque, one to Alaska, one to Boise, three to Grangeville) and 107 single-resource assignments.

Miles City was set up for the first time since 2007 and was able to get three fires jumped and seven single-resource assignments out before shutting down.

Over the winter and spring months, MSO sent three modules to R-8, two modules to R-9, one module to R-3, and around 10 climbers to the East Coast. Projects around the base involved the usual FAA rigger classes, manufacturing of harnesses, containers, jumpsuits, bags, NATICK parachutes, and local fuels work.

**Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91) and **"Rocky" Brian Ah-shapanek** (GAC-90) headed up the Silver City detail. Originally, the detail consisted of 20 jumpers who were in place on May 8, but on May 13 an additional 10 detailers were requested due to fire activity in R-3.

The detailer breakout for 2011 was 19 from Region 1 (nine MSO, five GAC, five WYS), seven from Region 4 (MYC), and the BLM provided four (two BOI, two FBX). It was determined May 18 there were too many bros in SVC, and a second R-3 base was set up at Albuquerque's Double Eagle II Airport.

Albuquerque was initially staffed by jumpers from Silver City, who were eventually replaced by three additional detailers from R-1 and booster crews from R-5 and R-1. Overall, initial attack (IA) activity was slightly above average with 28 fires jumped (19 in Silver City, nine in Albuquerque) and 200 jumpers out the door, but the bros were kept busy working on large fires.

There were 11 ground-crew actions taken (seven in Silver City, four in Albuquerque) and 43 single-resource assignments filled (36 in Silver City, seven in Albuquerque).

Fire activity dictated the need for a total of seven boost requests to Region 3. Silver City received four boosts (two from R-5, two from R-4) with the first arriving April 30 (sorry, R-6 – no love; talk to NICC).

Albuquerque received three boosts, one from R-5 and two from R-1. The majority of boosters stayed for 21 days with some taking days off in place and extend-

ing to 30 days. Overall R-3 was an excellent place to be.

The rookie trainers had their hands full with a R-1 rookie class of 25. Fourteen MSO rookies completed training in 2011, which consisted of eight regular hires and six detailers. The 2011 MSO rookie class included **Tyson Atkinson, Brian Bressan, Sam Bullington, Will Burks, Kyle Errecart, Stephen Latham, Megan McKinnie, Nate Ochs, Ian Pohowsky, Daniel Poole, Eli Schned, Brian Schwitters, Edward Smith and Wesley Steenhoven.**

Once again GAC hosted “hell week,” and from there the operation was moved to MSO for units and jumping, with cadre from all three R-1 bases. Thanks to all the trainers and support cadre for this extensive time commitment. They did receive significant amounts of rain throughout training that added to the experience.

This year, nine Region 1 jumpers successfully completed “New Man Ram-Air” training. The training was five weeks long (one week of rigger training and four weeks of jump training) and was facilitated with a combined USFS and BLM cadre, which took place in Missoula at the end of April.

**Rick Olivares (MSO-07), Travis Parker (MSO-08), Stephen Reed (MSO-95), Ashton Ferruzzi (MSO-08), and J.T. Gilman (WYS-06)** were the five MSO jumpers who trained on the Ram-Air system. To date MSO currently has 18 jumpers on the Ram-Air system with a total of 31 Forest Service Ram-Air jumpers in R-1.

Many thanks to the BLM trainers and loft personnel who once again provided expertise and oversight to this training – their assistance is truly appreciated.

Also a big “thanks” goes out for the bros who had to be on “hold” (possibly missing fire and project work assignments) in order to support the logistical and technical demands of such an in-depth training. Currently there are plans to train more R-1 Forest Service jumpers on the Ram-Air system in 2012; the numbers have not been decided, but most likely will be between 8-10 Region 1 jumpers.

MSO had very little turnover this past year. **Rogers Warren (MSO-00)** accepted a job in R-3, and in December **Edmund Ward (MSO-80)** retired as base manager.

Thanks for all the work you did. Eddy, we hope retirement is going well.

**Mike Fritsen (MSO-95)** won the “battle” for base manager in the spring and managed to get to R-3 on a boost. **Clem Pope (GAC-03)** accepted a GS-6 (13/13) position; **T. Wallace (MSO-06), S. Pfahler (MS-03), and Courtney Wallace (GAC-04)** accepted GS-07 positions; **Jake Besmer (MSO-03)** and **David Bihr (MSO-01)** accepted GS-08 spotter positions. Hopefully, MSO will be able to do more hiring this coming winter (once the federally mandated “hiring freeze” ends).

At the beginning of the summer, the AFD opened up a Montessori school on campus (otherwise known as the “day care”). Ironically enough there seems to be a “baby boom” at the MSO base ... to date there are some 11-13 jumpers who recently had or are expecting “babies” in 2011. The count is hard to keep track of because it seems to be adding up daily. Needless to say, there is a waiting list at the new “day care.”

**Jessie Thomas (MSO-04)** was very influential in making this happen, and with assistance – a lot of which was volunteer – Jessie and the “day care committee” have managed to make it happen despite several unsuccessful tries from predecessors. Even though many people may gawk at the idea of a “jumper day care” (until they need day care), it is quite handy and is open to the public, with a discount given to government employees.

In late August MSO received 21 jumpers from Fort St. John, British Columbia. This was an excellent opportunity for both American and Canadian jumpers.

At the time R-1 was tapped out of jumpers and was receiving moderate to heavy IA. The Canadian jumpers were able to fill the void and allowed us to better serve our users, and it allowed the Canadian jumpers to be immersed into our operation and cross train, and of course it was beneficial to keeping the door open for future joint operations.

Most all the Canadian jumpers got two fire jumps or more, and they managed to be in Missoula the same time the Miss Montana Pageant was taking place at their hotel.

All in all the season was a good one. Now that it is October, some jumpers are “tapping out,” while others are holding on ‘til the bitter end, or planning hunting trips, planning ski trips, planning exotic vacations, buying cool stuff like high-end camouflage, or taking time off to salvage what is left of their marriages.

## **Please Tell Us When You Change Your Address**

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



# Boise Base Report

by Jake Brollier (Redding '95)

The fire season of 2011 has come to a close. The previous two years Mother Nature provided slow seasons for fire activity. This fire season was shaping up the same, but when it was all said and done we had steady business. Spring brought an extended pattern of cold and wet weather to the Northwest, but we still were able to send jumpers to users in Montana BLM for prescribed fire operations and the south/southeast for fire suppression operations. In the fall, jumpers participated in fuels reduction for the state of Washington and continued to support the south/southeast area with single resource assignments and jumpers for prescribed fire operations.

Hearty congratulations to **Calvin McGowan**, **Dan Staab**, **Tommy Hayes**, and **Cody Skinner** as our newest rookies to make it through the training program. We gained a fine addition to our group. Also, we would like to welcome **Chris Lord** (FBX-08) and **Jake Class** (MYC-04), who transferred from Alaska and McCall respectively last spring. On a similar but opposite vein, we lost **Rich Zimmerlee** (RDD-95) to the Boise National Forest as the FMO for the Idaho City Ranger District. **Todd Jinkins** (NIFC-98) also flew the coop to the Forest Service as the R-4 High Risk Specialty Programs Manager. **Tim Schaeffer** (MYC-92) picked up a job on the Nez Pierce National Forest and is the new FMO on the Moose Creek Ranger District. **Josh Graham** (NIFC-05) is now the BLM Central Zone AFMO for Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit out of Rifle, CO. We wish them all good luck on their new endeavors and thank them for all the hard work and dedication to the Boise Smokejumpers.

A very special thanks to **Jason Hofman** (NIFC-88) and **Walt Wasser** (MYC-79). Jason hung up his harness for good and retired January 30<sup>th</sup> last spring and was available for AD assignments as a single resource. Wally, a.k.a. "The Legendary Legend," succeeded to become the

jumper with the most fire jumps in the 71-year history of smokejumping. On September 30<sup>th</sup>, Wally hung his harness up and walked away with 395 fire jumps, 834 total jumps and a 33 year career as a smokejumper.

**Steve Stroud** (NIFC-03) and **Brian Cresto** (NIFC-04) became our two newest spotters last spring and kicked enough of us out the door to become fully qualified to rotate with the other veteran spotters. Congrats to them! **Jared Hohn** (NIFC-01) became the new Assistant Loft Foreman last year and **Todd "Unit" Johnson** (NIFC-98) is the new Assistant Operations Foreman.

Looking back over the 2011 season, we had 76 total jumpers at our base. There were 106 fires jumped with 10 fires pounded with a total of 569 smokejumpers on fires. This does not include the jumps in Alaska in the spring and summer that afforded great training and operational experience for the Boise Smokejumpers. We also had 13 Fire Management details at the local, district, state and national level. In addition we had 25 people on rosters for Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3 Incident Management Teams. Several of them were able to get assignments with their respective IMTs and others were able to go out as single resources.

While 2011 was not one of our busiest seasons for initial attack, there was good opportunity for us to work on and complete various task books on larger, extended attack fires in the Southern/Southwest Areas: i.e. Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. In Missoula, the BLM supported the USFS R-1 Ram-Air program with assistance from our parachute training cadre and our loft in the spring with good success. Thanks for all the help from our trainers and the dedication to all the students.

This year the Boise BLM Smokejumpers are looking at having a rookie class in 2012. We intend to have three aircraft, plus the shared Dornier with Alaska.

Have a great winter, stay safe, and we will catch up with you on our next update.

## Fort St. John Base Report

by James Bergen (Fort St. John '02)

I would like to start by thanking all the bases who hosted Canadian jumpers in 2011, and a special thanks to **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91) and **Robin Embry** (GAC-85) for all their hard work to make our boost to America a memorable one.

Canadian smokejumping originally started in 1947 in Saskatchewan but disbanded in 1967. If you want to see an interesting bit of history on the Saskatchewan program, go to [archives.cbc.ca](http://archives.cbc.ca) and enter the keyword

### MEMBERSHIP CORNER

**John McDaniel** (CJ-57)

**NSA Membership Chairman**

There have been numerous questions about when memberships are due for renewal. You will receive a *postcard notice* about six weeks before your renewal date, a second card will be sent on the renewal date, and a final card on the publication of the current quarterly magazine.

“smokejumpers” to watch a short documentary CBC did on the program in 1964.

Ontario followed Saskatchewan with a program designed to deliver equipment by parachute to ground crews. Unfortunately, the ground crews were never adequately trained in parachute retrieval and eventually this “paracargo” operation ended.

The next stop for smokejumping in Canada was the Yukon Territory. Like most of northern Canada, the Yukon firefighting authorities were challenged with limited funding, large distances and very fast-moving fires. So in 1974 the Yukon employed contract smokejumpers for four years before experimenting with a rappel program.

Small payloads, long distances, and limited fuel caches of northern Canada all combined to end the rappel experiment.

The Northwest Territories followed suit by hiring contract smokejumpers in 1977 through to 1982 but was eventually disbanded when the NWT implemented a local-only hire program. Smokejumping returned to the Yukon in 1984 where it operated for 12 years on a contract basis. The Yukon Forest Service was unable to renew this contract in 1996 when the Yukon Government also implemented a local-only hire program.

The British Columbia Forest Service entertained the idea of a smokejumping program in 1997, hiring our Base Manager **Tom Reinboldt** (YXY-89)(Whitehorse/Yukon) and three other ex-Yukon jumpers to start the program. Smokejumper training started the spring of 1998 in Smithers with 18 rookies.

The first fire jump came in 1999; the program moved from Smithers in 2000 to its present location in Fort St. John. Fast-forward to the present day, and I’m pleased to say smokejumping is alive and thriving in British Columbia. A big reason for the early success of this program was the assistance of the Region 1 and Region 6 smokejumpers, and the program has been helped immensely over the years by the ongoing support of the Missoula base.

It was generally a slow year for firefighting in British Columbia in 2011 and jumping was no exception. The program did 385 proficiency jumps and 60 fire jumps. But like most smokejumping programs, a lack of fire didn’t mean we weren’t busy.

Plans to start a second smokejumping base in Mackenzie are underway, and the jump training for their crews was completed this year. Currently, our organization has expanded to look like this: Reinboldt is still the base manager, and he is supported with four overhead staff and 40 jumpers for a total of 45 active jumpers in the province. Continued expansion is planned and the hope is to see a fully operational base in Mackenzie with a second aircraft.

Finally the opportunity for 21 Canadian jumpers to

go the U.S. and jump fires and work with U.S. jumpers has given us all memories and created friendships that most will cherish for a lifetime. We look forward to the opportunity of having all of you on Canadian soil to jump some fires in the future.

## Alaska Base Report

by **Brett Fairchild** (Redmond ’05)

The snow stayed late this spring in Alaska. Second refresher saw many practice jump spots still frozen and usable, not growing mosquitoes or supporting the local moose population.

Even with the extended spring, fire season came fast and furious about mid-May. For a while it seemed we were going to get lucky with another Alaskan money-making season. We even supported a fair amount of boosters, giving them a good base of overtime hours early on. However, by mid-June we were getting plenty of showers, and the fire world in Alaska was below average.

The doughnut eaters in Paracargo had a good year, considering. The overall pounds dropped was well below the last two years but seems about par for the decade. With the help of a few military contract paracargo specialists, our Paracargo boys have been testing a new release mechanism designed for high-wind drops.

This system releases when the weight of the cargo lands on the ground, allowing the cargo chutes to float freely and not drag the cargo across the windy tundra or into the water. This could be very beneficial on certain fire and project drops.

It should be noted that **Jeff Stark** (FBX-03) in Paracargo has somehow managed to tag his name across an Apache Indian Reservation in New Mexico or Arizona. Weird.

The motorboat “club” was pretty dismal this year with no operational drops or shifts on fires. The fleet should be ready for a bomber year in the future as most boats are rehabbed and repaired. I am sure many training runs are planned in the future, ensuring the boats run in tip-top condition.

Loft personnel are constantly driving forward, testing new chutes and providing flight time under different canopies for interested jumpers. Early in the year, the reserve MT1S chute was rigged and jumped multiple times as a main. The focus on this training was providing time with the somewhat smaller, faster canopy for jumpers, giving them an idea how the reserve manipulates, should they ever have to deploy one.

Another reserve chute was tested by a small working group later in the season – the PD Low Bulk, a seven-cell reserve. Like the MT1S, it was flown as a main. This

canopy is still being tested and evaluated.

Training shop had their hands full in the spring, herding cats into taking all the required online training. I am pretty sure most of the overhead still need to take five or six college credits' worth of EEO and Diversity training. Soon most will have associate's degrees on how to be civil.

Another training highlight was evaluating stand-up exits for Ram-Air jumpers. A small, experienced working group was selected for evaluation. The goal was at least six stand-up exits per jumper, with several cameras capturing the performance. The training shop is still discussing its findings.

Towards the end of August, the firearms instructors at the base were blessed with an opportunity to attend a one-day course put on by the infamous instructors from Gunsite Academy. This course was designed for defensive shooting involving large mammals. The information was top-notch and gave the firearm instructors plenty of material to pass on.

If you have ever walked the halls of the Alaska jump shack, you've probably heard someone loudly proclaim "88" at some point in time. In fact you have probably heard it loudly slurred during the big flip. Unfortunately, you probably won't hear it much anymore, unless it's a rookie's birth year.

The last remaining Bros of this holdout year have all moved on to bigger and better things. **Chip Houde** (FBX-88) has done an amazing job as the statewide Bureau of Land Management aviation manager the last handful of years. Under mandatory retirement he gracefully stepped down, toasted a cold one with the boys and announced any bro was welcome to come ride surf at his paradise in Mexico. Chip, we are all very sad to see you go.

Thankfully, **Gary Baumgartner** (FBX-88) was offered Chip's position about mid-summer. Gary was assistant base manager for the last four years. His knowledge and expertise will be sorely missed at the shack, as will his level mind and cool temper. However, we are all glad another jumper filled Chip's position and take comfort in the fact the Gary is next door drinking coffee in the head shed.

Another valuable firefighter from "88," **Charlie Brown** (FBX-88), moved up in the ranks. Life could not be better in the Charlie world right now, as he was accepted into the super-competitive position of air tactical supervisor on Bravo-8, a national ASM platform. His pilot is **Don Bell** (GAC-95). They both are based in their hometowns, Durango, Colo. and Redmond, Ore., respectively and report to NIFC when needed.

Charlie is a newlywed, marrying his beautiful wife, Julie, Oct. 8. His remote alternate work base allows him to enjoy her and their passion of fly fishing.

Congrats, Charlie and Julie ... tight lines!

On another note, the wiry and tattooed **J.P. Knapp** (NCSB-96) is moving on to enjoy his home in the beautiful Methow Valley. J.P. suffered a cracked femur this year and had to sit out the entire season, scraping together a few hours here and there figuring out the dispatch world. He will be missed.

Our EMT supervisor, **Anthony Marchini** (FBX-01), has accepted a position as a structural firefighter/paramedic for the Anchorage Fire Department. This keeps him closer to his family and the sheep mountains. His medical knowledge and sense of humor will be missed by all.

The "Free-stetlers" – **John "Freebird" Fremont** (FBX-05) and **Kristin Hostetler** (FBX-08) – were due to be wed in mid-October in Wyoming. Kristin had another bomber jump season with two long boosts down south, elevating her to "Jump King" status with 17 jumps this year. Their offspring could give "Fish" – **Isaiah Fischer** (RDD-05) – a run for his money as the next Lance Armstrong. Congrats to Freebird and Hoss!

**Brandon Petersen** (FBX-01) and his wife, Lynn, added another family member this summer. Lynn finally got her baby girl. It will give something for her mob of older brothers to do when she hits dating age.

**Rob Miller** (FBX-05) and wife, Lisa, had a rug rat of their own. The little boy might put a damper on Rob's brewing and stilling activities. I wonder if when watching Sesame Street, he might think Oscar is Dad. Just kiddin', Rob, aught-five!

**Matt Allen** (FBX-95) and Tommi had a baby boy last spring in what Matt affectionately calls "calving season." The Pac-12 Conference is already calling and offering football scholarships.

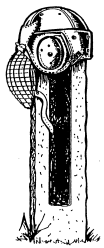
**Brian Kirkman** (FBX-08) and Rachael added a baby boy to their family this summer. That being said, I believe we have almost two casa loads of infants and toddlers running around the shack sometime during the day.

Tune in to The History Channel and you might hear a familiar voice. If you can recognize the face behind the beard and Coke-bottle glasses, you will probably be hooked on watching all the episodes.

The infamous and unnaturally tough **Marty Meierotto** (FBX-94) signed a contract to film a series of reality TV shows portraying a trapper in Montana, one in the southeast somewhere, and Marty himself. The show will give a day in the life of Marty on his different hunts in the fall and out on the trapline. It will be entertaining for sure and give bros plenty of material to rib Marty with. I urge everyone to watch; stay tuned for program times.

The Alaska jumpers are still burning; only this time of year it's airplane gas, gun powder and firewood. We hope to see many of you next year. Have a great holiday season! 🦋





# Off The List

Remember and honor fellow jumpers with a gift to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund in their name. Hard times can fall on many of us at any time. The NSA is here to support our fellow jumpers and their families through the Good Samaritan Fund. Mail your contribution to:

Chuck Sheley  
10 Judy Lane  
Chico, CA 95926

## **John Frankovich (Missoula '46)**

John, 85, died Oct. 24, 2010, in Tucson, Arizona. He attended Montana School of Mines – now known as Montana Tech – and earned a degree from the University of Montana School of Business and School of Law. John joined the Army and served as a tail gunner in Europe during World War II. He jumped at Missoula in 1946-47 before embarking on a career with State Farm Insurance in Great Falls, Montana. John then joined the legal department of the Anaconda Mining Company in Butte, Montana, and transferred in 1968 to Tucson during Anaconda's expansion to the Southwest. He was later lead counsel for the Twin Buttes Copper Mine in Green Valley, Arizona; the open-pit mine became a joint venture called Anamax, where John worked until his retirement.

## **Robert "Bob" Hilbun (McCall '51)**

Bob, 84, died June 10, 2011, in Missoula, Montana. After an honorable discharge from the military, he graduated from the University of Washington in 1948. Bob ran a successful electrical contracting business first in Richland, Washington, and then in Whitefish, Montana, where he started Big Mountain Electric. He earned a pilot's license before he learned to drive a car, and logged thousands of hours during his lifetime. Bob jumped from McCall in 1951 and 1952. Following retirement, he and his wife split their time between Whitefish and Punta Chivato, Baja California, Mexico.

## **Gerald "Jerry" Linton (Missoula '48)**

Jerry, 83, died July 18, 2011, in Spokane, Washington. He attended Montana State University in 1948-49 and the Commercial Trades Institute in Chicago in 1950. He was drafted into the Army in January 1951, serving a two-year stint in the 231st Combat Engineers Battalion "A" Company. Jerry jumped from Missoula in 1948 and 1949, but already had Forest Service experience as he had worked in the Blister Rust Control Project during summers in high school. He volunteered to jump in the Lolo National Forest to help find and recover an injured hunter. Jerry went skydiving on

his 63rd and 80th birthdays. He was a Life Member of the NSA.

## **Nicholas "Nick" Helburn (Missoula '44)**

Nick, 92, died June 11, 2011, in Boulder, Colorado. He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Chicago and received a Master's in Agricultural Economics at Montana State University. Nick had spent a year at Harvard University, but left to spend a year working in the New Hampshire mountains. Nick was a conscientious objector during World War II; his alternative service was jumping from Missoula in the 1944-45 seasons, following a stint of building bridges in Tennessee. He began his professional career at Montana State, helping to establish the Department of Earth Sciences. Nick spent a year in Turkey in 1951 on a Ford Foundation grant; the research from this time resulted in a book about dry land agriculture and village culture in Anatolia. Nick moved to Boulder in 1965 to direct the High School Geography Project, one of the "New Social Studies" curriculum projects sponsored by the National Science Foundation to develop a new approach for teaching geography in high schools. He became the first director of the Education Resources Information Center for Social Studies. He joined the Geography Department at the University of Colorado in 1971 and served as chairman for three years. He was also elected president of the Association of American Geographers.

## **Richard C. "Dick" Eriksson (Missoula '60)**

Dick, 70, died Nov. 2, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. He attended Western State College in Colorado, where he earned bachelors and master's degrees in Business Administration, taking those skills to work as a representative in truck sales for the Mack Truck and International Harvester companies. Dick worked as an Outward Bound instructor in North Carolina and Georgia. He jumped at Missoula from 1960 through 1967. Dick was injured and became a quadriplegic in 1982. Despite his handicap, he volunteered in the Peer Support Program at Shepard Spinal Center in Atlanta, and joined friends and relatives on hunting excursions.

**Dave Ferguson** (Associate Trail Crew Member)

Dave, 69, died of a heart attack while hiking in Glacier National Park with several of his smokejumper and associate trail crew friends. Dave contributed his engineering skills to several of the Colorado trail crew projects, most notably the Twin Lakes and Glade Guard Station projects. Dave is survived by his wife, Peggy, and son, Ryan, in Arvada, Colorado.

**Dale Haver** (Missoula '64)

Dale, 26, died April 11, 1969, in Vietnam due to injuries he suffered two days earlier when his OH-

6A helicopter crashed on the Michelin Plantation, 11 kilometers northeast of Dau Tieng, Binh Duong Province, during a reconnaissance mission. Another crewman died upon impact while two others were injured. Dale was a resident of Whitehouse, New Jersey, upon enlistment in the Army Reserve in 1968. He rose to first lieutenant, HQ Company, 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Dale jumped from Missoula during 1964, 65, 67, Grangeville in 66 and Fairbanks in 1968.

*Even though 40+ years late, we're printing this obit in response to information sent in after the October issue. (Ed.)*

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**Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004 – \$15,800**

**Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:  
Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico, CA 95926**

### **Thomas “Jerry” Walters (Missoula ’66)**

Jerry, 24, died May 27, 1968, in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam. He attended the University of Southern Mississippi after earning an Associate’s degree from Jones County Junior College in 1963. He jumped from Missoula in 1966 before joining the Marines later that year, earning the rank of corporal after serving in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, before being assigned to the Demilitarized Zone in Vietnam in December 1967. Jerry, a rifleman, died from small-arms fire on the ground in combat while serving with E Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, 3rd Division, III Marine Amphibious Corps.

*Even though 40+ years late, we’re printing this obit in response to information sent in after the October issue. (Ed.)*

### **James I. Edison (Cave Junction ’56)**

Marine Lt. James “Jim” Edison was killed October 2, 1961, when his F9F Cougar went over the side while making a landing on the USS Antietam. The carrier was operating in the Gulf of Mexico and the aircraft and Jim were “lost at sea.” Jim starred in football and basketball at Jacksonville (NC) High School and later in basketball at Louisburg College in North Carolina where he graduated in 1958. He jumped at CJ for the 1956 and 1957 seasons.

*Even though 40+ years late, we’re printing this obit in response to information sent in after the October issue. (Ed.)*

### **William “Bill” Morin (Missoula ’46)**

Bill, 82, died February 21, 2011, in Butte, Montana. He attended the University of Montana in his native Missoula after jumping there in 1946-48. Bill started his work in fire safety as a lookout when he was 15 years old. He hiked to Mann Gulch on a guided tour for the 50th anniversary of the 1949 disaster that killed 13 firefighters, including several of his friends. Bill had a career in sales for more than 50 years, retiring at 72.

### **Maj. Gen. William “Bill” Eicher (North Cascades ’48)**

Bill, 84, died May 2, 2011, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., following a highly decorated military career. He jumped from Winthrop for the 1948 season and rejoined the Army in 1950, having served in the Army Air Forces – predecessor to the U.S. Air Force – at the end of World War II. He was a 1950 graduate of Washington State College and earned a Master’s degree in Business Administration from Syracuse University in 1960.

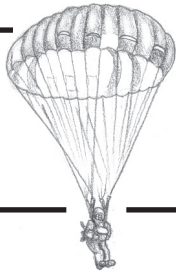
Gen. Eicher commanded a battalion in the Vietnam War and was commanding general of the Army Armament Materiel Readiness Command in the late 1970s. He was inducted into the Ordnance Hall of Fame in 1986, having streamlined a process for ammunition procurement that saved the Army hundreds of millions of dollars. Gen. Eicher received the Silver Star in 1951 while serving as a lieutenant in the Korean War. His award noted that as his platoon attacked a strongly defended hill, he repeatedly braved automatic weapons fire and “so inspired his men by his inflexible resolve that they maintained the perimeter against every hostile thrust.” Gen. Eicher’s other decorations included the Distinguished Service Medal, three awards of the Legion of Merit, four awards of the Bronze Star medal, the Purple Heart, the Joint Services Commendation Medal, and two Army Commendation medals. After retiring from the Army, he spent 12 years as a vice president of technical management at the American Defense Preparedness Association. 🇺🇸

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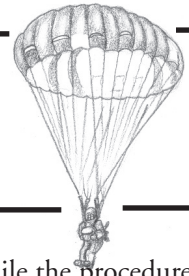
Know your way around a website? Want to contribute to your favorite organization and profession? The National Smokejumper Association is looking for folks with technical and web experience to contribute to [smokejumpers.com](http://smokejumpers.com).

We would welcome HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Graphics, and/or database skills. Additional opportunities exist as well. Contact the Web coordinator at: [webmaster@smokejumpers.com](mailto:webmaster@smokejumpers.com) with your skills and interest.





# ODDS AND ENDS



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Gene Hamner** (MSO-67), **Ash Court** (NCSB-63), **Ken Perkins** (RDD-77), and **Richard Andrews** (RDD-68), who just became our latest **Life Member(s)**.

In talking to my Assistant Editor, **Ed Booth**, I commented about how I enjoyed the annual pieces that **LeRoy Cook** (CJ-64) sends in the magazine. We printed "Staying Connected Thanks To Old Memories" in this issue. Ed's comment back: "You're right—his pieces are always excellent and introspective. In a different culture he'd be a spiritual master. Most young people today would think 'connecting' with someone else means sending that person a text message."

**Don Baker** (MSO-65): "Just finished reading the latest edition of the *Smokeyjumper* magazine. I liked your listing of the smokejumpers killed while in the military. It is nice to remember them. Here is another one to add to the list. He only jumped the one summer in 1966. We didn't jump any fires together, but he became a good buddy of mine. Maybe because we were both going in the Marine Corps when our jumping was done that summer. "His name is **Thomas Jerry Walters** (MSO-65). Everyone called him Jerry. He was from Laurel, Mississippi. He was a Corporal and rifleman with E Co., 2nd Bn, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division, up near the DMZ in Quang Tri Province. He was KIA on 5/27/1968, and was 24 years old. I always think about him and miss him. RIP Jerry."

At the Cave Junction reunion in June, I was talking with **Bill Knight** (CJ-60) and his involvement in retrieving Apollo astronauts while being a US Navy helicopter pilot. We then got to wondering if Bill had picked fellow Gobi jumper **Stuart Roosa** (CJ-53) out of the Pacific. Just heard back from Bill: "Sorry to say it was the Apollo-Soyuz mission that I had contact with. Apollo-Soyuz splashed down July 23, 1975. The USS New Orleans was the primary recovery ship. I was the Chief Pilot on board flying the CH-46 Sea Knight. My mission was to lower swimmers who were to attach floatation equipment on the module.



Then, I backed off while the procedure was completed, then landed back aboard New Orleans."

**Ben Musquez** (MSO-56): "Thanks again for the honor you gave me and my family to represent all Veterans, especially Smokejumpers (centerfold October *Smokeyjumper*). All our friends and family

members that have seen the magazine speak highly of the great work you and your team did 'Honoring all Veterans.' Great Job!"

Small World from **George Straw** (CJ-63): "Once upon a time when we were both younger men, you were working on the Mendocino National Forest and Lyle Laverty was the forest supervisor. Last week (July 2011) I was on a 100-mile horseback ride with Lyle and he noticed the belt buckle you sold me and asked me if I had been a smokejumper and if I knew a guy named 'Chuck Sheley?' He was really floored when I told him I just didn't know you, but was just with you in Cave Junction a couple of weeks ago and bought the buckle from you. Great and very hard ride and Lyle is a really good fellow. We had lots to talk about along the trail; he lost his job with the change in administrations in Washington, so is doing freelance work now."

**LeRoy "Lead Hook" Cook** (CJ-64): "Enjoyed the Bigfoot article (July 2011 *Smokeyjumper*) by **Major Boddiker** (MSO-63). It reminded me of one night in Kirby, Oregon, (Kerby Tavern) with **Cliff Hamilton** (CJ-62). We were listening to a few forgotten tunes on the juke and a high-heeled Bigfoot came in dressed in bib overall cut offs and an inter-tube top. She and Cliff started jumping around to the mellow tunes and the suds really flowed. This may have been the start of the California west coast swing. Anyway, I got out of there when they started slow dancing to Sara Vaughn's 'Broken Hearted Melody.' I wonder if she was the same young Bigfoot in Mr. Boddiker's article? The Umpqua is just a short walk to the North. Thanks for the memories."

**Brian Miller** (RDD-85) has been accepted as a Fellow in the American College of Surgeons (FACS). He is also the sole proprietor of Miller's Farm in Dover Foxcroft, Maine. The farm has been critically described as a "tenuous economic endeavor, seemingly established to

provide free range poultry to a burgeoning population of fox.” It also features Pie Face, a neo-socialist dwarf dairy goat with a skin problem.

**Fred Rohrbach** (MSO-65) concerning editorial on smokejumpers KIA: “You missed **Dale H. Haver** (MSO-64) helicopter pilot, died April 11, 1969, Vietnam.”

**Starr Jenkins** (CJ-48): “Thanks for remembering my younger brother, **Hugh Jenkins** (MSO-49), as one of that distinguished list of former smokejumpers who have died in the service over the years.”

**Jim Edison** (CJ-56) also came up as being a smokejumper killed while in the service. He was a Marine pilot killed while making a carrier landing on the Antietam. As with so many names in the NSA database, there is little in the way of detail on the individual. In an email **Ron Price** (CJ-56) added some things that he remembered about Jim: “He was a star basketball player from Jacksonville, NC, and a look-alike for Tab Hunter (actor of the 50s), had 6-2”, 200-lb frame and was way ahead of Stockton and Malone with the ‘give and go.” Further information from Louisburg College in N.C. shows he was a 1958 graduate and did play basketball there.

Since the above was entered into this column, **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) has done a lot of research and emailing over the internet. This resulted in finding Jim’s date of death. I have written an obit for this issue and added an obit to our smokejumper records.

**Jim Rathbun** (MYC-58): “Reference Barry Wynsma’s article in this last edition (*Smokejumper* Oct. 2011): Leadership is very necessary and the closer to the ground it is, the better. Forest supervisor offices provide technical and professional skills at a higher level, which are needed to support the ranger districts. You cannot manage the resources by telephone. People need to be in contact with the ground, and that cannot be done from the regional offices. But, the Service isn’t managing the resources today, anyway, so it probably doesn’t make that much difference. Jim Rathbun, McCall 1958 -1961, Forest Supervisor Kootenai National Forest - retired.”

**Howard E. “Ed” Usrey** (MYC-73): “I jumped one year out of McCall in 1973. It was a great way to wind down from my time in Vietnam. I stayed in the barracks for a couple weeks, while in training, until my wife could come up from California. We used to drink a little beer after a hard day training each day. I would wake up in the morning with a dry mouth and go in to the head to wash my face. I would use **Neil Satterwhite’s** (MYC-65) pewter mug to have a big drink of water every morning. Neil almost considered me human, even as a Ned, because I was in Long Range

Recon in Vietnam. Neil was up earlier than me every morning until one morning I woke up before he did. I was going through my morning routine and was going to use his mug to have a big drink of water. I stopped using his mug when I found that he kept his false teeth in it every night. I almost puked in his mug that morning. I’m sure he would have been offended had I done that.”

**Ron Stoleson** (MSO-56): “In response to your article about fallen veteran jumpers, a name that comes to mind is **Robert Gallup** (MSO-54). He was serving in Vietnam as an Air Force pilot. Captain Gallup was killed on June 16, 1965. He was involved in a head on collision with another aircraft while flying an A-1E over Pleiku AB. He bailed out, but his chute did not open. Bob attended the University of Montana Forestry School. **Art Jukkala** (MSO-56) and I last visited him while he was stationed in Wisconsin.”

**Dick Hughes** (MSO-64): “I have noticed that the name **Greg Campbell** (FBX-67) shows up from time to time in the happenings at NSA Newsletter (aka *Smokejumper* magazine). Greg was a rookie in Fairbanks with **Pat Ward** and **Alan Dunton**, among others. I have no official information, but I recall that after the ’67 season he was drafted, went to that ridiculous war and got shot dead within two weeks of his arrival. I did advise someone in Fairbanks at the reunion a couple years ago, but still see that he has never been entered into the deceased file. Don’t want to kill him prematurely, but have no doubt that if there were not some truth to it, he would have been back in ’68 and for that matter, probably forever. He was very much taken with being one of the chosen. Had the energy and enthusiasm of the Brookes. We missed him.”

After 39 years in fire, **George Maasen** (RDD-81) is retired. He did just about everything, which included eight years as a smokejumper, 12 years on crews, 10 years on engines and nine years in forest protection and prevention. George worked on six different forests and two different agencies and “loved jumpin” the best. He is looking forward to fishing, hunting, backpacking parts of the Pacific Crest Trail and working with the NSA trail crews. “I don’t get it, I can still beat most of the boys to the top of the hill at age 57, but the Forest Service says I can’t fight fire anymore and are kicking me out the door.” Stay retired George, we need more people like you on the NSA trails projects.

**Jim Clatworthy** (MSO-56): “Great work on the October 2011 issue of the *Smokejumper*! Chuck Sheley and his associates do a marvelous job getting out the magazine every quarter. The centerfold with the Musquez family was amazing. Ben’s always talked to me about all his military family members, but seeing the pictures

makes the point. Stay healthy, Ben, and hope to talk with you soon.”

**Bob Hooper** (CJ-67): “When I first arrived at the Gobi in 1967, I noticed that the dayroom had photos on the wall. I used to study the photos, wondering where they were from and why they became smokejumpers.

“As for me, my brother was in the 82nd Airborne in North Carolina. I always looked up to him and wanted to do what he did. He was a firefighter with the Calif. Division of Forestry and so was I. I heard about smokejumpers and wondered what it would be like to become one. By chance I met **Chuck Shelley** (CJ-59) who encouraged me to apply, so I did and was accepted.

“I had heard stories about past smokejumpers and one in particular, **Stuart Roosa** (CJ-53), and looked him up in textbooks about astronauts. At that time I worked as a high school teacher and coach at Marysville High School, in Marysville, Cal-

ifornia. During the winter of 75-76 I was informed that **Stuart Roosa** was going to give a talk about his experiences as an astronaut. After his presentation I spoke with him for about 10 minutes and was able to get a photo and autograph. During my time with Mr. Roosa, I asked him if he would be interested in returning to the Gobi to see how it had changed. He said that he thought it was a good idea and would consider coming for a visit. That summer when he and his family showed up for a tour of the base, he gave us some seeds that went with him on his Apollo 14 mission to the Moon. This was a memorable event and still is to this day.”

**Lee Gossett** (RDD-57) was inducted into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Honor at the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum October 16, 2011. The Hall of Honor was established in 2003 to recognize outstanding men and women in aviation. 🦅

## It's Been Thirty Years Since Women Shattered The Gender Barrier

by **Leo Cromwell** (Idaho City '66)

**T**hirty years ago this fire season was the year of the “first.” The year was 1981 when the first female smokejumper, **Deanne Shulman** (MYC-81), and the first female smokejumper pilot, **Charlotte Larson**, made great historic significance as they broke the gender barrier into these male-dominated professions.

How the two careers met in smokejumping, and where their illustrious careers went, has been a lifetime accomplishment matched by very few.

Deanne was the first woman on the crew when she started with the Los Padres Hotshots in 1977; one year after women first joined the all-male hotshot crews.

In 1979 she tried out for the McCall Smokejumpers, but was “washed out” of the all-male crew, even though she had passed the extremely rigorous fitness test. Weighing 125 pounds, she did not meet the minimum 130-pound weight requirement codified in the manual at that time. Deanne was not to be denied and, after filing a formal Equal Employment Opportunity complaint, returned in 1981 to try again weighing in at just over 130 pounds.

On July 10, 1981, after passing the physical tests and the parachute training competencies, Deanne



*Charlotte Larson and Deanne Shulman “Veterans of the 1985 Season.” (Courtesy Leo Cromwell)*



Shulman became the first woman smokejumper. Two years later, Deanne's success was instrumental in a Forest Service review of both the height and weight requirements; with the weight range subsequently changed to 120-200 pounds.

She went on to jump a total of five years through the end of the 1985 season. Deanne's career in the Forest Service continues today where she serves as a Senior Emergency Management Specialist with the Office of International Programs. In this capacity, she has traveled to 25 countries throughout the world, developing and implementing collaborative programs with international partners on all aspects of disaster management.

The same year that Deanne Shulman qualified as a smokejumper, Charlotte Larson flew as co-pilot on the DC-3. Charlotte's interest in flying began in Beach City, Ohio, where she grew up and took her first flight lesson. She made her first flight from a grass airstrip with the guidance of her WWII flight instructor. She eventually left Ohio for California, where she had many jobs and worked her way up from receptionist, secretary, flight school registrar, aircraft sales, VIP pilot, to Flight Operations Manager. During the early years of her career, she was given the nickname Charlie. It was hoped that by the time prospective students or VIP customers scheduled to fly with her found out that "Charlie" was a woman, their shock would last long enough for Charlotte to get them into the airplane. It turned out to be a successful ploy since not one of them refused additional flights, and most of the VIP folks requested her for subsequent trips.

In 1978, Charlotte became a customer pilot training specialist for Beech Aircraft Corporation in Wichita, Kansas. She met and flew with many FS pilots and managers as they took delivery of the Beech Barons for lead plane duty. As a result she was hired in 1980 by Region 4 of the Forest Service and based in Ogden, Utah. By 1983 Charlotte became fully qualified as a jump captain and flew many smokejumper missions in the Beech 99 and Twin Otter. She was primarily based in McCall until 1985/86 when she flew part of the season for the West Yellowstone Smokejumpers.

During 1987 she became the second woman qualified as a lead plane pilot. Mary Barr was the first. In 1990 she accepted the position of National Fixed Wing Specialist for the Washington Office at NIFC in Boise. She became the administrator for the airtanker and lead plane programs as well as the Training Officer for the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System.

Charlotte retired from the Forest Service in 2002 and lives in Boise. She was an important part of the success of the 2007 National Smokejumper Reunion



*Charlotte Larson and Deanne Shulman toast their successful 1981 season. (Courtesy Leo Cromwell)*

in Boise and is now on the Board of Directors of the National Smokejumper Association.

Today, women smokejumpers and smokejumper pilots remain a minority, but for those that were around in the early 1980s, it was a great achievement in the world of fire. Many firefighters on the ground were surprised to see the "Lady Smokejumper" as she floated to the earth, picked up her Pulaski and went to work. In the aviation world it was equally a surprise to see a jump plane come in with a "Lady Smokejumper Pilot." Deanne Shulman and Charlotte Larson blazed the path for women 30 years ago this fire season. 🍷

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Jump List continued from page 13

## The Jump List

crybaby.' After teaching him how to hurdle, this young lad went on to be a high school hurdler who never lost a hurdle race in four years of competition, winning the state championship. He also received a full scholarship to Washington State University. You can never predict how a young person may develop and 'turn out.' Throughout a life of teaching and coaching, I have been fortunate to travel to several foreign countries, and I find there is a common 'thirst' by all coaches and athletes alike regarding how to learn the best techniques so athletes can perform at a high level. In the United States we need to initiate a program like the early Civilian Conservation Corps in order to teach young people proper work ethics. The time I spent in the smokejumper program certainly influenced my life in a very positive way, and the individuals whom I met and worked with made an impression upon me that continued to help guide my decisions in times of trials throughout my life. I'd like to hear from other smokejumpers who worked in those districts where I was located. My telephone number is (253) 536-1422." 🍷

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## BOOK REVIEW

# THE KILLER INSTINCT

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by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

HERE'S A NOVEL that should appeal to fighter pilots, especially those of the Navy persuasion. Every one of them, I'm sure, can identify with the hero of this story, authored by Gary Watts (MYC-64).

The book's setting is the Miramar Naval Air Station in San Diego, and its leading character is Lt. Jason "Jay Bird" Pierce, an instructor pilot teaching new pilots air-to-air combat tactics.

Jay Bird isn't just an ordinary IP, but the epitome of the genre, quite possibly the best pilot and instructor of those assigned to the station.

He's "tall, with military cut brown hair and light blue eyes. The left breast of his short-sleeved khaki shirt dripped with colorful ribbons, most from his exploits during the air war of Desert Storm." He's also rich, the scion of a wealthy ship-owning family, and drives a red Corvette.

It's no surprise that this guy is a chick magnet, but ordinary women need not apply. One leading contender for his favors is Lt. Pauline "Tinker" Bell, a Naval Academy grad and aspiring fighter pilot. She's short, but with a "great body" and is a good stick. As he muses, he reflects that "she's the most beautiful and intelligent woman I've ever known. Why is fraternization with a student forbidden?"

The other leading aspirant is Jay Bird's longtime lady friend Darcy Garr, a "tall, gorgeous" flight attendant who possesses "an athletic hard-body that

would put most centerfolds to shame, and ... long raven hair that looked almost blue in the sunlight."

A tough choice, and naturally it takes many pages for Jay Bird to make it.

While he's deciding, there's a lot going on. Jay Bird must deal with Lt. Jackson "Sinkers" Fairbanks, a black pilot with an attitude who apparently doesn't have the skills to fly the airplane but is nursed along because of his race. And neither, it seems, does a second woman in the class, Lt. Martha "Sunshine" Conklin, have the requisite skills.

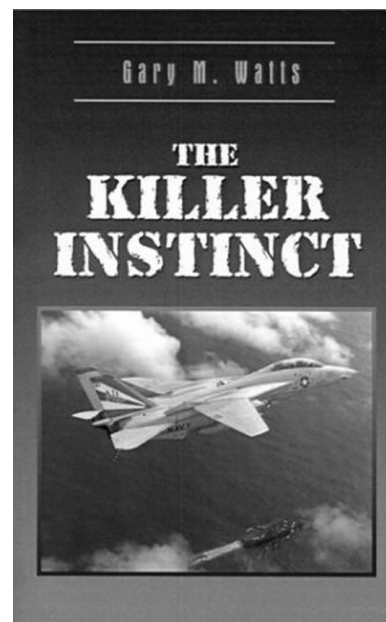
Further, a backseater, "ET" Corvino, just might be gay in a Navy that doesn't countenance that kind of lifestyle. Jay Bird knows about the man's possible proclivities, but what's he to do?

Decisions, decisions.

The book is heavy on technical information related to dogfighting that will probably be understood by fighter pilots, but is a bit confusing to those not of that fraternity.

Watts piles it on as he recounts the mock air battles, describing each critical maneuver in technical detail.

And in the classroom he excels, of course, explaining at one point that "Thrust-to-weight is just that: an aircraft's maximum thrust measured in pounds divided by its gross weight, usually max gross. You have to consider that the thrust-to-weight ratio will increase as fuel is expended. The thrust-to-weight ratio of any fighter is



*The Killer Instinct*, Gary M. Watts, 307 pp. ISBN: 978-02759666962, \$15.95.

a good indicator of several of its key performance factors: acceleration capability, use of the vertical and maximum sustained G performance."

"God! He's a walking encyclopedia," thinks Tinker Bell.

Will Tinker or Darcy capture Jay Bird's heart? Do Sinkers and Sunshine finally garner fighter pilot skills? What about ET? Is he or isn't he—a homosexual?

You'll just have to read the book to find out. It's available through [authorhouse.com](http://authorhouse.com), [buy.com](http://buy.com) and [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). 📖

*Author Gary Watts was a McCall smokejumper in 1964 and 1965. After graduating from the University of Utah, he qualified in and then flew F-8 Crusaders, F-4 Phantoms and F-14 Tomcats for 20 years, including combat tours in Vietnam. After his Navy career, he flew for a major U.S. airline.*

# Judge For Yourself: Courson Has Enjoyed A Fabulous Ride

by Kathy Aney

(Copyright 2011, *The East Oregonian*, Pendleton, Ore.)

**P**ENDLETON, Ore.—Richard Courson (CJ-46) is the last man standing.

Every two years, the Pendleton man has traveled to a reunion of smokejumpers from the now-defunct Cave Junction Smokejumper Base. The number of jumpers from his original training class of two men dwindled with each reunion.

This summer, Courson found himself the lone jumper from his training group from 1946. He mingled with smokejumpers from later classes, wondering where all the familiar faces had gone.

Courson, 87, isn't one to flinch at danger. The Marine paratrooper came home from World War II having survived the fierce Battle of Iwo Jima. He returned to Portland and started looking for a job. He had a limited skill set, he said, that included jumping out of airplanes and killing his enemy.

The retired Umatilla County circuit judge has a wit as sharp as a carbon steel knife and a sense of humor dryer than the Sahara.

"I could have gone to Chicago and worked for Capone," Courson added, "but that wasn't real practical."

When he noticed a newspaper ad for Forest Service smokejumpers, Courson applied and got the job.

He learned to parachute Forest Service style, wearing a heavy canvas jump suit with stand-up collar and helmet with open-lattice face protector. He parachuted from Noorduyn Norseman bush planes onto mountainous, rocky terrain of northern California and southern Oregon. The jumpers aimed for trees close to the flames.

"Smokejumpers inevitably got hung up in the timber," Courson said. "You're talking 80-percent slopes with nothing but rocks."

A huge pocket on the right leg of their trousers held 80 feet of coiled rope. Using the rope, the firefighters rappelled from the canopy and started looking for equipment that had free-fallen from the aircraft — cross-cut saws, shovels and pulaskis, double-edged tools with an ax on one side and an adze for digging on the other. The firefighters communicated with the pilot using surplus World War II radios.

"The darned things usually wouldn't work," he said. "The pilot would have to throw notes out of the plane.

There was a lot of waving. It was really clumsy."

Radios are better now, but "not much has really changed," said Bill Selby (RAC-91), smokejumper program manager at the Redmond Air Center. Kevlar has replaced canvas, he said, but jumpsuits have the same design. Modern jumpers use GPS units and chain saws, he said. Ropes are made from tubular nylon, instead of natural fibers. Tools have their own chutes.

The Redmond Smokejumper Base opened in 1964, consolidating jumpers from Cave Junction and North Cascades. (*Six jumpers from each base went to Redmond that first year, though each base continued to operate independently. — Ed.*)

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*When Courson started jumping, the practice of delivering fire-fighters by air was in its infancy. The Forest Service deployed its first smokejumpers in 1940 on a fire in Idaho's Nez Perce National Forest.*

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When Courson started jumping, the practice of delivering firefighters by air was in its infancy. The Forest Service deployed its first smokejumpers in 1940 on a fire in Idaho's Nez Perce National Forest.

After two fire seasons, Courson became a spotter. That meant he lay on his stomach on the plane's floor and called the shots. From that vantage point, he could signal both the pilot and the jumper perched in the doorway. After gauging the timber, wind drift and possible landing sites, he motioned the pilot to slow down and patted the jumper on his back to go.

He watched the first man land, then made his own jump.

Other than bruises and scrapes, Courson sustained only one injury in five years of smokejumping. The bad sprain came after parachuting over Crater Lake. Tourists watched wide-eyed as he floated to a small lightning-caused fire about a mile from the water. His ankle twisted painfully in deep gravel upon landing.



The jumpers shared solid bonds forged during their battles against flame. They worked hard, jumping into precarious spots, scratching fireline, and hiking miles carrying heavy equipment. Courson remembers hives of angry bees and even a bear that scattered embers outside a fireline where they restarted the blaze.

His fellow jumpers eventually scattered to the winds. Courson left smokejumping after five years and entered law school. He settled in Pendleton, working as an attorney

from his Court Avenue office and later becoming Umatilla County district attorney. Ultimately, Gov. Tom McCall appointed Courson to the bench, where he stayed for 25 years.

Despite a frenetic schedule, he took time to attend jumper reunions every couple of years. Over time, his original band of brothers faded away, but not the bonds forged while battling wildfire and floating toward flame.

Courson said, "I always felt closer to them than fraternity brothers." 🐼

## The Dangers Of A Widow-Maker Snag

by Ross Parry (Missoula '58)

I was assigned to be the leader and trainer of the first hotshot crew from the Nez Perce National Forest in 1962. As their leader, I was more or less responsible for their "well-being" – facilities, showers, meals, etc.

Our location was to be the old, abandoned Adams Ranger Station, which was in a remote area out of Grangeville, Idaho. This location was within the boundaries of the State Creek Ranger District. Consequently, the ranger of that district was very influential and personally dedicated to rehabilitating the various buildings of our assigned location. I don't remember his name but he was a good one.

Since we were located at the old Adams Ranger Station, we called ourselves the Adams Hotshots. As the leader of these young men, I was expected to train them in firefighting techniques, provide transportation to fires, and lead them as crew boss on fires. We had a good crew of 33 men, and they were hotshots.

**Ron Stoleson** (MSO-56) had organized the first "hotshot" crew out of Missoula in 1961. They were known as the Nine-Mile Hotshots. **Lyle Brown** (MSO-54) was assigned to be their leader and crew boss the following year.

During the 1962 fire season, the Adams Hotshots had been on a few fires, and I personally feel they had done well – very well.

In midsummer 1962, the Adams Hotshots and the Nine-Mile Hotshots were assigned to the same fire on the Salmon River area in Idaho. **Herb Oertli** (MSO-48), a former smokejumper, was sector boss on the fire.

Whether it was accidental or by design, the Adams Hotshots and the Nine-Mile Hotshots were assigned to be working together in Herb's sector – but maybe it wasn't accidental because Herb knew both Lyle Brown and me personally.

The next morning, the two hotshot crews started

working together building lines. During that day, we built one heck of a bunch of line (not yards, but miles). At the end of the day, Herb came to lead us back to base camp. Man, we were ready. We were tired.

Herb started walking at a steady, slow pace, and it was mostly uphill, but he never stopped for a break. He just kept going, and going, like the Energizer bunny.

Finally, at the top of a ridge leading directly down to base camp, Herb stopped for a break. At the top of that ridge, there was a huge snag on fire. This snag was within controlled fire lines and not a threat to fire containment, but it was burning clear to the top, where limbs were being burned and sparks blown over the area.

The area around this snag was kind of like an amphitheater, and consequently, more than 60 firefighters were sitting around the snag taking a break – finally.

Apparently, Lyle decided that this was a great opportunity to teach a safety lesson. He went down to the base of that snag and walked around it.

He pointed up at the limbs on fire and he shouted out, "This is a widow-maker; those limbs could break loose at any time and without a sound could come down and injure or kill a person below. Therefore, anytime you need to do anything under one of these snags, you must place a lookout to watch and warn of any falling limbs."

At that exact time, a limb fell from that snag and hit Lyle across his shoulder and helmet. It knocked Lyle ass-over-teakettle about 15 feet down the hill. I don't believe he lost his footing.

His helmet was about 30 feet down the hill. Fortunately, the limb was relatively small. There was not a single warning shout from any of the more than 60 observers. It happened too quickly.

Lyle Brown gave his all to teach a lesson and that lesson will stick. What a man! 🐼