



THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
OCTOBER 2013

# SMOKEJUMPER

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SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE No. 82, OCTOBER 2013  
ISSN 1532-6160

Smokejumper is published quarterly by:  
THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION  
C/O 10 JUDY LANE  
CHICO, CA 95926

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[www.HeidelbergGraphics.com](http://www.HeidelbergGraphics.com)

Cover photo: *Luke Sheehy* (Photographer unknown)



## Message from the President



by **Jim Cherry**  
(Missoula '57)

PRESIDENT

WITH ALL due respect ...

How often have you heard the following quote? *"In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes."* — Benjamin Franklin

Well, I'm sorry, Ben, but I think you got it only half right. That may have been the case in your day, but in the United States today if you are poor enough — and you have to be really poor — you probably don't have to pay taxes.

But even if you're rich enough, have a good tax attorney, and make use of the tax shelters and loopholes, you can probably avoid most, if not all, of your tax liability. Taxes for some are not all that certain.

So where does that leave us? With the certainty of death ... and I can assure you that, like it or not, it is a certainty for all of us. It's just a matter of time and the clock is ticking.

All you have to do is ask **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59), editor of this magazine. Chuck handles all of the obituaries as they are reported to the NSA. There are a lot of them every month, year in

and year out.

This is where I'd like to have a personal word with all of you. You're reading this magazine. You are receiving it because you are a member of the NSA. You were a jumper or a pilot or a family member of one who was, or you just have a passion for what smokejumpers have done and continue to do.

Bottom line is that the whole idea of and atmosphere around smokejumping has caught your fancy. It means something important to you. If it didn't, you wouldn't be wasting your time reading this magazine. You probably even have some clothing or other memorabilia that identifies you with smokejumpers. I know I do ... I have a lot of it.

So, here's the personal word for you. If smokejumping and smokejumper history and all the NSA does (e.g., scholarships, Good Samaritan Fund, trail projects, etc.) means so much to you now while you're alive and kicking ... why don't you go the next step and take what has been so important to you in life and plan to also leave your mark on it through your death, as well? (It's coming, you know. We've already talked about that. Unlike taxes, you can't avoid it.)

So now you're wondering how you can leave that mark. I have a few suggestions ...

- At the very least, talk with your family and let them know that if memorial gifts are received, you would like to have the NSA mentioned as one of the key places for memorials to be sent.

- Again, if memorials are anticipated, why not ask your family to use those gifts to set up a memorial scholarship with the NSA? It could be as simple as a one-year, one-time scholarship, or it could extend for several years. It would be a great way to remember and honor you.
- You could do the same thing with the Good Samaritan Fund or with the Trails Program. It's just a matter of where your interests and passions are the strongest.

Just to be clear, you don't have to wait till death for making your mark and leaving a legacy. Life insurance policies, appreciated assets, drafting a will to include

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### *Smokejumper* base abbreviations:

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 NSA, designing a planned gift that can provide you with a flow of income during your lifetime ... all are ways that you can benefit the mission of the NSA.

By the way, many of these ways of remembering the NSA, both during your lifetime and at your death, may also prove to be a means for reducing your taxes. We can provide you with some information that can help you make it happen. What do you think about that, Ben Franklin?

If you haven't done so yet, get on the NSA website and see the "new look." The website was rebuilt, updated, given pizzazz and loads of "user-friendly" features. Visit [www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com). Try it ... you'll like it.

Those "Trails" guys and gals have done it again. Another successful year! They were all over the place ... north, south, east and west ... trail maintenance, building restorations, campfires and jump stories, great fellowship and food.

To all of you who took part in any way, shape or form: THANK YOU! If you haven't yet taken part, there's another chance for you in 2014. There's a project somewhere that could be just right for you. Try it ... you'll like it. 🍄

## Are You Going to Be "Temporarily Away"?

As more of our membership moves with the weather, we are getting an ever-increasing number of *Smokejumper* magazines returned by the post office marked "Temporarily Away." Since we mail the magazine via bulk mail, it is not forwarded, and we are charged first class postage for its return.

If you are leaving your mailing address during the months of March, June, September and/or December, please let Chuck Sheley know. He can hold your magazine and mail it upon your return OR mail it to your seasonal address. Please help us save this *triple mailing expense*. Chuck's contact information is in the information box on this page.

Another option is *join our electronic mailing list*. 🍄

# How A Non-Jumper Spearheaded Creation Of The Redding Smokejumper Base

by Bob Kersh

*The following was delivered by Bob at the 2010 NSA National Reunion in Redding. It details an important part of smokejumper history relating to the establishment of the California Smokejumpers based in Redding. (Ed.)*

**M**y name is Robert Charles Kersh. I was born in Sacramento, Calif., on January 3, 1923. My mother was born in El Dorado, El Dorado County, Calif. My grandmother was born in Placerville, Calif., making me a third generation California native son.

I am a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of World War II, and this essay concerns my life here in Redding, Calif.

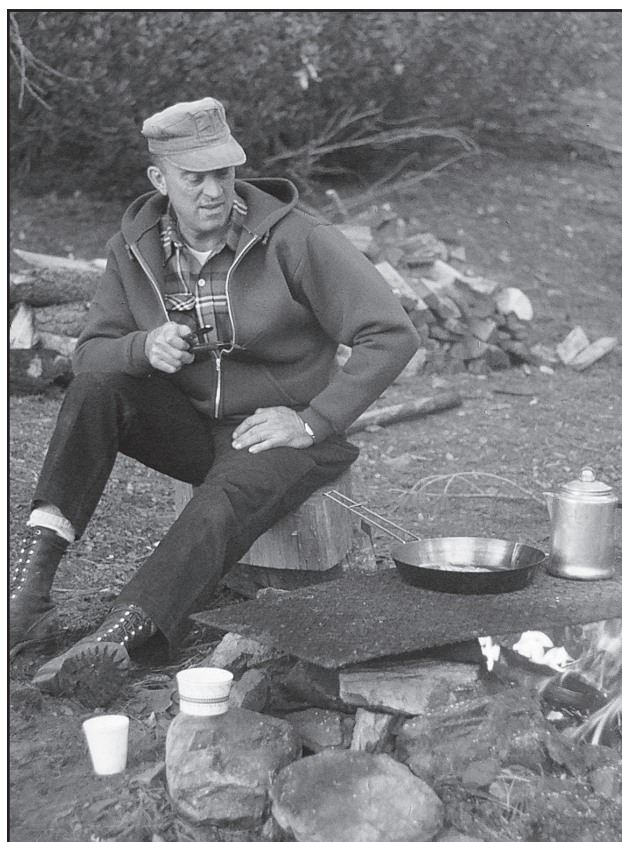
I originally came to Redding in 1939 as a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, during the Great Depression. This was one of President Franklin Roosevelt's work projects for the unemployed young. A man was obligated to join for six months; then he would receive a discharge or would remain for a maximum of two years.

A man was required to be 17 years of age. However, I remember some boys in juvenile court cases were sentenced to the CCC by some judges as a choice.

Supervisors were military officers taken from the reserve rolls, which were very large. At that time, the New York City Police Department was larger than the U.S. Army. The camp operation was totally under the control of the military and the work projects were under the control of the U.S. Forest Service. There were hundreds of camps in the Redding area.

The clothes we wore were sand-tan khaki dress in the summer months, olive-drab wool in the winter, Army-issue and dungaree work jackets, pants and cap, blue denim for work. All were Army-issue, a fore-and-aft cap, khaki sand-tan and O.D. – gold-plated "CCC" worn on the shirt collar. The work boots were not Army issue but all government issue.

I was sent to Company 2940 Camp Lost Creek, Lassen Volcanic National Park, way up in the woods in those days. Ages were 14 to early 20s. We received pay of \$30 a month, more than Army privates who earned \$21 a month. The ones from the Army service were



*Bob Kersh (Courtesy Leas Dickey)*

always called "soldiers."

The mess hall was under the Army, as all the camp was. After breakfast we were under USFS management. Before the Forest Service had the CCC, they had to use sawmill employees for fires and could conscript people right off the roads as they all were required to have a shovel and ax in their possession when traveling in the woods.

These people were usually quite belligerent when forced to help suppress fires. So with the CCC, for the very first time, the Forest Service had organized crews on fires. The 1930s were banner years for fire control in the whole nation.

We were trained in the three-step method for fire line construction with McLeod, Pulaski, shovel and ax.

Other tools were crosscut saws for falling and bucking with wedges and mauls. We burned wood for heat and cook-stove cooking, kitchen use, as well as hot water in the latrines.

When disciplinary action was needed, there was an enormous wood pile of rounds, which always had plenty of unhappy workers in the evening after supper with the first sergeant watching from the windows to see who was getting with the program and who wasn't. Double time was the penalty for those who slacked off too much.

Lookout towers on predominant peaks called in fires on No. 9 wire telephone lines; then men with pack animals took off to the fires – a long, long walk in and many long days working the fires.

However, then came World War II and aircraft progressing fairly rapidly to where men with nerve began to jump out of them, and the Forest Service was one of the first to do so, even before the Army! I was fortunate to have known some of these men.

Back to the CCC. The very first fire to which I was taken was on the McCloud River, part of which is now under the waters of Shasta Lake. We traveled by truck from camp to the south side of the river to where people lived on the opposite north side of the river. We crossed on cables stretched across the river on log towers. The cars would hold four or five persons, and people on the other side would pull you across. The ones who lived there were Indians.

Once we got the men over, we formed up and

started north, up the McCloud River, military-style. We hiked for 50 minutes, then rested for 10 – also military-style.

During the stops, the question came up: "What are we going to do for food?" The answer was: "They are going to feed us by parachute." I thought, "My word! How unique!" But it was true, though I never knew how or where it came from. The year was 1939.

We reached a certain point on the McCloud River, and a Forest Service ranger said: "Up this mountain is where our lunches are," and chose six of us to go and retrieve the lunches. The ranger said, "Follow me!" World War II-style, and I happened to be chosen with the retainers, as fate would have it!

Up and up we went into the dark night following the ranger, our headlamps shining into the darkness. I had high hopes of seeing a parachute, which turned out to be – NEVER. Finally, we came to the fire actively burning in the night. The ranger said, "Stop," and he left us and went on. He came back in a short time and proclaimed, "Come on. Follow me."

We did, to a spot where the fire was bright and hot, and he said, "Run across here and don't stop until we get to the other side." We all did what he said and there were our lunches and a keg of water. He pointed to a smoldering pile and no parachute. The fire had eaten it up!

One enterprising fellow got to digging about in the pile and said: "Here is a hamburger patty, still warm!" So I joined him and found three more, all edible and a



*Original Redding Smokejumper and Paracargo Loft in the 1950s and Early 1960s. Close to Downtown Redding just off Cypress Avenue on Akard Street. (Courtesy Scott Warner)*

toasted cheese sandwich to boot!

Some time later, the keg – which was steel, with a bung – was rolled out of the coals and when it was cool enough, we got the bung out and poured the hot water into our canteens, which turned cold by daylight.

We never knew how or from where the parachute cargo got there, whether it came from Oregon or Washington – a mystery to this day, or who the so-called ranger was. However, this is a true story, but, unfortunately, I am unable to have corroboration! About the same time, *Popular Mechanics* ran an article about smokejumpers and what their gear would look like.

Well, I went through World War II from start to finish, but before I leave the CCC, this one incident. Our lieutenant called us to assembly – the whole company – Sept. 1, 1939, before our supper meal and said, “Men, I have called this assembly to make an announcement of great interest and importance to all present. That is that England and France have just today declared war on Germany. I am sure this will make a great difference in all our lives. Dismissed!”

Well after this war was over, I would come back to Redding under a different set of circumstances, with a new bride. The year was 1947. I worked at all sorts of jobs and was fortunate, for the Redding job market was sometimes very chancy. Now the family was three instead of two, and I never have drawn one check of unemployment in my entire life.

I was working for U.S. Plywood in 1951. I worked three months straight without one day off, and they ran three shifts: day, swing, and graveyard. The job I had, the skinner saw, ran only two shifts. They said it was the toughest job in the mill.

They had a layoff and when they resumed work again, I had, in the meantime, picked up a job in the woods felling trees and sawing logs. Finding jobs in those days in the wintertime was tough, but through some friends I found one planting trees for the Forest Service.

The boss asked me one day if I had ever driven an Army “Deuce and a Half.” I had, and he said, “Well, I will take you to the equipment yard on Parkview Avenue in Redding and get you a Forest Service license for driving government vehicles.” So we did.

At the time we were planting trees at the face of Shasta Dam, in the devastated area caused by the two former copper smelters of the towns of Keswick and Coram, which produced fumes that killed all growth.

A friend of mine, who worked at the Forest Service shops on Parkview Avenue, told me about a job opening at the Fire Cache, which was on the west side of

Akard Street, across from the back of the shop building on the east side of Akard.

The boss over both units was Jay Porter, known as “Boss Porter.” So I went in and talked to him and gave my qualifications, and he said, “Very good; you can go and talk to the head warehouseman at the cache. I’ll give him a call and tell him you are coming over.”

I went over and he approved of me. I had a 10 percent military disability, which gave me a permanent appointment.

The Fire Cache was a cache of tools beyond the everyday use of equipment: for fire control of large fires exceeding the ordinary small fires; for fires of the Campaign Class, where large groups of fire fighters would be brought in; and for extra large camps where thousands of firemen were needed – the necessary food, shelter and bathing supplies.

We also packed cargo for aerial delivery. For large pack-in camps in remote wilderness areas, the smokejumpers used burlap chutes. They started out 9 feet by 9 feet with four lines – one from each corner – and finally settled on 10 by 10 with standard nylon load lines. We had a special fold in each corner and tie. I haven’t made one in years, but I spent many days making them in years past.

The General Services Administration (GSA) used to have the burlap squares in its catalog, along with rolls of load line and paper bags to pack them into, along with cotton twine static line cord. We used grommets in the middle of the top of the burlap squares to prevent tearing out on opening pressure of the static line deployment. But as thousands of parachutes became available from World War II, procurement procedures became very good, and men of knowledge adapted them for Forest Service needs.

I received a truckload of beautiful deceleration chutes for gliders. They were used on gliders as brakes, as gliders had no engines. I copied the style of the large, rayon, colored cargo chutes the military used with the adaptation developed at the Forest Service equipment base in Missoula, Mont.

The senior warehouseman was an older man who did not want to fly in airplanes. So when the Nordyne came one day to get a small order to drop on a small lightning fire – I believe on the Trinity Forest – he asked me: “Do you want to be my cargo dropper? Then we can go directly to the fire and won’t have to land in Weaverville to get a dropper. We won’t be long.”

The Nordyne was a single-engine, Canadian-built airplane used for smokejumping and cargo dropping. I said, “Sure, I would do it.” He took me inside the Nordyne and showed me what to do and what not to



*New Redding City Hall on Cypress Avenue in 2010. The Original Redding Smokejumper and Paracargo Loft Previously Stood in the Lower Right of the Building in the Photo. (Courtesy Scott Warner)*

do. I climbed in and we took off.

When he got me to the spot, we flew around it and determined the best way to approach and how the wind was blowing. We made a practice pass and when on final, the buzzer rang and it was cargo away – the first drop of hundreds for me, with many different pilots and aircraft: single-engine and multi or twin engine.

This was the first flight for me, and many more to come; every time to learn something and to help develop and make things easier and smoother.

When people came from the regional office in San Francisco, they always helped with getting things I needed. I started to repair parachutes and make things to aid in wearing backpack parachutes, which became mandatory. I had to fill out cards and make sure they were mailed before taking off.

I was insured by Lloyds of London, as the Forest Service wanted all things covered. Flying became a great part of my work, and sewing machines were becoming much easier to use and familiar to the touch and speed-up of operation.

When World War II ended, the airport the military had built east of Redding early in the war became City of Redding property. It had excellent runways, able to accommodate large aircraft, and a well-designed road from Highway 44 with lots of useable acreage. Not too far from the Fire Cache in Redding, we used this airport.

One spring day, **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) came to Redding. Jim was the manager of the Cave Junction base in Oregon and had been a paratrooper who jumped into the Netherlands with the 101st Airborne

during the war. He then was trained by **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40) in the Region 6 smokejumper program. Jim wanted to see what I was doing in Redding.

After I showed him what I had been doing, he was impressed and suggested we could be using Redding as a spike base for jumpers with some help. I introduced him to Jay Porter, and Jim told him what he had in mind.

Jim made arrangements to put these additions to what we already had: to get me licensed as a parachute rigger through the Federal Aviation Administration, build a rigging table, build a bungee rigging machine, have a hanging tower put in, and purchase or procure a couple more sewing machines. Jim and Jay came to agreement, and the warehouse became a spike base for smokejumpers working out of Redding.

One morning, Porter came into the cache and said, “Well, Bob, it looks like what you said is going to happen.” I said, “What is that, Jay?”

He said, “The Shasta and the Trinity are going to merge into one forest with the headquarters here in Redding!” I said, “You aren’t kidding, Jay?” and he said, “No.” I asked him when it would happen, and he said, “From what I have been told, right away.”

Sometime later, I had a pile of burlap squares on the floor and was making repairs on them, when the sliding door opened and there stood a group of important-looking men. The biggest of them all said, “I am Paul Statham, the supervisor of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. What goes on here? What is that long table for?”

I said, “For rigging parachutes.”

“What do we have parachutes for?” Statham asked.



*Historic Photo: Danny On (CJ-46) and Bob Kersh taken in CJ loft 1952/53.*

I said: "Every one of the Region 5 aircraft has parachutes and some extra chutes for cargo droppers, and in case the smokejumpers are here, for them to use while they are operating out of here on off-base fires in Region 5."

He asked, "Do we have any smokejumpers based here?" I responded, "No, but we pay the wages of six jumpers and one of the foremen for our use."

Satham then asked, "Could we have jumpers here on a permanent basis?" I answered "Absolutely!"

Satham then said to one of his staff, "I think we are going to have jumpers here." And that is how the Redding Smokejumper Base was born.

Paul Satham's word was good, and the beginning season for the Redding Smokejumpers was 1957.

He came back one day and told me, "I think we are going to move the whole operation to the Redding Airport – this fire cache and equipment depot,

operation, headquarters and all." It took a while, but that is exactly how it happened. He also brought the California State Division of Forestry's Redding District Office to boot!

I was nothing but a willing worker with no authority, but was the one who started the whole ball of wax.

Paul traded with the City of Redding the in-town Forest Service property gained from the CCC for part of the land the city had gained after World War II from the Department of Defense.

This airport property had been a gunnery-training center for waist gunners in large, four-engine bombers, such as B-17s and B-24s. When the war was over, it was given to the City of Redding, which made part of it into its municipal airport. Through Satham's efforts, a big part of the City of Redding airport property went to the Forest Service.

Orville Looper (CJ-49), the first foreman, and I

built the first jump training shock tower downtown on Akard Street, where the Redding City Hall now stands. We also cut the brush fields out at the airport property, where the Redding Smokejumper Base, USFS offices and Fire Cache now stand.

With a Dodge Power Wagon and a power winch in front of it, I would pull the cable out through the brush and put the hook on the end of the cable, on a bunch at a time. Orville would work the controls and pull out a bunch at a time. Then we would pile the pulled-out brush and would burn it, and start again. We later brought out the tower and assembled it, a section at a time, and then built all of the other training units.

Fred Barnowsky (MSO-42) from Missoula became the first manager of the smokejumpers in Redding, and I became the loft foreman from the beginning of

the position in 1953 until my retirement in 1978.

I made the first jump off the old shock tower. Orville slapped me on the leg and said, "GO!" I did and my feet banged the ground and the rope jerked me into the air, and I came back down with my feet 18 inches off the Earth.

Well, we had a lot of close ones in my life, but here I still am. The Lord has been most gracious to me for one long time, and a much longer life than I even thought I would ever see.

I took my wife, Emily, of 66 years to the Redding City Hall to pay our utilities one day, and looked at the new City Hall building. I had never seen the inside of it, and thought, if I ever told people I was responsible for the City Hall being where it is, they would say I was a real pipe dreamer. But it is true, every word of it. Not too bad for a 90-year-old guy! 🙏

# Retreads And Recollections Of The 1964 Jump Season

by Richard Grandalski (Redding '64)

All smokejumpers, if asked, would be able to spin a tale or two about experiences they can recall while jumping. In fact, I can remember many cases where, once a jumper gets started, there seems to be no end to the tales of funny, scary, rewarding, or challenging experiences he or she has had.

When jumpers are talking and sharing experiences, I always notice that many of the stories shared are similar. The following are a few examples of my own experiences that I reflect back on with mixed emotions.

I started my career with the USFS in 1962 and competed for a Redding smokejumper position in 1964, after my second year as a firefighter. Rather than employing seasonal fire fighters as jumpers, R-5 was trying a new concept with emphasis on training smokejumpers in leadership and use of fire-control equipment in order to more closely meet the increasing demands for more regional training.

Twenty-four fire fighters from various national forests around R-5 (California) reported to the Northern California Service Center in May 1964. Two of the 24 who started in the class did not make it. One guy couldn't muster enough courage to jump off the training tower and was sent back to his home forest. The other guy broke his back on our first training jump.

We all had permanent appointments with the Forest Service and were detailed to Redding from our home forests for the summer. We received formal classroom training in a variety of subjects, such as fire behavior, air operations, helicopter operations, "pumper" training, leadership and instructor training, along with the normal smokejumper training.

As I look back at the faded class photograph, I can say that the concept was a success.

One of the 1964 class of jumpers advanced in fire management to a high-level position in charge of the R-5 smokejumpers and the entire Northern California Service Center; nine (and possibly 10) advanced to become district fire management officers. I advanced to assistant director of law enforcement and investigations in charge of internal affairs investigations for the Forest Service in Washington, D.C.

Before the career change to law enforcement, I had also advanced to a district fire management officer position. Another position in firefighting that I truly enjoyed was serving as the superintendent of the Los Prietos Hotshots on the Los Padres National Forest for three years.

Of course, lifelong friendships developed among the Redding jumpers of 1964 and with many other jumpers within a program called "Retread." After our initial

season as smokejumpers, we returned to our normal positions on our home forests. Each season, we Retreads had the option of returning to Redding in the spring to receive rectification training, return to our home forest, and, when needed, go back to Redding to jump. I was part of the Retread program from 1969 through 1972.

It seems much easier to remember my smokejumper buddies by their nicknames, such as “Mini-Poag,” “High School Harry,” “Lamp Shade,” “Barffy” or “Covelo Cowboy,” than by real names. When jumpers reminisce, we tend to refer to people by their nicknames – their real name having slipped from the memory banks over time.

Many pages could be filled with stories of the past, but I’ll only reflect on a couple. My story starts (as do all good stories) with: “Then there was the time when ...” in 1964 we were getting ready for our first jump, and the regular jump plane, a C-47, was down for repairs.

Our leaders decided to use the next best thing, which was a C-46. The C-46, like the C-47, was a work horse during World War II. The C-46 was a large cargo plane that provided a few new challenges for those of us who struggled to maintain proper body position during exit to avoid twisting lines.

Poor position, combined with the prop blast, was like suspension from a giant rubber band that has been twisted tightly and then let go. The prop blast from the C-46 was unforgiving, since its airspeed could not be slowed as much as the C-47s. Some of the jumpers were twisted so tightly that when they ran all the revolutions to untwist, they gained so much momentum that they spun in the opposite direction until they couldn’t spin anymore.

A few continued this untwist-twist process right into their landing, which didn’t help to impress the squad leaders grading us on our “Allen Rolls.”

The exit door on the C-46 didn’t remove like the C-47 and was hinged at the top. When opened, it was attached to the ceiling of the aircraft. The third jumper in the “stick” forgot to duck and almost knocked himself out when he hit the door with his helmet and bounced back to the other side of the cabin.

When he realized what he had done, he took off in a run and flew out the exit in the worst position possible. I think he is one who was still trying to untwist when he hit the ground.

Part of our training included the feared “death march.” Each jumper was required to pack enough C-rations for a week, plus clothes and the standard fire-fighting tools consisting of a shovel, pulaski, and “misery whip” – a cross-cut saw. The pack and contents were designed to simulate the weight of tools and jump gear we would have to carry out of a fire. The weight of the pack amounted to around 110 pounds, and the pack frame

back in 1964 was not engineered like the packs of today.

Every jumper seems to have his or her own idea on how to arrange the contents in and on the pack in order to make it as bearable as possible. Most of us had to have someone hold the pack upright while we sat on the ground to slip the straps on and then, with a little help, pull up to a standing position.

We hiked six to eight hours a day for five days through pretty rugged terrain. At times it seemed like it would never end. About the third day into the march, when our legs felt like rubber and our shoulders were black and blue and tender from the narrow straps, it became difficult to maintain balance.

One jumper tripped trying to negotiate his way through heavy brush and fell. He ended up on his back in a ravine next to the rest of the jumpers. He looked like a turtle on his back, since his arms and legs were thrashing around as he struggled to turn over. No matter how hard he tried, the weight — combined with the tight narrow straps of the pack around his shoulders – prevented him from being able to roll over and get back on his feet.

It took two other jumpers to get him onto his feet. We all wondered what would have happened to him if no one were around to help him.

One jumper thought he had devised the best plan, taking potatoes, frying pan and other lighter food items in place of the heavy C-rations. He learned quickly (as did we all) that bragging about having the lightest pack (or anything else) doesn’t pay among smokejumpers.

Another jumper put rocks into the bottom of his pack when he wasn’t looking. It was not long before the unsuspecting jumper with the lightest pack began to fall back from the rest of the group. The comedian of the group continued to harass the jumper carrying the rocks because he couldn’t keep up with the rest of us.

I can still see this guy, 100 yards or so behind the rest of us, taking his pack off and with all his strength flinging the frying pan down the canyon and then, a little while later, stopping and lightening his load by tossing a few potatoes into the canyon. He was not happy when he finally found the rocks in the bottom of his pack and had to repack it to carry the newly delivered (and heavy) C-rations that were cargo-dropped to the group along with water and other supplies.

We all learned something interesting about the contents in the C-rations during the death march. All the rations contained some crackers packed in a small can. There weren’t very many – maybe four thin crackers at the most. Well, one afternoon while we were taking a dinner break next to a small creek, one of the jumpers happened to throw one of the crackers into the creek, and it was almost unbelievable what we saw.

This small, thin, round cracker swelled up to what



*Rich Grandalski (Courtesy R. Grandalski)*

seemed like a giant loaf of bread as it absorbed the water from the creek and floated downstream. It appeared that the creek might even dry up and it probably would have if someone had thrown in a few more crackers.

We suddenly realized why after eating a cracker or two with a drink of water, we felt as if we'd eaten a full-course meal. It confirmed our belief that the nutrition experts who had designed the rations had never actually consumed them.

Every jumper has stories to tell about some fun they have had with new recruits. The one I recall involved the same guy who didn't make the program because he could not jump off the training tower.

During his first day at the base, a couple of us "veterans" gave the new recruit a tour of the base. When we got to the C-47, we took him onboard and gave him the "straight scoop" on what it was like to jump out of an airplane.

We went through all the drills about being mentally prepared, being sure the static line was not twisted and connected to the cable by the door, etc.

Now, remember that the old C-47 (DC-3) had two

landing gears under the wings and a tail wheel. This meant that the plane sat at an angle when it was on the ground. If you stand in the open door and look back at the tail of the airplane, it is lower than your position in the doorway.

We explained to the new recruit how to stand in the door with both hands positioned on the exit with his left foot at the edge of the door where the spotter would place his hand over the top of his boot. The signal to jump would come when the spotter removed his hand from the boot and slapped the back of the jumper's left calf. At that time there was to be no hesitation. After the signal, the jumper would immediately exit the aircraft.

We simulated the procedure for the new recruit, and then we had him take the position to get a feel of what it would be like. As he was standing in the door, we told him that there was a critical decision he would have to make when he jumped out of the airplane. The decision was based on the position of the tail of the aircraft.

We told him to look out the door at the tail and notice that the tail was lower than his position in the door. His decision every time he made a jump would be whether to jump high enough to go over the top of the tail or low enough to go under it.

Many of us had little experience in flying, and I am sure I would have believed this story if "veterans" had told it to me before my first jump. I can imagine what must have been going through his mind as we told him there had been many close calls when a jumper hesitated in making the under-or-over-the-tail decision.

The story was made a little more believable by the chips in the paint and small dents along the tail that were easily seen from the door. We told the recruit the paint chips and dents were made from boots or the helmets of jumpers either not jumping high enough to clear the top of the tail or diving low enough to go under it. (The chips and dents were actually caused from the parachute deployment bag that is connected to the static line hitting against the tail.)

Of course, it is not possible to hit the tail, since when the jumper exits the aircraft, he or she is traveling at the same speed as the airplane and after exit begins to fall straight down.

Although we got a kick out of teasing each other, there is little we would not have done to help one another. The teasing and joking helped us to ease our fear of doing something with a high degree of danger.

In 1964 we experimented with different ways of using helicopters in fire suppression. The region placed a large helicopter (as I remember, it was a Bell 205) at the jump base for this purpose. Without a lot of research or engineering, we tried things like rappelling out of the helicopter, not really realizing all the potential hazards.

We also tried making parachute jumps from the helicopter, hooking our static lines to a ring in the floor and wondering if the ring would be strong enough to hold the impact of the parachute being pulled from the deployment bag.

Another unknown factor, until after the first jump, was whether the deployment bag would be sucked up into the main rotor or if it would get caught in the tail rotor before the spotter pulled it in.

I remember that first jump from the helicopter. What stood out more than anything was the sense of free-falling with great body position because there was no prop blast.

One afternoon, while we were sitting around the base, someone wanted to see how high we could go in the helicopter with a full load. This was before we learned about things like payload calculations. We loaded nine jumpers, plus the pilot, into the helicopter at the Redding airport on a 105-degree afternoon and made it to 10,000 feet.

I believe the Redding Smokejumpers were the first to try rappelling from a helicopter. Since it hadn't been attempted before, we decided to try it over water first. But first we wanted to learn what it was like to be in water with all our jump gear on, so we went up to the local college and jumped into the pool from the high diving board in our jump suits and helmets. No one drowned, so we did our first rappelling from the helicopter into Lake Shasta in Northern California. We almost drowned one of the jumpers.

We had worked out a signal to give the pilot once the jumper was in the water and released from the letdown rope, so the pilot would know it was clear to make another pass.

One of the jumpers gave the signal at the wrong time and the pilot, thinking it was okay, began to move forward. It looked like fishing from a helicopter with a big fish on the line as a wake of water flowed over the jumper, who was still connected to the letdown rope.

We laughed about it later, but for a few minutes we were worried. I am sure that our pioneering experiments with helicopters helped to shape today's helicopter program in the Forest Service.

The saddest and most difficult experience of my smokejumping career came when a very good friend of mine was killed while jumping into a fire. I was told that he was the first smokejumper killed while actually parachuting into a fire.

There are, unfortunately, cases of jumpers losing their lives in plane crashes or while fighting fires after jumping, or while being transported to the fire by some other means.

**Tom Reginnetter** (RDD-67) and I were working on the Angeles National Forest in Southern California and

were both part of the Redding Smokejumper Retread program in 1969 and 1970. We made our last fire jump together in 1969 into a giant redwood grove on the Sequoia National Forest in Central California.

It was one of those "gravy" jumps, with the top of a single redwood burning from a lightning strike and a dirt road to the fire. We were told before we jumped that we were to cut a fire line around the tree and keep the ground fire from spreading.

The forest had a policy that the forest supervisor was the only person who could authorize cutting down a redwood, and unless the burning tree posed a threat of a larger wildfire, we were to just monitor the fire.

Tom and I made a good jump landing on the dirt road and after a few hours of cutting line around the tree, we sat back for what we thought would be a few days of easy going while drawing hazard pay and a little overtime.

It didn't last long. A district crew drove into the fire the next morning and released us.

The following year, 1970, we both decided to take a few classes at Pasadena City College. One evening during break, Tom and I were both thinking about leaving early, but were worried about missing something critical in class for the upcoming finals. I told Tom that I would stay and take notes and would share them with him the next day.

When I got home from class that night, I found out that the dispatcher tried to get hold of me for a fire assignment with the jumpers. I called Tom to see if he was home and found out that he made it home from class early enough to get the call from the dispatcher and had already left for Redding.

The next morning the dispatcher called and told me that Tom was killed making a jump into a fire on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Tom was in his mid-20s and grew up in Alhambra, Calif. Many years later when I was reading the book by Norman Maclean, *Young Men and Fire*, I noticed something in one of the photographs in the book that I found amazing.

It was a photo of the plaque with the names of the 12 smokejumpers killed on the Mann Gulch Fire in Montana in 1949. One of the names on the plaque was **Newton Thompson** (MSO-49), who was listed as being from Alhambra, Calif. I have always thought it amazing that two men from the same small city lost their lives as smokejumpers.

Tom was a quiet guy with many great qualities. He was a hardworking and dedicated Forest Service employee who chose a career in what, at that time, we called fire control. There were no movies or books ever written about Tom Reginnetter, and I expect that is the way he would have wanted it. 🌲



# Touching All Bases



## California Smokejumpers

by Mike Manion (Redding '13)

A surprise came to the Redding Smokejumpers in early November of 2012 when, unannounced, **Don "Max" Sand** (RDD-79) retired as the Smoke-jumper Base Manager. Max has made a great contribution to the program and will be missed. **Tim Quigley** (RDD-79) and **Bob Bente** (RDD-88) detailed into the Base Manager position through the winter and spring and the job was subsequently filled in early July. **Josh Mathiesen** (RDD-94) has accepted the position and started on July 14th. Josh was the Forest Service recipient of the **Al Dunton** award for 2012 and the base is thrilled to have him as their manager. In addition to Max's retirement, **Katie Scheer** (RAC-08) retired from smokejumping and the Forest Service to try her hand at organic farming. **Steve Murphy** (RDD-88) took a Division Chief position on the Plumas NF, and "**Jed**" **Scott Smith** (RDD-02) and **Gabe Harry** (RDD-12) left to "fly the squares" at Boise. There are many other key positions to be filled at the Redding Smokejumpers and this will undoubtedly create a different look and feel to the program. This has already started, as a senior smokejumper position has been filled by **Tye Erwin** (RDD02) this past spring.

The 2013 fire season started strong. We had 10 rookies from the beginning and there were 10 rookies standing when it was over. The motivation level for the rookies was high as we had an early season bust. The rookies were convinced that training was going to end early due to the need for jumpers, but it did not. Our base had 60 fire jumps in north ops by May 12. We slowed down until early June, and started jumping fires again as more lightning occurred. California Smokejumpers filled many single-resource assignments.

On June 10th, after jumping a fire in the South Warner Wilderness of the Modoc NF, **Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09) was killed when a five-foot widowmaker fell approximately 30 feet and struck him on the head. The loss of Luke Sheehy was devastating to the base.



We stuck together and worked as a unit through the hardest of times, and as a result, the strength and camaraderie at the base has grown. Though we cannot have our friend back, we will continue to keep his spirit alive through our hard work and dedication to the smokejumping program. We would not have been able to have the time we needed to regroup and continue moving if it were not for the Redmond, Boise, and McCall Bro's. They stepped up and covered our base during a very rugged time and we cannot express in words our gratitude for their help and support.

At present, the California Smokejumpers have started spike base operations out of Porterville, while subsequently maintaining a load in Redding and also providing a boost of ten to Alaska. We anticipate a very busy season in Region 5, and will likely have much to report in the fall. Stay tuned.

## Redmond Base Report

by David Orlund (RAC-10)

Smiling faces and high fives all around at RAC as we gather for the 2013 season. Oregon's snow melted significantly faster this spring, so we will see what that means for future fire activity. By the time the late refresher kicked off, the Bros at RAC had already made national news by jumping a marijuana plantation on the Rogue-Siskiyou NF. A boost went to Redding in early May, as well, and jumped a fire on the Tahoe.

The Redmond Base began the season with 35 jumpers this year. Another season began without a rookie class. The duties of mop, broom, and coffee making are still held proudly by the RAC 10 rookies. The late refresher began on May twentieth, with most of the usual suspects attending.

**Marcel "Fiddler" Potvin** (RAC-07) may have been pumping out maple syrup in a cabin in Quebec for many months, but still managed to make us chase him in the mile and a half. **J9 "AAR" Faulkner** (MSO-98) was fresh back from the Alaska frontier, surprisingly not wearing beaver pelts. **Mat Mendonca** (RAC-05)

refreshed but had to run back to Nicaragua to stabilize his ever-growing mission of providing drinkable water for the downtrodden masses. He will return to jump fires and practice his knife throwing skills.

The Smokejumper ramp at RAC was replaced this spring and completed the first of July. The ramp construction provided the opportunity for many fun-filled rides suited up in the van, which took us to the Sherpa conveniently parked a mile away at Butler Aviation.

A few of the staple jumpers at Redmond are moving on in the world. **Jonah "Stale Fish" Gladney** (WYS-06) took a position as Squadleader on the Siskiyou Rappel Crew in the spring of 2013. Thanks, Jonah, for your hard work at RAC and for keeping rookies out of the sewing room. **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92) accepted a job as a pilot for the Missoula Smokejumpers. All that hard work paid off, Tony! You will be missed around here. Please don't hang up my cargo. **Josh Voshall** (RDD-03) is now an Assistant Engine Captain on the Crescent District, Deschutes NF, and has the bugles to prove it. Josh has been representing RAC for Smokejumper Magazine for many years. Thanks for your constant Redmond commitment to the program.

In other news, **Gabriel Cortez** (GAC-02) has been on a detail this summer with AFS and will be back on the list in the middle of July. **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC-01) has moved up to the position of Spotter at RAC and is killing it with the streamers! **Brandon Coville** (RAC-00) is detailed into the Assistant Operations position. He just returned from the Gila, where he built upon his already sizable legend while acting as DO and jumper. **Garrett Allen** (RAC-10) and **Ray Rubio** (RAC-95) are on a detail to Silver City. They are set to return in July. **Dirk "Big Guerra" Stevens** (RAC-91) has kept busy as ASM in Colorado and here in the Northwest as well.

In early June, 12 boosters embarked to the Silver City Jump Base. Luckily, **Jacob "Uncle Randy" Welsh** (RAC-08) was able to plant the garden the day before the boost and didn't have to go on garden hold. From Silver, eight climbed aboard the "Doug" to staff Albuquerque, out of the Double Eagle Airport. Eight jumped the Servilleta Fire on the Cibola, but their most notable accomplishment was the rescue of a prized racing pigeon named "Pecos." **Tony "Good Deal" Johnson** (RAC-97) and three others boosted Alaska from Silver City in early June and have been busy.

The only news was from **Dustin "Animal" Underhill** (RAC-10) who stated, "reserve's don't float." Apparently the water is deceptively deep between the tussocks. In the third week of June, four additional RAC Bros boosted Alaska, led by **Jeff Robinson** (RDD-85).

With the crushing news of **Luke Sheehy's** (RDD-09) death on June tenth, eight Jumpers flew to Redding to fill in while the base was dealing with the all-to-early departure of our brother Luke. Our hearts go out to the Redding Bros, Luke's family and friends, and all the many people who lost so much when we lost Luke.

Overall, four fires have been jumped out of the Redmond Base this year, with a total of 19 fire jumps. The boosting has kept most of the Bros busy this season. Meanwhile, those at the base are involved in multiple research and development projects, mostly having to do with para-cargo missions.

Early July has brought a smattering of lightning across the Pacific Northwest, and jumpers have been going out the door over eastern Oregon. The season is just getting going here at RAC, and a few potentially busy months lay ahead. We have all been shaken by the loss of 19 brothers from Granite Mountain IHC. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of these great firefighters. Look out for each other out there and watch your topknot.

Good luck to all the Bros, present and past. We look forward to sharing the next update with you all.

## Boise Base Report

by **Todd Jinkins** (NIFC '98)

June 7, 2013, was the start of the wildfire season for the Boise base. For the fourth time in the last decade, the Boise base sent an early-season jump ship to the front range of Colorado in Canon City.

Colorado's front range had experienced low snowfall during the winter, leaving the high country extremely dry and susceptible to ignition from the multitude of thunderstorms and careless human activity in the region.

We remained busy on the front range until the end of June and eventually relocated that ship to Ely, Nev. As of today, we have jump ships scattered throughout the Great Basin; they're located in Grand Junction, Colo., and Salt Lake City, in addition to Ely.

It has been an average start to the fire season, thus far, but with many areas of the Great Basin experiencing drought-like conditions, we expect the season to be high tempo, keeping the Great Basin jumpers busy until fall.

Late spring brought some shakeup to the Boise base with the base manager, **Hector Madrid** (MYC-89), filling a 120-day detail as the Chief for Preparedness and Suppression Standards for the Bureau of Land Management at NIFC. This vacancy allowed **Jim**

**Raudenbush** (FBX-82) to move up to the base manager position for the Great Basin Smokejumpers and **Matt Bowers** (MYC-95) to fill in as the associate base manager.

Other notable details this spring and early summer included **Alex Abols** (MYC-02) filling in for 45 days as assistant fire management officer for the BLM's California Desert District; **Todd Johnson** (NICF-98) acting as the unit aviation manager for the Boise BLM for 60 days; **Paul Lenmark** (FBX-96) as a BLM aviation mentee, flying lead B-3 for the BLM; and **Rob Rosetti** (RAC-01) acting as the Oregon Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) coordinator.

As a final note, **Mark Motes** (RDD-86) will be joining the ranks of the forced unemployed, reaching the golden and magical age of 57 and retiring as smokejumper after 28 years. I am sure many NSA members will find Mark out there doing what he loves to do – playing in the woods, riding motorcycles, and taking up his new sailing passion. Congratulations, Mark!

## Missoula Base Report

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by **Nate Ochs** (MSO-11)

Norman Maclean wrote: "The world is full of bastards, the number increasing rapidly the further one gets from Missoula, Montana." This July, MSO recalled its sons and daughters from the wide abyss to celebrate its illustrious history with a reunion of smokejumpers from fire seasons past. Representatives from seven decades of operations hit the ready room and were satisfied that the canteen cups were still the same, even if there were an awful lot of square chutes going out the door during the proficiency jump they attended. Now, as the drift smoke off the Lolo settles into the valley, it's time to make some new stories for telling over the cook fire some day.

There are four who are unlikely to forget the summer of 2013: Missoula's graduating rookie class, fully recovered from their training and chomping at the bit for their next (or first) fire jump; **Jamey Thomaston**, **Mike Bagan**, **Tyler Kuhn**, and **Jake Caudle**. Advice from the class of '54 is to keep your feet together.

The RAM AIR program continues to grow in Region 1, with new training bolstering its ranks to 44 currently active smokejumpers. A training exchange has been adopted between the BLM and R-1 Forest Service to develop the most efficient and practical methods in the art of flying squares. That means no more pike exits, if not now, then soon.

Congratulations to the new MSO operations fore-

man **Tory Kendrick** (MSO-00), and to **Josh Clint** (MSO-04) and **Dan Cottrell** (MSO-01), who received assistant operations and project fuels foreman positions.

Josh Clint is also a proud new father this year, along with **Ashton Ferruzzi** (MSO-08) and **Ran Crone** (MSO-00), while **Derek Harbour** (MSO-05) awaits the birth of his next child and **Chris Loraas** (MSO-04) and **Lori Cotter** (MSO-03) are expecting twins.

MSO scored a good deal with two jump base transfers, **Ariel Starr** (RDD-12), and **Isaac Karuzas** (RDD-01), who will no longer be making the commute from here to GAC, as he did 150+ times by his own count. There are also three new hires, rookie bros **Jeremy Kroeker** (MSO-11), **Brendan Quinn** (GAC-11), and **Nate Ochs** (MSO-11).

The losses to our firefighting community have been difficult this season. Redding Smokejumper **Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09) was a friend to many Missoula jumpers, and all were affected by his death. The tragedy that befell the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshots at the Yarnell Hill Fire has humbled us and we mourn for them. We will honor them by asserting the duty, honor and respect that they represent, as our forebears did and as our successors will.

It's a hot day today and the Sherpa is orbiting over the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Until next time, your static lines are clear. Get in the door! Get ready!

## McCall Base Report

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by **Adam Dealaman** (MYC-10)

The 2013 fire season is upon us here in McCall and we're happy to report that it's been a record-breaker already. This spring, "Big Ernie" blessed us with the earliest fire jump in McCall Smokejumper Base history, thanks to a careless motorist traveling northbound on Hwy 95 dragging a loose chain. Sparks and bro's were flying May 7<sup>th</sup>, putting this one in the books early. After the record-breaking jump, the base experienced a minor lull, but not to fret, our bro's have since boosted Redding twice, Fairbanks once, and set up Cedar City and Ogden spike bases.

Details, details...**Jeremy Cowie** (MYC-06) worked at the base for about two minutes before taking a Krasel FOS detail. **Ramona Hull** (RAC-06) detailed back for a second year to the EGBCC as a meteorologist, and can now be heard most mornings providing R4 personnel with fire weather forecasts, complete with her own green screen. After a most unfortunate back injury throwing paracargo over the Shasta-T, **Chris Niccoli** (MYC-95) has healed up and is back in the

saddle as Air Attack out of Ogden, UT. Lastly, **Shawn Denowh** (MYC-98) took a detail out at Yellow Pine as Foreman of the new Krassel Lightning Module.

There are a few new faces in the Ops box this year. Newly hired Spotter, and still sore from rookie training, **Matt Carroll** (MYC-03) can now be found in the box updating the plebes on Fire World. **Hans Ohme** (MYC-01) can also be found behind the box defending justice and equality on the jump list, which takes brains, brawn and a little magnet manipulation. Speaking of new faces, four lucky Neds make it through rookie training and will be cracking Mountain Canopies, and boning their JP's, over a Western state near you.

This spring the base celebrated R-4's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a record-breaking reunion turnout. Bro's from near and far made their way to McCall from June 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>. After a few well-timed offerings to "Big Ernie," west-central Idaho was blessed with amazing reunion weather. To kick off the weekend, **Matt Ganz** (MYC-01) hosted a private Jump affair at his most excellent Salmon River Brewery. Much to everyone's surprise, there was no nudity or law enforcement involved, at least for the purposes of reporting for this

column. New to the R-4 Reunion agenda, and thanks to **Holly Thrash**, jumpers and jump-wives alike enjoyed a Payette Lake boat cruise complete with catering, bubbly, and even a Sharlie sighting on Saturday afternoon. Other popular Reunion events included a Golf Scramble at Jug Mountain Ranch, spearheaded by the one and only **Eric Brundige** (MYL-77), and a Fun Run in Ponderosa State Park hosted by the rookie class of '12. The Saturday evening dinner and program at the North Fork Lodge on the Payette River was attended by over 300 jump-people, the most in reunion history. An Awards Ceremony, Raffle, and Jump Story Competition made for a great and memorable night.

Sunday's Memorial Service could not have been better and was made possible by **Steve Loomis** (NCSB-76), **Leo Cromwell** (IDC-66), **Francis Mohr** (IDC-63) and **Bobby Montoya** (IDC-62). They did an amazing job organizing a moving memorial and paying tribute to those that have passed over the last five years. On behalf of the entire McCall Smoke-jumper Base, I'd like to extend a huge "thank you" to everyone who participated in and attended our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion! We're already booking sites for 2018 – put it on your calendars. 🙏

## If Lips Could Walk: The Story Of A Jumper Bro

by **Rick Hudson** (Boise '73)

**I**t could be any hour of the day, any day of the year, when a voice on the other end of the phone would start with, "There's smoke on the horizon. We're wheels-up at first light. We have a Doug-load of 12 souls, tried and true. Dixon's in the door and we're turning on final. I just have one question: Are you with me?"

I would listen to him finish with some unrecognizable phrase in French and wait for **Jerry "Lightning" Dixon** (MYC-71) and his sales pitch involving an epic plan for some backwoods adventure. Either he needed my opinion or he wanted me to join him, but whatever I was doing had to be put on hold to hear *his* plan.

From his home in Alaska, Jerry would plan weeks of back-to-back hikes, ski trips, bike rides and river trips, generally arranged one after another. He relied on the logistical support and expertise of others to accomplish these tasks. But all those who accompanied him will tell you that their patience was "often tested"

along the journey.

I received "the call" to join Jerry with mutual friend, Greg Eames, on "a hike from hell." Jerry wanted to hike *from the lowest to the highest point* in Idaho over the shortest distance. This would involve negotiating the bottom of Hell's Canyon on the Snake River at 1,200 feet elevation up to He-Devil Peak in the Seven Devils Mountains at 9,400 feet, covering 38 miles over three days.

The trip was going to be "light and fast" with packs weighing only 15 pounds. Up until this trip, Jerry had been kayaking on rivers all over the West with very little conditioning for his legs. The 100-degree heat in the bottom of the canyon and the overnight frost up in the Seven Devils didn't compare to the agony of Jerry's feet.

Despite his agony, he talked incessantly about his many adventures over the last few years while moving at a snail's pace. Greg coined the hiking episode, "If lips could walk ..."

We survived Jerry and we survived a very invigorating hike, but never saw the summit of He-Devil Peak.

Pick up any National Smokejumper Association magazine before 2009 and you're bound to find an article or comment by Jerry and rambling impressions about his adventures in wild areas of the West.

He traveled the route of Lewis and Clark west through The Gates of the Wilderness on the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean by kayak, foot and bike. He mushed dogs on frozen rivers and entered endurance races in the Alaskan bush. He paddled the South Fork, the Middle Fork, and the Main Salmon River in Idaho countless times. He literally hiked across the entire width of the state of Idaho on foot.

He did all these things, and more, with a moderate level of conditioning and generally at a leisurely pace.

I met Jerry on a booster to Redding while jumping out of the Boise jump base. Ed "E.J." Kral (MYC-66) and I were sent as a booster to Redding along with an Otter load of McCall jumpers.

When the fire horn sounded on a hot Northern California day June 18, 1974, we suited up with FS-5a parachutes and boarded Twin Otter 64Z for the Salt Fire on the "Shasta T" – the Shasta-Trinity Forest. Our spotter was the legendary **Wayne R. Webb** (MYC-46), who got the streamers into the only jump spot within miles of the fire. (See "Wayne Webb: A Common, Uncom-

mon Man" by **Lonnie Park** (MYC-54), *Smokejumper* magazine, April 2000).

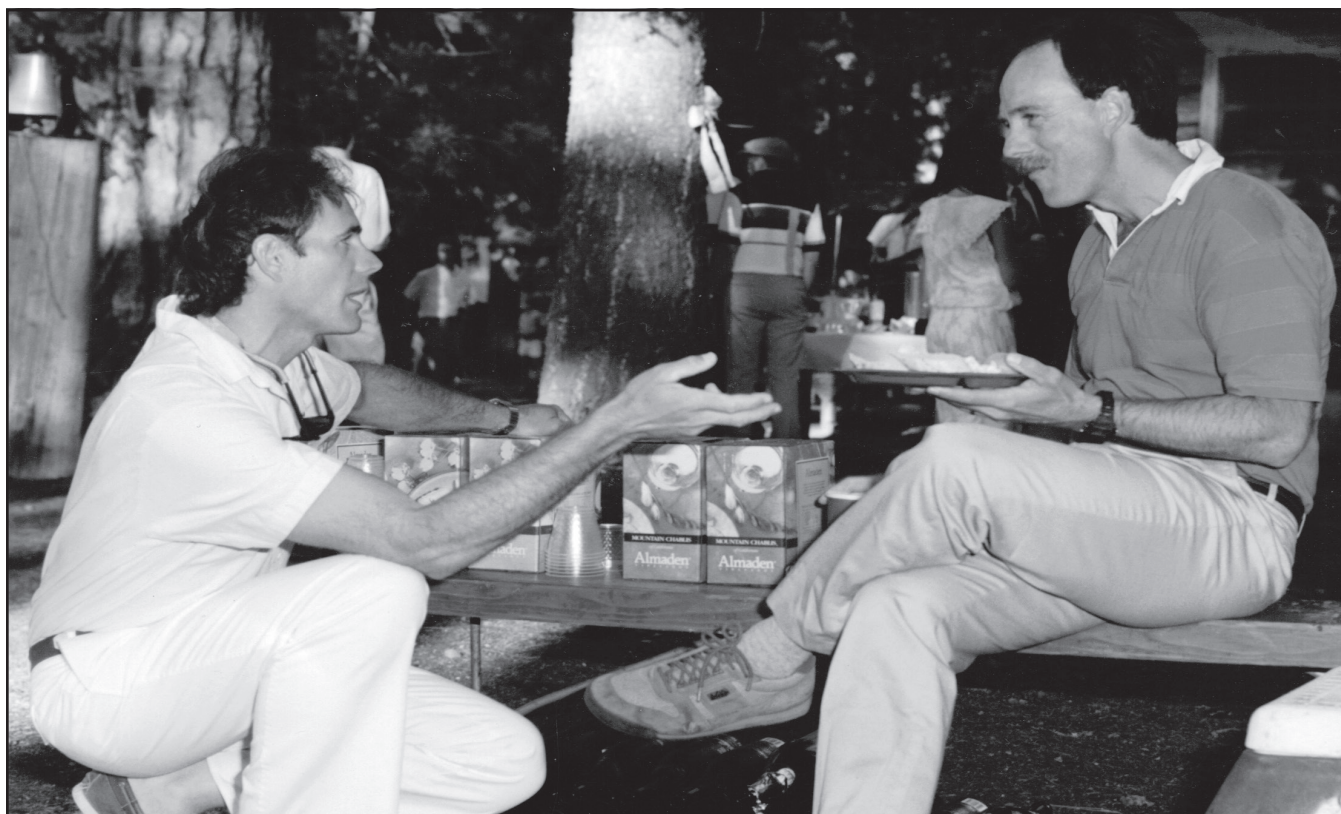
I should have paid more attention to Wayne's spotting instructions. Instead, I steered my FS-5a parachute into the side of a colossal, Douglas fir tree and had to perform a 150-foot letdown!

We had a fire about an acre in size and the eight of us knocked it out. We also had "a good-deal crew" with **Don Ranstrom** (MSO-66), **Lynn Flock** (MYC-68), **Jim "Doo-Dah" Diederich** (RDD-70), **Jim Voelz** (MYC-71), **Mike "Buffalo" Nielson** (MYC-73), Kral and Jerry. Jerry's enthusiasm for being on this fire was contagious, and he wanted to print t-shirts when we got back with "The Good Deal Crew" stenciled on them.

Jumpers seldom talk about the time-consuming mop-up on fires, but this is when you get to know your bro. I was the youngest of the crew and listened to their tall tales, along with the clinking and clanking of pulaski and shovel grubbing in ash and earth.

Of course jump stories were in abundance, but some stories included tours in Vietnam, whitewater kayaking, snow skiing, fast cars and fast women. If he wasn't involved in a discussion, Jerry had a habit of wandering off alone to explore the surrounding flora, fauna and topography of the Shasta-Trinity Forest.

Demob was a packoff down an overgrown logging road that crossed a major creek a dozen times. And, of



L-R: Rick Hudson (BOI-73), Jerry Dixon (MYC-71) (Courtesy R. Hudson)

course, it became an endurance race for some jumpers. "Buffalo" lived up to his name (and former Marine training) by blazing a trail far ahead of the rest of us with his heavy pack.

After several hours in 90-degree heat, staggering over downfall and banging our shins on slippery boulders in the creek, we caught up with Buffalo and gladly dumped our loads. Forest dispatch told us by radio the river crossing ahead was impassable with spring runoff and that we now needed to build a helispot to be flown out.

Jerry wasn't in sight, but we felt he couldn't be far behind, so the rest of us began cutting an opening for a landing zone on a former logging-deck area. Once we had a sufficient opening for a helicopter, we radioed dispatch about our progress and cooled off in a convenient swimming hole in the creek.

It was not until after the helicopter made a flight out with the first load that Jerry shuffled up with his pack; I realized that the jumper with the nickname "Lightning" was not very fast.

I boosted Alaska in 1976 and found Jerry slouched in the dark of the smokejumper "T-hangar," alone and withdrawn with a vacant, faraway look in his eye. He had experienced a double-malfunction on a training jump a few weeks before. (See Jerry's article in *Smokejumper* magazine, April 2000, titled "Ten Seconds Over Birch Hill"). He had walked away from that jump as his last and was flying as an aerial observer. He refused to talk about the life-altering event, but anyone could tell he missed the smokejumper life.

"Lightning" was once again over the Payette in 1982. Taking a summer off as a schoolteacher, Jerry put in for jump training in McCall at the age of 33 and was ready to give it one more try. It was a new Jerry and a new world for smokejumping.

With "anti-inversion netting" now on the skirt of the parachute to prevent his type of malfunction experience, Jerry was willing to try it again. That summer, **Deanne Shulman** (MYC-81) became the first American woman to complete smokejumper training, thus opening the door to women in the male-dominated occupation.

Returning from a fire in mid-August, Jerry ended his smokejumping career on his own terms. He handed his jump gear to trainer **John Humphries** (MYC-79) and said, "I'm going to quit while I'm ahead," and went back to Alaska and teaching.

A few years later, Jerry called me about helping him with one of his adventures. He had circumnavigated by foot, ski and bike most of the valley that contains Payette and Cascade Lakes. He asked me to plan and accompany him on the only section he hadn't covered.

I figured out a route that involved connecting a maze of logging roads and trails that had not been cleared in

years. We were both exhausted after accomplishing the "hike-a-bike" route of 50 miles just before dark.

McCall hosted the World Masters Nordic Races in 2008. Participants needed only to be 30 or older and generally have some background in cross-country ski racing. Some were former Olympic participants.

Jerry asked if he could put a tent up in my front yard in the middle of winter and join in a week of Nordic skiing with 2,600 skiers from 23 countries. I told him "no" but would let him stay in my house, instead. His skis were not light racing skis, but old, beat-up touring skis with the bases gouged and grimy ... "the very skis that carried him on the Idita-ski Race course" and "along the Brooks Range above the Arctic Circle."

Though I offered him better performance skis, he insisted on using his old familiar boards. At least I gave him some advantage by waxing them with expensive, high-fluorocarbon wax. I think his joy was just in participating in the international event, making friends, and speaking French to anyone who would converse with him.

The day of his race, he lined up and at the sound of the start gun skied off following fellow-racers down the trail and into the trees. An hour later, when the last racer had crossed the finish line, there was no Jerry to be found. The race officials proceeded on with the next race for women by firing the starting gun and the women, in turn, rushed off down the same trail.

Sometime later, the loud speakers announced that the women were nearing the finish line and the crowds gathered to cheer them into the finish. But out of the woods skied Jerry, alone and seemingly confused that all these people were cheering him. Instead they were yelling at him to get out of the middle of the trail.

Not far behind him, a group of elite women exploded into view, vying for position and hurtling toward the finish line. Looking forward, Jerry saw none of this and had no idea he was in the path of a stampede. Without touching him, the first racers roared past him, surprising him, and sending him diving into the trail.

As he struggled to get up, another wave of women blasted by, clipping him and sending him sprawling once more. This time he collapsed in the middle of the finish lane as if defeated. But being a survivor of avalanches, parachute malfunctions and dangerous rapids, "Lightning" struggled to his feet and crossed the finish line under a hail of curses from an Italian race coach.

Jerry came through McCall in April 2010 one last time. Despite an obvious lack of balance, he was able to ski several runs with a group of friends at the local ski hill. He passed away late that year from Lou Gehrig's disease.

"Lightning" may not have been fast, but none of us could keep up with him. 🙏



# SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

MY WIFE, K.G., and I had the opportunity to represent the NSA at the McCall Base Reunion in June. We've been to many reunions in the past thirteen years selling merchandise, recruiting new members and "waving the flag" for the NSA.

This event was so well done that it should be packaged and marketed as a template for all base reunions. What made it special?

It was the involvement of the McCall Smokejumper Base and the current jumpers. **Adam Dealaman** (MYC-10) and **Ashley Taylor** (MYC-12) headed up the registration, publicity and planning. They did an excellent job.

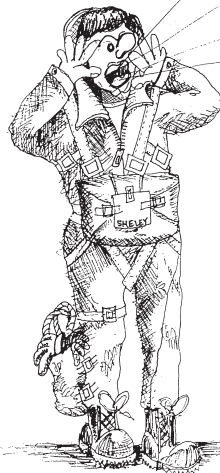
One of my main concerns, when representing the NSA at reunions, is to get a place where we will be able to do our job. Please don't stick me in a back corner with limited exposure. Most of these reunions are a two-day drive each way, and we want to make the most out of a week's worth of time.

We got to McCall on a Thursday afternoon to start setting up our merchandise and NSA table. Adam located our table right next to the registration table, giving us the opportunity to see everyone as they checked in. Registration was at the McCall Smokejumper Base, again showing the team effort between the current jumpers and the alumni. Check-in was steady Friday right up to the 1600 social at the Salmon River Brewery, owned by **Matt Ganz** (MYC-01).

Saturday evening's dinner was at the North Fork Lodge, one of the nicest places we've seen used for that type of an event. The program was well done and moved right along. **Wild Bill Yensen** (MYC-53) took the top award in the story-telling contest. Wild Bill noted that it was 60 years to the day since he started rookie training at McCall. One of the highlights of the evening was a short talk from **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43), who was the first base manager. Lloyd is now 97 and the oldest living smokejumper.

I know that there had to be many people working together to make this reunion such a success, but we all should thank Base Manager **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98) for putting together the operation. I'm also sure that **Leo Cromwell** (IDC-66) had a large input, as he is the go-to-person in R-4. Good job all.

While driving home from



McCall, my wife and I took a different route that ran through Alturas in Northern California. We went through the area on a Sunday afternoon, and the thunderheads were starting to build at that time. Sunday evening and Monday morning we were rocked with a thunder and lightning show that shook our house in Chico. With some 6,000 strikes, I knew the California Smokejumper

base in Redding would be seeing some action. It was early on Tuesday morning that I got an email from **Larry Boggs** (RDD-63) that there had been a smokejumper fatality on the Modoc N.F., outside of Alturas.

Later in the day more details came to my desk. **Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09) had been killed Monday evening around 1700 while working on a lightning-caused fire in the Warner Wilderness. Luke and two other jumpers had jumped the fire earlier in the day. He was hit by part of a falling tree.

On June 23<sup>rd</sup> a memorial service for Luke was held at the Redding Municipal Auditorium. Earlier in the week, **Brian Kvisler** (RDD-03) called and requested NSA help to provide ushers for that afternoon. I went to the NSA database and sent out emails to members/non-members in Northern California and Southern Oregon. We had 23 former smokejumpers answer the call to seat the crowd of 1500 that attended the event.

The two-and-a-half-hour service was one of the most impressive and well-done events that I have ever attended. The Sheehy family from Susanville, California, played a major role in the program. The whole family is made up of very talented musicians. The closing music with the band, composed of Luke's father, uncle, sister and friends, was outstanding. The strength of the Sheehy family during this time of loss was also impressive. Losing a son or daughter has to be one of the worst experiences in a lifetime. The Sheehy family provided the foundation for the memorial that afternoon in Redding.

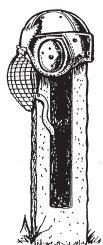
After the service I reflected back to a story we did on smoke-

jumper **Willie Unsoeld** (CJ-50). Willie, along with his partner, Tom Hornbein, were the first to climb Mt. Everest via the West Ridge Route in 1963. In 1976 Willi was climbing Nanda Devi (25,643) in India. His daughter, Devi, named after the mountain they were climbing, died of a blood clot. Her body still remains on that mountain. Willi said that experience opened his life to the reality of death and he could never look at it again quite the same way.

He was asked, "How does one handle the death of a surpassing human being?" His answer was, "You don't. It handles you. It rubs your nose in the reality of your mortality...We are not in

charge in the face of reality and nature, and in the final analysis, I wouldn't have it any other way."

**Jim Phillips** (MSO-67) will be heading up the 2015 National Reunion to be held in Missoula. He has already put together his team to start work on this event which will be held July 17-18-19. We will be honoring the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Smokejumping and the first fire jump by **Rufus Robinson** (MSO-40) and **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) that took place on July 12, 3:57 p.m., 1940. If you have never attended a National Reunion, it is important that you do not miss this one. If you are a regular attendee, start your planning now. Let's make this one the best ever. 🙏



## 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

### **Max Aiken** (Missoula '47)

Max, 87, died May 12, 2013, in Salem, Oregon. He served in the U.S. Army from September 1945 through November 1946, and later had stints with the National Guard in Oregon and California. Max earned a bachelor's degree in Forestry from the University of Michigan, a master's degree in Divinity from the American Baptist Seminary of the West, and a master's in Education from Oregon College of Education (now Western Oregon University). He also earned a degree from the Council for Clinical Training. Max worked in the timber industry and as a pastor before becoming a counselor for Marion County Juvenile Court and the Mid-Willamette Jobs Council. He jumped at Missoula during the 1947 season. Max's enthusiasm for travel took him to many parts of the U.S. as well as to Germany, India and the United Kingdom.

### **Douglas "Doug" Abromeit** (McCall '71)

Doug, 65, died May 19, 2013, near Sun Valley,

Idaho, while cycling with friends. A coroner's report said he appeared to have died from natural causes as he crashed to the side of the road, but had no apparent trauma and his feet were still in the pedal clips. Doug had retired in 2011 as director of the U.S. Forest Service's National Avalanche Center, an agency he helped create. He had been serving as a snow ranger, but moved to become the national coordinator of the Military Artillery for Avalanche Control Program; it later became the National Avalanche Center. Doug often described it as being a "program with a big name and a very small staff," as he was the only employee until Karl Birkeland joined him in 2001. Doug jumped at McCall in 1971 and again from 1976 through 1984.

### **Ron Campbell** (Redding '64)

Ron, 70, died April 18, 2013, in Redding, California. He worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 17 years, including the 1964 fire season when he jumped at Redding.

### **Norman 'Norm' Allen (Missoula '46)**

Norm, 88, died May 18, 2013, in Thompson Falls, Montana. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and volunteered for the new parachute infantry. He earned a spot in the elite 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which operated independently with the 82nd Airborne Division and later as part of the 13th Airborne. Norm specialized in reconnaissance and demolitions and participated in the Battle of the Bulge in 1945. He earned the Purple Heart and Bronze Star during the war. Norm jumped at Missoula in 1946-48 and 1950-53, and suffered a broken back during his second refresher jump in 1954; recovery took two years. He graduated from Black Hills Teachers College in South Dakota in 1951, teaching junior high social studies. Norm took a fire-control job with the U.S. Forest Service in 1961, retiring in 1980. He was also a rancher and an expert in rawhide braidwork through his Oglala Lakota heritage, developing a rawhide tanning method.

### **Walter 'Walt' Currie (Missoula '75)**

Walt, 69, died Sunday, June 16, 2013, in Great Falls, Montana, as the result of hemochromatosis. He jumped 26 seasons, finishing at the age of 61 with 260 fire jumps. Most remarkable was the fact Walt had never suffered a jump injury until his final day on the job on a practice jump. He earned degrees in Education and History from the University of Montana. He coached football and wrestling in addition to teaching while in Oregon and Montana. Walt also served as head coach at Montana State University-Northern as that school revived its football program. He jumped at Missoula during the 1975-81 and 1983-86 seasons, and at Grangeville during 1987-2003.

### **Charles 'Chuck' Reinhardt (Missoula '66)**

Chuck, 70, died June 6, 2013, in New York City. He graduated from Carroll College in Helena, Montana, and jumped at Missoula in 1966. He was injured in a car wreck prior to the 1967 season, but worked at the base that summer. Chuck taught social science and human rights education in California, New Jersey, New York and Denmark during his career of more than 40 years. He also worked providing humanitarian aid in Mexico, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **Joseph 'Joe' Farrell (Missoula '49)**

Joe, 86, died Jan. 6, 2013, in Bismarck, North Dakota. He served two years in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific, then attended the University of Montana. Joe was called back to active service in 1950 and served one year fighting in Korea. He jumped at Missoula in 1949 and did not jump the day of the Mann Gulch

tragedy, in which 12 smokejumpers – many of whom were Joe's friends – and a firefighter died in a forest conflagration. Joe had a 35-year career with Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.

### **Lowell D. King (Missoula '57)**

Lowell, 75, died at home in Anchorage, June 3, 2013. He jumped at Missoula for two seasons before moving to the Fairbanks base, where he jumped three seasons. He then took the fire dispatcher position in Fairbanks and later retired from the BLM at the end of his career. Lowell was an NSA Life Member.

### **Loyle Washam (Missoula '51)**

Loyle, 87, died June 17, 2013, in Boise, Idaho. He served in the Navy during World War II, mostly at Okinawa Island. Following the war joined the Army Reserve, retiring as lieutenant colonel in 1978. Loyle served in the Green Berets and was a Special Forces member. He earned degrees from Boise Junior College (later Boise State University), College of Idaho, University of Southern California, University of Idaho and Washington State University. Loyle trained and jumped at Missoula in 1951 before jumping at McCall in 1953-54, 1956-58 and 1960-62. Loyle spent his professional career as an educator, ranging from teaching fifth grade to high school, and serving as counselor and vice principal. He received the Distinguished Citizen award from the Idaho *Statesman* newspaper in Boise in August 1987. Loyle was an avid bicyclist, logging more than 2,000 miles per year, and worked with City of Boise officials to install bike lanes there. He also worked on the Weiser River Trail project, rode the Lewis and Clark Trail and rode from Canada to Mexico. Loyle was eight states short of his goal of riding at least 50 miles in each of the 50 states, and in one calendar year logged 300 car-free days. He also remained an enthusiastic parachutist, making his final jump – in tandem – April 13, 2013.

### **Larry Fellows (McCall '56)**

Larry, 78, died Feb. 17, 2013, in Columbia City, Oregon, from lung cancer. After earning a degree in Forest Management from the University of Idaho in 1957, Larry joined the Army and served two years at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona. Following his discharge he began his career with the U.S. Forest Service, working as a timber sales officer and timber management assistant in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in La Grande, Oregon, from 1960 to 1963. Larry became director at the Forest Service Cispus Job Corp Center in Randle, Washington. He became deputy forest supervisor of the Black Hills National Forest in Custer, South Dakota,

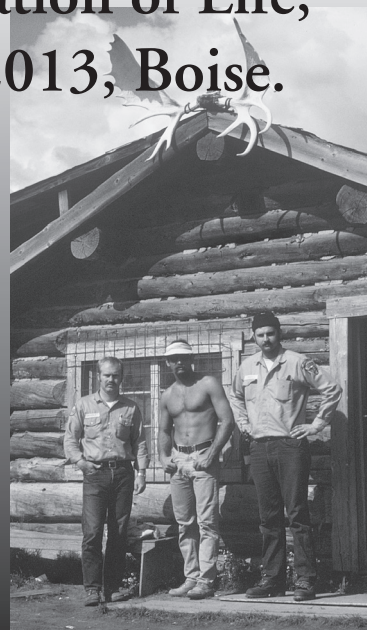
during 1969-74. He then went to Region 6 in Portland, Oregon, to work as staff director for the Manpower Development Department. Larry became forest supervisor of the Siuslaw National Forest in Corvallis, Oregon, in 1976. After retirement Larry enjoyed fishing for salmon on the Columbia River and was an enthusiastic traveler in his recreational vehicle. He jumped at McCall during the 1956 season and always said smokejumping was one of the best times in his life.

### Richard D. Austin (Misoula '53)

Dick, 78, died at his home in Cove, Oregon, July 11, 2013. He received his master's degree from Montana State University and became a voc-ed teacher in Plevna and Bridger, Montana. Dick then worked for the State of Washington Highway Dept. as a landscape architect before going back to teaching. He retired in 1995, after 24 years as the horticulture instructor at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington. Dick jumped at Grangeville in 1953, Missoula 54, 57, 58, and West Yellowstone 59-61 and was an NSA member. 🌲

## Alex Theios (CJ-65) Celebration of Life, May 2013, Boise.

*Ft. Yukon 1970  
L-R: Paul Bradley,  
Alex Theios,  
Don Havel. Alex  
passed away Jan-  
uary 14, 2013. As  
Don Havel said,  
"The Fairbanks  
jumpers always  
thought of Alex as  
cool guy. But, he  
was not just cool,  
he was California  
cool." (Courtesy  
D. Havel)*



Celebrating the life of Alex Theios. Back L-R: Harold Hartman (CJ-65), Bill Harro (MYC-68), Tommy Albert (CJ-64), Troop Emonds (CJ-66), Jon Klingel (CJ-65). Middle: Heidi Theios. Front L-R: Jerry Katt (CJ-67), Terry Egan (CJ-65). Not pictured: Dick Wildman (NCSB-61), Dick Terry (MYC-58), Jim Lancaster (MYC-62) (Courtesy Tommy Albert)

# Currie's Death Leaves Large Void In Montana Athletic Circles

by Scott Mansch

*(Copyright 2013, the Great Falls Tribune.)*

**T**he sadness stretches this week, from Great Falls to Fort Benton to Havre, as the news of the passing of **Walt Currie** (MSO-75) hits hard for high school wrestling and football fans.

Joe Aline was a childhood friend of Dr. John Kumm, a Great Falls optometrist and sports advocate whose funeral is Friday. Aline also coached with Currie in the highly successful Great Falls High School wrestling program.

"It's just an awful week," said Joe Aline. "John was a good friend. And now Walt ... It's a tough loss for a lot of us."

Currie, 69, died June 17, 2013, of a blood ailment in Great Falls. A highly successful football coach in Havre, who came out of retirement eight years ago to help a Fort Benton community desperate for a head coach, Currie was better known in the Electric City for Bison wrestling.

"He was, bar none, one of the greatest coaches I ever had," said Michael Zadick. "And that's through all levels of wrestling."

Zadick won four Class AA state championships while wrestling for Currie at GFHS before becoming an All-American at the University of Iowa and a U.S. Olympian. He said Currie's influence went beyond the sport.

"He taught us about being a man," Zadick said. "About opening doors for people and being nice to people. About not being arrogant, and about being humble. Things like that. The best way he did it was by the example he set."

Currie was the head coach of the football and mat programs at Havre High School from 1977-86. He moved to Hermiston, Ore., to coach prep football for four years, then took over the Great Falls High School wrestling program. From 1991-98, Currie's Bison mat teams were annually in the hunt for state championships.

"He was a great mentor for me in the coaching business and a great friend to boot," said Aline, who succeeded Currie with the GFHS wrestlers and remains involved in the program. "He touched so many kids' lives and really was a positive influence for everybody."

Inspiration was Currie's specialty.

"He could get kids to run through a brick wall for him," Aline said.

For 40 years, Currie's summers were filled with fight-

ing forest fires, including 25 of them as a smokejumper. He had an ever-present smile that belied his competitiveness, but not his toughness.

"He got upset, but only when you're supposed to get upset," Zadick said. "He was the type of guy that whenever you were in battle, he was bumping you right in the shoulder. He was right behind you."

Fifteen years ago, Currie was hired to resurrect an MSU-Northern football program that had been dormant for nearly three decades. He coached the Lights for six seasons, building a foundation for the successful program that exists today.

There were other fine candidates for the Northern football job. A conversation back then with Mike Tilleman, the Chinook native and former National Football League star who was on the search committee, revealed much about Currie's reputation.

"We knew we didn't have to sell the community on Walt Currie," Tilleman said. "People in Havre were already sold on him."

To be sure, Currie coached a lot of athletes to a lot of success. And that's from Havre to Great Falls to Fort Benton.

"He was beyond that with me," Zadick said. "He was more than just a four-year high school coach. He traveled when I was wrestling in college and internationally. I saw him all the time. He was more or less family with me."

"I thought Walt Currie was the epitome of a man." 📌



Walt Currie (Courtesy Pogo West)



*Don Brennan (NCSB-54)*



*Murray Taylor (RDD-65)*



*L-R: Bill Bowles (RDD-57), Dennis Bradley (RDD-57)  
& Ron Dickie (RDD-57)*



## Redding Smokejumpers

*Photos Courtesy: Lee Gossett (RDD-65)  
Phil Englefield (RDD-65) &*



*L-R: Phil Murchison (CJ-58), Bernie Weisgerber (RDD-60),  
Chuck Engstrom (MSO-55) & Roary Murchison (RDD-57)*



*Redding C*



*Rick Grandalski (RDD-64) & Leas Dickey (RDD-61)*



*Pete Struman (RDD-65)*



*L-R: Jim Freeland (RDD-60)  
Weisgerber (RDD-60) &*



*L-R: Dennis Bradley (RDD-57), Jim Kloepper (RDD-57) & Vern Lattin (RDD-57)*

## **umpers 1957-1965**

*-57), Bernie Weisgerber (RDD-60),  
& Rick Grandalski (RDD-64)*



*Bob Thrush (RDD-60)*



*Crew 1957*

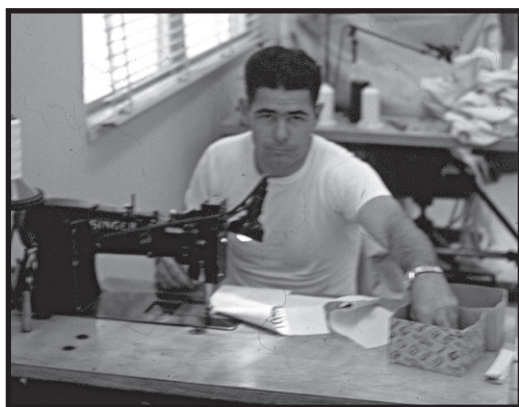


*L-R: Phil Murchison (CJ-58), Chuck Engstrom (MSO-55)  
Bill Bowles (RDD-57) & Bernie Weisgerber (RDD-60)*

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



*, Mick Swift (CJ-57), Bernie  
& Bob Thrush (RDD-60)*



*Mike Daugherty (RDD-65)*



*Jim Freeland (RDD-60) &  
Bernie Weisgerber (RDD-60)*

# Elements Of Team Cohesion And Effective Leadership

by Walt Currie (Missoula '75)

## “Team” Definition

Group of individuals who want to succeed in an endeavor with everyone contributing and they all share in the success.

### Type of people needed for formation of a team

- People who want to succeed (they want to win)
- People who want to contribute (that's why they're there)
- People who welcome competition (they must like to compete)
- People who meet the standards you need to win (high standards)
- People who are unselfish (they don't care who gets the credit)
- People who accept the rules (rules must be few and effective)
- People who are willing to share their knowledge (this makes everyone better)

### The development of the team

- Standards (the higher the standards the better the team)
- Tradition (this must be established for pride)
- Motivation (this should be positive tempered with fear)
- Loyalty (this is a must) (loyalty to each other and the leader) (remove the disloyal)
- Position (place team members by ability in positions they can succeed)
- Discipline (be consistent in discipline – discipline the stars too)
- Fundamentals (sound fundamentals win)
- Leadership (a team must have a strong, fair and knowledgeable leader)

### The performance of the team

- No stars (treat all team members alike)
- Intimidating (opponents should be in awe of you)
- Humble (especially in victory – don't ever do or say anything to motivate the opponent)
- Praise and self-motivation (this must exist among teammates)
- Fundamentally sound (no wasted effort – this will

keep you fresher than your opponent)

- Setbacks (they are temporary – learn to come back)
- Advancement (the opportunity should always exist to be a starter)
- Leadership (give the opportunity to lead)

## Leadership

How many good leaders will you work for in a lifetime?

### Very Few

- A lot will be company men
- A lot will be climbers
- A lot will be in it for themselves
- A lot will abandon you in tough times
- A lot will not have the experience and training for the job

### Characteristics of good leaders and supervisors

- Tough and hard-nosed, not fragile (wimps are sick a lot and always complaining)
- Hard-working, highly skilled (can lead by example)
- Listens and communicates
- Knows his or her job (wants the hardest assignment)
- You know who's in charge
- Humble
- Praises and gives credit
- Wants his or her crew to do the best
- Trains and explains (willing to share his or her knowledge)
- Knows the personalities of his or her crew
- A sense of humor (able to laugh at himself/herself)
- Pushes you to be the best
- Has high standards and lets you know what they are
- Motivates positively tempered with fear
- Nips problems in the bud (puts out brush fires while they're still small)
- Shares responsibility (gives you the opportunity to lead) 🙏

# BOOK REVIEW: THE ESPERANZA FIRE – ARSON, MURDER AND THE AGONY OF ENGINE 57 (JOHN MACLEAN)

by **Charlie Roos** (Redmond '97)

AS SMOKEJUMPERS WE all understand that the legacy of wildfire in the United States is often both understated and misunderstood, and those who fight the constant cycle of summer blazes only get just recognition when flames roar and smoke columns tower overhead.

With the cool winds of fall, wildland firefighters are practically forgotten. Sadly, those who have paid the ultimate price fade too quickly from the memory of all but their family and closest friends.

By recording the events of the Esperanza Fire in such a compelling and reverent manner, John Maclean has created a rightful legacy for the crew of Engine 57, as well as with those who continue to engage in the gritty and dodgy profession of wildfire.

The Esperanza Fire eloquently illustrates the often-unsung sacrifice and tribulations of wildfire. It brought back the smoke, heat,

excitement and danger that were part of my firefighting experience as if it were yesterday. This multifaceted story is masterfully told with Maclean's signature reverence for fact and truth.

I did my time as an engine crewmember, hotshot and smoke-jumper, and I am always impressed with Maclean's willingness and ability to capture the scene in a manner that preserves the real story and spirit of wildland firefighting.

I often fly over the Banning Pass. After reading this book, I've realized how easily fate turned on Engine 57 and the fact that it could have just as easily turned on me or anyone else in those wild places in which we all labored. And as with the South Canyon Fire, I am struck with the tragedy of the Esperanza and the crushing nature of the aftermath of these events on families and communities – all of which the author has fittingly addressed.

From the events of the fire to the pursuit of the arsonist and his capital murder trial, the Esperanza Fire draws the reader into a world of twists and turns and human frailty and drama. It is also a world where the forces of nature and humanity will meet head-on, but unlike most wildfires that are fought and defeated without much fanfare, the Esperanza Fire played a furious and seemingly fickle hand on the crew of Engine 57.

And like those who have fallen before, the memory of the crew of Engine 57 will fade over time, but at least their story has been told and given its due.

Maclean's will to seek truth and to tell the real story of wildfire is creating a fitting illustration and rightful record of wildfire in the United States, and the Esperanza Fire is another part of that unassuming legacy. It is a well-crafted book with numerous dimensions that won't disappoint those with inside knowledge of wildfire. 🙏

## NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

### Contributions since the previous publication of donors, July 2013

#### Donor

Larry Nelsen (MSO-56) .....	Finn Ward
Gene Hamner (MSO-67) .....	Chuck Reinhardt (IDC-54)
Kristin Maypole (Father's Day) .....	Donald Maypole (IDC-54)
Perry Rahn (MSO-61) .....	Smokejumpers in Need
John Marker (Associate) .....	Luke Sheehy (RDD-09)
Dayton Grover (MSO-55) .....	Dave Bevan (MSO-55)
	Billy Hester (MSO-58)
Mike Patten (MSO-87) .....	Smokejumpers in Need

#### In Memory/Honor of

**Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$24,050**

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# LUKE SHEEHY REMEMBERED

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Luke was born in Susanville, Calif., an area of majestic mountains lined with pine trees, bordered by the high desert and wide-open spaces. He was drawn to the outdoors and all the activities associated with it: hiking, trail running, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, snowmobiling and motorcycle riding.

He did it all. It's no surprise he ended up pursuing the adrenaline-filled career of a smokejumper.

Throughout his childhood, so many loving friends and family surrounded Luke. This is what helped shape him into the man we all loved and deeply cared for. He was very easy to be around and he respected people for who they were. He was not one to pass judgment. His personality and oversized grin were infectious. Luke was "genuine."

I had the pleasure of meeting Luke early in his firefighting career. It didn't take long to figure out Luke was the guy everybody wanted to work with. You couldn't help but be drawn to him. He was always having fun, but he was also an absolute workhorse.

Throughout the toughest assignments, he always had a smile on his face. He loved what he was doing. He lightened up the whole group and allowed us to become a very tightly-knit and efficient crew.

I truly enjoyed working with Luke, but the memories of him I cherish the most are those away from work. Over the years we became very close friends. I consider Luke a brother. Not a day went by that we didn't communicate in some form or fashion. It was pretty easy since we lived about 400 yards from each other.

My family and I could always count on Luke to show up for dinner. When he was gone on a fire or out of town visiting family, the kids couldn't figure out why Luke wasn't there to eat.

Whether it was chores or just hanging out in the back yard, we were always together. It didn't matter if it was his place or mine; knocking was not necessary. We had developed a relationship in which formalities were unnecessary. We could just walk into each other's home and feel at ease.

In fact, sometimes he would be there when we got home, just waiting for us to show up. It was as if he had always been there, part of the family, and we couldn't imagine it any other way.

I have so many fond memories of Luke. We loved sitting on the back deck, playing guitar with Ira, another good friend of ours who also lives in the neighborhood. In fact, we decided to name our three-man band "Rat Farm," after a place where we would often hunt for ducks.

Luke was a very talented musician and could play multiple instruments. He was the only reason I ever picked up a guitar. The gift of music he gave me is something I will cherish the rest of my life.

We spent a lot of time hunting for deer in the Trinity Alps together. We would beat ourselves up hiking cross-country in search of the ultimate spot to find a huge buck. He loved the silence of the wilderness and sharing a sip of whiskey with a good buddy, high on a ridge, in the middle of nowhere. There are just too many good memories to list.

It has been very hard for my family and me to accept the loss of Luke. However, his passing has allowed many people in the firefighting family, and Luke's family, to become very close to us. I have no doubt these bonds that have been created will last as long as we live.

This is proof that Luke's spirit is alive and well in all of us. It is amazing how he touched so many of our lives in such a profound way. Luke Sheehy has forever changed my life, and for that I am grateful.

— **Aaron Burroughs** (Friend)

Rain clouds moved in from the south that morning and a few showers had already fallen. By 8 o'clock people were gathering to get organized. By 10 o'clock fifty fire trucks and Hotshot crew rigs began staging in the west parking lot. By 11 a.m. the bagpipes and drums – 12 firemen and ex-firemen from Cal Fire and the Forest Service – were practicing with the combined color guards of the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, Cal Fire, the Redding Fire Department, and the National Park Service.

Old smokejumpers – organized by the NSA – met in the auditorium to receive their instructions on how to behave themselves and be good ushers. Just before the 1 p.m. starting time everything came together at the entrance to the center.

Fire trucks and Hotshot rigs lined the roadway on both sides. Three hundred uniformed fire personnel stood shoulder to shoulder in front of their rigs. At the front, two ladder trucks had angled their ladders together to form a giant "A," from which hung a 30-by-50-foot American flag.

At 1 o'clock sharp a 12-car motorcade bearing Luke's family and friends entered and passed beneath the flag as hundreds of firefighters snapped a crisp salute and held it while the motorcade passed by.

All I can say is that Luke Sheehy's memorial service was extraordinary in every way imaginable. There were

around 1,500 people there - many in full-dress uniform - fire trucks from throughout the North State, the color guards, bagpipes and drums, and a great video/slide presentation of Luke's life.

Best of all were Luke's family and friends. After a brief introduction, Luke's father, Doug, took the lead and set the tone by having the entire audience repeat a line from a poem that began with the words, "I will not die an un-lived life."

There followed songs by his dad, family and friends, plus special words from his mother and sister. A dozen people rose and spoke about Luke's personality and being. There were a lot of tears. The whole program was an emotional and powerful testimony to a wonderful family and the great heart within the firefighting community.

To cap it off, there was a traditional smokejumper Big Flip at the barbecue across the river that afternoon. There were 102 entrants at \$40 per head. All the proceeds were to go to the family.

After second-round buybacks, the total was about \$4,500. The prize for the winning flipper was five of those great chain-saw carvings - a raccoon, an eagle, and three bears - that Redding smokejumper **Mitch Hokanson** (RDD-00) makes.

From 102, the flip went down to 52, in the first round, then to 25, then to 12, then to six. By the sixth round only three people remained. One was Luke's Dad, Doug. A man threw first and got a head, a woman threw second and got a head, and we all knew that if Doug could throw a tail he would win it all. Everyone got excited and started chanting, "Doug, Doug, Doug, Doug ..."

Doug smiled, looked at the sky, threw the quarter and - even in all the noise - you could see by the look on the judge's face that he'd thrown a tail. Doug was immediately mobbed and danced around and around for two minutes. Let me tell you, it was magical. Absolutely magical.

Not long after the flip it got completely dark, the beer ran out, and it began to rain hard. Soon everyone was gone. The day we came together to mourn Luke's passing was a painful and sorrowful one, for sure. But it was a beautiful one as well, filled with love, heart, and the cherished memory of a very special young man.

- **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65)

**L**uke was the youngest smokejumper candidate in our rookie class. If he didn't tell us his age, we certainly wouldn't have guessed it. He was, for his age, a seasoned woodsman.

I'll never forget trying to figure out which climbing spur went on which foot as I frantically tried to make

sure I wasn't falling behind my rookie bros. I remember hearing one of the "old guys" ask Luke how he was doing and when he replied that he was "doin' good," I thought to myself: "You have got to be kidding me" as his voice was coming from the top of a big ole Doug fir. I looked around and luckily all the rest of my RBs were navigating the base of their respective trees.

It seems like every fire Luke came back from, somebody would say something about a "salty" thing he did or something wildly hilarious.

We have been going over Luke stories for a couple of weeks now. The more I think about it, and as highly as I regarded him while he was alive, it seems that stories just can't do the man justice. He was the best RB a fella could ask for. He would never sell out his RBs for anything; no matter how widely accepted he was with the older guys.

He would give you the shirt off his back if he was having a hard day himself, and if he was having a good day - which was about 99 percent of the time - he would move a mountain for ya, and I truly believe he could.

It's impossible to sum up the man he was, but I can assure the readership of this publication that he was everything, and more, an old smokejumper reading this would've wanted next to him/her in the woods. He would've kicked all of your asses up a hill and come back for more.

He was what you all hope a young smokejumper nowadays would be - loyal, rough, strong, and above all, A BRO.

- **Joey Maggio** (RDD-09)

**A** hard-nosed, caring man. Luke was a good friend and more-than-excellent person.

I first met Luke in the fire academy in 2004. Through the academy and all the years to follow, we were very good friends and had some excellent times together. He introduced me to, and brought together, many good people.

Luke could do or figure out anything that was in front of him and would never turn down a good time. Damned fine man and friend! I'll be holding a grudge that you were taken from us all way too early, but I know I'll see you again someday, my friend. Love ya.

- **Chance Karlgaard** (Friend)

**L**uke was definitely one of a kind. He had a goofy perma-grin and was one of the happiest people I have ever met.

Luke had a style of his own - a fine balance between a hippie and a lumberjack. I would always tease him about his choice in clothing. He would wear flan-

nel, lumberjack-style t-shirts with the sleeves ripped off and fire pants hemmed as though he were waiting for a flood.

Luke was one strong dude. He took pride in running circles around the rookies and made the workouts look easy – all with that goofy smile on his face. He would often comment to the rooks on how much of a slug he was during the winter, as he was leading them into the second hour of calisthenics. His one-liners were priceless.

Luke had a personality like no other. Shortly after he passed his rookie training in 2009, I remember walking by him one day and out of nowhere I hear: “F— you, Fashano!” which put me in a state of shock.

Then I looked over at him with his big, goofy smile and said to myself, “I like this guy.” Bold, brave, goofy, strong, genuine – that was Luke.

**Greg Fashano** (RDD-99)

**L**uke was well suited to be a rookie PT instructor. Not only did he volunteer his time, but he did it with a smile. He had an easy manner about him – it didn’t matter if he was on the first rep of the first set of push-ups or the 25th rep of the 25th. He still had a smile and that easy manner.

He was bold, confident and sure of himself, but didn’t have an ego or special attitude about it. He was just one of the bros, a smokejumper who, if he was on your load, it was a good thing.

He was one of those guys whom even old guys could learn something about how to function better with a diverse group, like smokejumpers.

**– Bob Bente** (RDD-88)

“**O**800, the rack!” Those were our instructions virtually every morning of rookie training. We would be out there awaiting misery 20 minutes early, and we could always tell how hard of a morning it was going to be by judging the size of the smile on Luke’s face.

If he would come out with a big ol’ cheese grin, we knew we were in for it.

He was an outstanding rookie trainer. He dedicated two weeks of his free time to come out and push us. For as kind a person as he actually was, he sure could play hard ass and scare the hell out of us.

He was a machine. He walked through every PT with us and never showed a sign of fatigue.

He was a great motivator. The one thing we never wanted to be was “pathetic” in Luke’s eyes because this guy was so solid through and through. Luke was also one of the first jumper bros to start talking to us after rookie training was over. We all wanted to be his friend

as he was such a stand-up guy. He hosted the after-party following the rookie party and invited us all to his place.

He was generous and took pride in us, and we are forever thankful for his commitment to the 2013 rookie class. We wish rookie classes in the future would get to experience the Sheehy strength because it was awesome! We love and miss our trainer, and we are proud to be Sheehy Rookies.

**– Redding Rookie Class of 2013**

**L**uke Sheehy was one of the best smokejumpers that I have ever worked with. When you got on the airplane en route to a fire and looked down the plane at the load, you would breathe a sigh of relief when you saw Pale Rider sitting down there.

He dug hand line like a machine and could run a saw all day long. A giant hole opened up at our base the moment he left us. He will never be forgotten.

**– Brad Schuette** (RDD-04)

**M**y first memories of Luke are less than enjoyable; it was about the second or third week of rookie training when the trainers let a few of the old guys come out for our morning PT session. Of course Luke was there and since we didn’t know him yet, he was looking very intimidating.

My RBs and I were holding on for dear life, and I was just barely able to keep up with the endless calisthenics when I looked up and saw Luke smirking at me with his trademark smile.

“All the way down,” he scolded.

He kept up the “encouragement” throughout the rest of rookie training, all the while making the PT sessions look easy and the runs equally effortless.

Thankfully, the rest of my memories of Luke are enjoyable, and my respect continued to grow throughout the 2012 season and into the 2013 season.

As we drew for the list this year, I was disappointed when I pulled second from the bottom. The only person below me was Luke, but Luke wasn’t fazed; he never was. What I thought was my misfortune turned out to be my good fortune. I got to be Luke’s jump partner on a good-deal four-manner on the Six Rivers National Forest in early May.

We spent a few memorable days working the fire and trying to stay out of the rain, while Luke kept us entertained with stories around the campfire and continued to impress us with his eclectic music collection. I am grateful I got to spend time with a man I developed such a huge amount of respect and admiration for.

**– Brett Newell** (RDD-12)

**W**e were working out at the California Smoke-jumpers weight area, which is about two stages below what inmates might have. There was a tour going on for about 10 or so Fire Academy cadets and their instructor. All of these kids were looking sharp in their uniforms, and for some reason, the instructor had them all in a line at parade rest.

They were standing there for about five minutes when Luke started playing with a big piece of pumice that **Dorsey Lightner** (RDD-89) had brought back to the base. It was about two feet square and weighed about 20 pounds, but looked like it weighed at least 100 pounds.

Luke started lifting it over his head, making it look heavy when one of the other guys said, "Hey Luke, won't you run with that rock over your head in front of the academy kids."

Luke got this big grin. You could tell he was thinking about it. He grabbed the rock, picked it up over his head, and started running in place. Then he took off in a straight line about 30 yards, made a left and ran right in front of the academy cadets who were still at a parade rest.

Luke ran right in front of them and kept going with a determined look on his face until he was out of sight. The cadets watched Luke run by them in disbelief. The instructor turned to his cadets and said with a stern voice, "Now that's a smokejumper."

Luke came back to where we were at the weights with the biggest smile, and we all sat around laughing our asses off.

– **Dan Hernandez** (RDD-85)

**P**ure ... Luke was pure!! Luke never wavered for what he believed in ... not for popularity, not for accolades, not to fit in, or to fit some mold someone thought he should be. Anyone who spent time around Luke knew that he would crawl across broken glass to New York for someone he cared about.

Luke had a consistency, grit, and a calmness to his character that I will never get the opportunity to be around again. It's not common; it was precious.

It came from being raised in a family rooted in love and acceptance – a family whose power shook every person who attended the service. They laid the foundation for such an impressive man early in his life. Teaching him about teamwork, about compassion, and about the beauty of smiling with those you love.

His work ethic never wavered; he never complained; he never gave up, no matter the challenge – true grit. Luke was the friend everyone is lucky to have in life, even just one. He never judged, never appeased – just truly accepted and cared. He was the son every

expecting mother and father dream about. He loved his family ... purely ... unconditionally ... just as they loved him. We all have lost someone special in our life, but we all must be extremely thankful that we got to experience someone purely exceptional also.

Live like Luke ... our friend will always be young.

– **John Houston** (Redding Fire Department) 🕒

If I be the first of us to die,  
Let grief not blacken long your sky.

Be bold yet modest in your grieving.  
There is a change but not a leaving.

For just as death is part of life,  
The dead live on forever in the living.  
And all the gathered riches of our journey, *Luke*  
The moments shared, the mysteries explored,  
The steady layering of intimacy stored,

The things that made us laugh or weep or sing,  
The joy of sunlit snow or first unfurling of the spring,

The wordless language of look and touch,  
The knowing,  
Each giving and each taking,  
These are not flowers that fade,  
Nor trees that fall and crumble,  
Nor are they stone,

For even stone cannot the wind and rain withstand  
And mighty mountain peaks in time reduce to sand.

What we were, we are.  
What we had, we have.  
A conjoined past imperishably present.

So when you walk the woods where once we walked  
together  
And scan in vain the dappled bank beside you for my  
shadow,

Or pause where we always did upon the hill to gaze  
across the land,  
And spotting something, reach by habit for my hand,

And finding none, feel sorrow start to steal upon you,

Be still.  
Close your eyes.  
Breathe.

Listen for my footfall in your heart.  
I am not gone but merely walk within you.

– Taken from *The Smoke Jumper*  
by Nicholas Evans (1999)



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# EDITORIAL IN RESPONSE TO SHEEHY DEATH

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by **Bruce Ross**

(Copyright 2013, *Redding Record-Searchlight*.)

SMOKEJUMPERS OFTEN strike a cavalier pose about the inherent dangers of their work – parachuting into the most remote and rugged country to fight wildfires.

But all of the hazards the rest of us imagine are real and very deadly. And they took a painful toll this week with the death of Luke Sheehy, a member of the Redding-based California Smokejumpers.

A 28-year-old firefighter from Susanville, Sheehy was on a crew putting out fires sparked by last weekend's lightning storms in the South Warner Wilderness, south-east of Alturas in remote Modoc County.

The U.S. Forest Service reported that he was hit by a section

of a falling tree and could not be revived. He was evacuated but declared dead at the hospital in Alturas.

Firefighters knowingly face these risks when they venture out, and they relish the adrenaline rush or they'd have desk jobs. But that doesn't make a death any less tragic. Make no mistake: They venture out so the rest of us can enjoy our homes, breathe clean air, hike in green forests instead of charred wastelands.

There's an eternal debate about the wisdom of fighting remote wilderness fires – which, if they stay deep in the back country, pose little danger to life and property and even have some ecological benefits in the long run. Of course, fires left to their own devices don't obey boundaries convenient to humans. Witness last summer's blaze

at Lassen Volcanic National Park, a high-country lightning strike that ultimately blew up into an expensive disaster. Thus the push to stop fires early.

The focus of these discussions is frequently the value of timber, the hassle of smoke, the loss of tourist seasons or beloved views.

We should never forget, though, that when we decide to fight back-country fires, we're deciding to send real men and women – with families and young children – to put their skins on the line to do that job. They train hard to stay safe, but life-threatening accidents of one kind or another are inevitable.

It's no exaggeration to say Sheehy died so the rest of us can live safely in this fire-prone place we all call home. We all owe him and his family a debt we can never repay. 🙏

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## Letter to California Smokejumpers

June 20, 2013

California Smokejumpers

6101 Airport Rd.

Redding, CA 96002

As you gather to memorialize Luke Sheehy, you can be assured that you are being joined (if not in body, at least in spirit) by the entire Smokejumper community of both the current generation and the generations past, for we stand together as a 'band of brothers'.

In the passage of time, your current grief will diminish as you must continue to move forward with your lives and focus on the tasks at hand. This is part of healthy healing. Truth be told, as much as it may sadden us now, some memories of times spent with Luke will also slowly fade.

As we move through the coming days, weeks and months, what we must do is join together and wrestle some meaning and good out of what is, at this moment, little more than the senseless tragedy of a life cut short far too early. This is what we have done when

previous tragedies have fallen on this band of brothers, whether at the multiple loss of life at a Mann Gulch or a South Canyon or the other untimely accidents that have ended lives or damaged bodies. We may fail. We may never find that meaning or good, but we must work together and try for Luke's sake and for ours.

The National Smokejumper Association stands with you in these hours and days of your grief, as it is our grief also. It is our mission to preserve our smokejumper history and the stories of the sacrifices and accomplishments that smokejumpers have made through the years. It is our mission to work to advance the smokejumper program into the future and to be there for those who have made the sacrifices and who can use a helping hand in a time of need.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you today and continue into the days to come. May our Creator give you comfort, strength and courage to boldly and confidently face the future.

On behalf of the National Smokejumper Association,

Jim Cherry, NSA President 🙏

# Luke Sheehy – He Enjoyed Everything He Did

(From Memorial Event Program)

**L**uke Sheehy (RDD-09) could never get enough action. He was active from the start. Whether it was hunting, fishing, dirt biking, motorcycling, snowmobiling, mountain biking, road bikes, logging or general overall fitness, he enjoyed it all.

“People usually have valleys and peaks in their life,” said Redding smokejumper **Luis Gomez** (RDD-94), “but for Luke there were no valleys. He danced from peak to peak.”

His biggest passion was smokejumping, which he started in 2009 for the U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers in Redding, Calif. Luke excelled in the smokejumper program due to his candor and work ethic. These were key parts of rookie training for smokejumpers and were integral parts of the Region 5 program.

“His love of life and love for the people around him made him easy to be around,” said his friend Aaron Burrough. “These qualities allowed him to excel at whatever adventure he decided to tackle. He was extremely family-oriented and selfless. To sum Luke up in one word, he was ‘genuine.’ ”

Luke was not one to be boxed in. In addition to his active lifestyle, he enjoyed playing numerous musical instruments.

“Put me in a box; I will just kick my way out of it,” fellow smokejumper **Joe Maggio** (RDD-09) reported Luke saying. “He was genetically designed to be a smokejumper. He was the only guy driving a Cummings diesel with Simon and Garfunkel coming out of the window.”

Before becoming a smokejumper, Luke worked for the Diamond Mountain Hotshots with the Bureau of Land Management and as a firefighter for CAL FIRE.

Luke attended Lassen High School and received a certificate from the Shasta College Fire Academy. He is survived by his parents, Doug and Lynn Sheehy of Susanville, Calif.; his sisters, Meg and Kate; and a large extended family. 🙏

## Thanks For The Help

The NSA was called by the California Smoke jumpers to provide ushers for the Luke Sheehy Memorial Service. We would like to thank the following for stepping up and getting the job done:

Atwood, Dave	Redding-67
Bailey, Kit	Redmond-95
Garnica, Salvador	Missoula-82
Hamner, Gene	Missoula-67
Harris, Bob	Redding-75
Hedges, Jim	McCall-78
Henderson, Brooks	Redding-69
Klaseen, Sven	Redding-79
Lockwood, Keith	Cave Jct-64
Peugh, Kenny	Redding-71
Russell, Rick	Fairbanks-77
Ryan, Ralph	Redding-77
Sheley, Chuck	Cave Jct-59
Steffens, Jeff	Boise-78
Taylor, Murry	Redding-65
Tracy, Brenda	Redding-90
Vice, Jerry	Redding-69
Warner, Scott	Redding-69
Weisgerber, Bernie	Redding-60
Woodhead, Gordy	Redding-83
Yamamoto, Andy	Redding-98
Youmans, Mark	Redding-81

## Letter to the NSA from the California Smokejumpers

Joey Maggio (RDD-09)

Brothers and Sisters of the National Smokejumper Association:

Here at the R-5 Smokejumpers, we have all been given the opportunity to express our thanks to the various folks and groups that aided us in many ways as we found our way through all the challenges that came, and continue to come, as a result of a fallen brother.

As I write this letter, it occurs to me that this one is a bit different than some of the others. We are very thankful for all that the NSA has done to help us and will continue to do (for us); however, and I know that y'all will understand what I am trying to convey here, we expected it. We expect the best from the Bro's.

There are folks that stepped up to help us that

were unexpected. There were agency folks that were required to help and, I'm sure, would have done anything they could have, even if it wasn't required.

But when it comes to the NSA, I can tell you that the level of help in the past, present, and future will always be an expectation from us because we are "the Bro's" and that is what we do.

I could go on about how thankful we are to the NSA, but I feel that you are the type of organization that does what it does because it's the right thing to do.

This letter in no way is meant to downplay our appreciation for the NSA, but rather to say that we know that you guys are there for us and it doesn't take a tragedy to show us.

Keep doing what you do. Know that we preach history to our rookies and will continue to honor the traditions of the Smokejumpers and our brother Luke Sheehy every day we come to work. 🙏

## Making The Jump From Fires To Fine Booze

by Jodi Hausen

*(Copyright 2013, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle.)*

ENNIS, Mont.—In 2005, **Willie Blazer** (MSO-05) was sweating it out in New Orleans, helping out after Hurricane Katrina. He was hundreds of miles away from his wife, Robin, and their baby daughter in Stevensville, Mont.

A wildland firefighter by profession, Willie was tired of traveling for work and "responding to every world disaster."

"I wanted to stay in Montana," he said recently, sitting on a wooden stool in the tasting room of his distillery in Ennis. "We had one baby and one on the way. It was time to come back."

Having grown up in the seat of moonshine country in western North Carolina, he got to thinking. He called Robin from Louisiana and asked her, "What do you think about making moonshine?"

"Let me look into the legalities," the practical Montana farm girl responded.

Robin was raised on a 2,000-acre wheat and barley farm in the Crow Creek Valley. The two met at University of Montana and eloped in 2000.

It was a match just meant to be.

He knew about spirits. She knew about grain. And Montana legislators had just passed laws to make owning

a distillery easier.

"A lot of stars just lined up," Robin said. "It seemed like a good fit turning Montana products into something tasty."

Seven years later, the couple gave birth to another baby. It's called Willie's Distillery.

### Making spirits

The sun blasts through the distillery's large glass windows, where Main Street meanderers can watch the spirit-making process.

But it wasn't just sunshine heating up the rehabilitated, high-ceilinged livery stable. Steam rose from the approximately 400-gallon mash tun – a giant silver pot filled with water calibrated to exactly 200 degrees. From a tall stepladder, Elizabeth Serage poured 50-pound bags of oats and wheat and buckets of corn into it.

Steeped for several hours, the grains and water thickened into a sweet-smelling, porridge-like substance. It converted back into a less-viscous liquid as main distiller Nick Yalon added malted barley. This first step in spirit making should be familiar to beer brewers as is fermenting, though spirits typically ferment for only about five days.

The following phase is what distinguishes moonshine and other spirits from its less-alcohol-imbued cousin.

Heating the fermented grain liquid in a distiller to about 172 degrees – the boiling point of alcohol – creates a sort of enclosed “weather system,” Yalon explained.

The alcohol steam rises and falls back down as it condenses. Because water evaporates at a higher temperature, the process separates the alcohol from the water, creating a more potent product than beer. Willie’s Montana Moonshine packs a 45-percent alcohol content compared with craft beer of about 5 to 7 percent.

Ennis resident Tikker Jones stepped into the tasting room and noted the sweet aroma wafting in from the adjacent distillery.

Jones had tried the moonshine at a recent dinner party mixed in a cocktail, but he’d never tried it straight up.

After taking a sip and holding it in his mouth as Serage recommended, he smiled.

“It’s smooth,” he said. “The flavor continued in my mouth and had more depth.”

He walked out with a bottle.

### Moonshine with a mission

In about its fifth month distilling moonshine, brandy, whiskey and bourbon, the business has had visitors from as far away as Buffalo, N.Y., as evidenced in their guest-book where reviews are resoundingly positive.

For \$1 each, one can sample as many as three tastes of Montana Moonshine, grappa, pear or apple-raspberry brandies. A chokecherry liqueur will also be available soon.

Whiskey and bourbons take more time as they age in oak barrels and won’t be ready for months.

Sure, the moonshine is smooth, but the ambiance of

the tasting room adds to the experience.

Droplets of water run down windows fogged with steam, surrounded by age-darkened, rough-hewn timbers. The furnishings mimic the building’s character.

As welcoming as the structure itself are the people who work inside it.

When they aren’t busy distilling, the small crew readily answers patrons’ questions about the process or simply chat amiably with them. A colorful line drawing on the window between the distillery and tasting room, Serage’s creation, explains the process.

It feels the way any gathering place in small-town Montana should feel. It is exactly the reason the Blazers moved to Ennis in 2007.

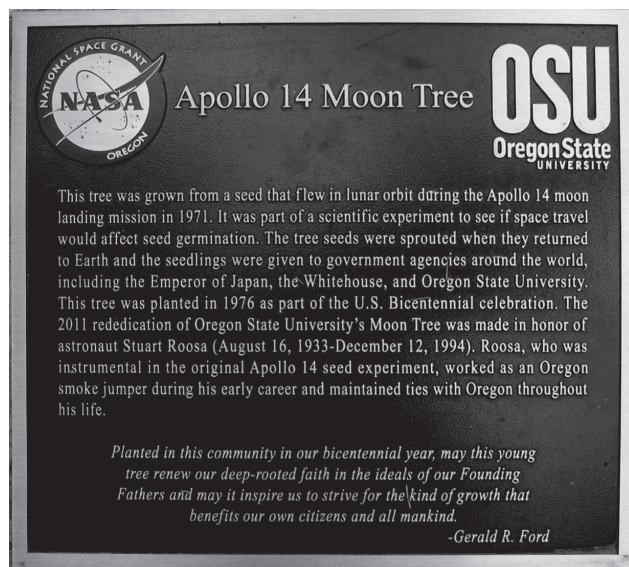
“We chose a small town because we love a small-town environment,” Willie said. “And we’re 200 yards from blue-ribbon trout fishing. I can leave my office and catch a fish in 10 minutes.”

They are confident of their success.

“One of our goals is to prove you can have a successful manufacturing business in small-town Montana,” Willie said. “Montana has some of the best grains and most pristine water in the world. And people want cool products, locally made and locally grown. They want to see how products are made. They want to see it, feel and touch it.”

The company’s mission statement: To make world-class spirits for world-class people, but “world class” has nothing to do with money.

“Being a good neighbor is being a world-class individual,” Robin said. “Good booze for good people – that’s basically what it boils down to.” 🍷



*Moon Tree Plaque Oregon State University Campus (Courtesy Karl Hartzell)*

## Do You Have News To Submit To The NSA Website?

The recent website survey completed in January shows that the membership goes to our website ([www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com)) for news and information about friends.

If you have any news that you feel should be posted on the NSA website, write it up and forward it to me at [cnkg-sheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkg-sheley@earthlink.net).

# THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

MEMBERSHIP IN THE National Smokejumper Association has brought a lot of highs and lows over the years. One of the biggest highs was the McCall 70th anniversary reunion in June. If you missed it, you missed by far the best smokejumper reunion to date.

The McCall Smokejumpers left absolutely nothing to chance. The planning and logistics were superior. NSA merchandise was flying off the table as fast as **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) and wife, K.G., could make change. Chuck actually ran out of some sizes of clothing and took orders to be shipped later.

I have never seen merchandise sales this brisk at a reunion. The hoodies and fleece jackets were especially popular. Smokejumpers were even tasked with helping Chuck unload the merchandise from his car. How is that for paying attention to the details?

Every McCall jumper deserves some of the credit, but special

credit goes to Base Manager **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98), **Adam Dealaman** (MYC-10) and **Ashley Taylor** (MYC-12). If I were going to hold an after-action review of this reunion, it would last about two minutes. I would tell everyone what a great job they did, save your notes and start working on the 75th anniversary reunion!

On my way to the McCall reunion, I made arrangements to visit the Grangeville Air Center. A tip of the hard hat to Base Manager **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91), **Mike Blinn** (RDD-01), and the rest of the GAC jumpers for their hospitality, good humor and candor. I thoroughly enjoyed visiting GAC and hope I can visit again soon.

Still on a high from the McCall reunion, we plunged to the lowest low the following day when **Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09) answered a fire call on June 10 and didn't come back. Chuck Sheley and your Board of Directors went to a full-court press in the ensuing days. Many decisions needed to be made and many assignments were carried out.

My very small contribution was collecting photos of Luke for inclusion in this issue and determining who the photographers were for proper credit.

Just six days after losing Luke Sheehy, we lost **Walt Currie** (MSO-75). Walt was one of those rare people who excelled in more than one endeavor. Walt holds the record for making the oldest fire jump at age 61. He also excelled as a coach in both football

and wrestling at the high school and college level. Walt's words of wisdom on team cohesion and leadership are published on page 26 in this issue from a wall hanging in the Ready Room in Grangeville.

Another special thanks to Mike Blinn and Sarah Doehring for responding to our request of getting the text of that wall hanging to us during both a difficult time and a very busy fire season. We were under deadline and they went the extra mile for us.

Activity is starting to pick up on the NSA's Facebook page but we certainly can use a lot more activity.

By the time you read this, **Dwight Chambers** (MSO-66) will be home from Craig Hospital in Denver and **Lane Lamoreaux** (MYC-09) is still making a miraculous recovery. The need for encouragement and support for both of these jumpers is ongoing.

In tribute to Luke Sheehy, I leave you with a quote from *Julius Caesar*: "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once." (Act II, Scene II).

In tribute to Walt Currie, I leave you with a quote from Mike Zadick, one of Walt's high school wrestlers who went on to wrestle in the Olympics: "He was the type of guy that whenever you were in battle, he was bumping you right in the shoulder. He was right behind you. I thought Walt Currie was the epitome of a man." 🙏

# Tide Talk

by Leroy Cook (Cave Junction '64)

I've yet to master the art of perfect patience. It's a skill that comes and goes with me, some days held in place by flimsy cobwebs and others by twisted wire. I guess it's the weather!

Knowing I spent a lot of time in Alaska, I'm often asked if I've ever been to the panhandle. "Yep," is my response. "I've been there, the crown of the Pacific!"

Visitors know the region as the Tongass National Forest within the Alexander Archipelago. Most see it from a cruise ship, but it's more than a marine highway in a Pacific temperate rain forest. I call it the "Big Wet" – a place of constant drip, old and salty, where feelings of primeval permeate big, old coniferous trees, and every morning their needles drip drops of moisture soaking the ground below.

Something unknown ties me to wild places where fish live. Years ago I was – as a handsome and adventurous young man – yearning to fish for steelhead. It's a fish of mystery and catching them can make a poor man rich, a game of persistence and chance; the Alaskan panhandle, with its drizzly habitat, grew lots of steelhead, and I longed to wade its coastal streams and catch their wild fish.

Many stories from different quarters abound about places that are hard to get to, their part of sport fishing's psyche having mystery, beauty and imagination.

The largest run in the Sitka area was in Sitkoh Creek, located on the northeastern end of Peril Strait, the east-west channel passage between Sitka and Juneau.

With the prospect of a good outdoor experience, one spring I talked my friend Jim into flying us into Sitkoh Lake, the beginning of this river. He lived in Juneau, had a small Taylorcraft on floats, and I had lived 15 years in Alaska's northern solitudes. We wouldn't have any trouble!

Flying out of Juneau, I remember looking down into both Chatham and Peril Strait through the fading light and the drifting mist. Now and then a faint amber glow could be seen coming from lonely fishing boats floating on a dark, turquoise sea.

We'd flown out of Juneau late in the day, having taken our food and camping gear in earlier in the morning. Small, wee planes don't carry much, and because of the day's prowling storms, we waited until evening to fly in ourselves, gambling on less wind.

Jim flew and I navigated. At the confluence of the

two channels, we turned west into Peril Strait passing through several fog banks, when suddenly we were caught in a whiteout. Realizing what had happened, Jim managed to crank the plane around and then pushed the left rudder while turning the wheel over to the right into a slip, knifing us down through the wet air. Scary for a few minutes, with blank stares we hardly breathed.

At a thousand feet things came back into focus. Although not instrument rated, Jim had gotten us out, but in the recovery process I lost our position. Precious minutes went by as we tried to pinpoint our location. We needed to find the lake before dark.

I looked down onto the ocean strait, spellbound. On the water, luminous ribbons of frothy white spray – sometimes called "white horses" – were blowing across the surface and running down the channel's twisted passage. One of us muttered, "Looks a bit nippy;" I'm thinking *this place is only fit for orcas and humpbacks*.

Little daylight was left, the shadows were gone in the strait and, not knowing our exact position, we had to put the plane down. A high-strung race ensued against the night; it would be dark in minutes.

Some places have a sense of mystery, perhaps storied in history, providing a special sensation or experience. Peril Strait was well named – a known torturous water route framed by mantles of western red cedar, Sitka spruce and hemlock, snow tipped on the highest peaks. It was here, legend and reliable talk say, years ago more than a hundred Russian fur traders met their doom from eating poisonous shellfish.

With their names lost to time, it's rumored that whispers from their weathered and cracked bones can still be heard in the channel's nightly fog – a place of huge tidal currents, where boats prefer the safety of a flood or slack tide.

Providence rode with us on the landing. I never got the gist of what Jim said, but with getting down we quit talking to ourselves. We were on the water, unable to taxi with the plane weather-vaning in the wind, floating like a weathercock. Tongues of salty spray were blown onto the windows as we went forward and backward.

We listened to the menacing force of the channel's briny song and managed to work the plane into a leeward cove. We turned the engine off, then exchanged concerned looks and sat and watched, watched with-

out words – words not spoken but on our minds.

Finally, Jim uttered, “Phooey! Leroy, got any matches? I don’t think I have any in the airplane.” Our camping gear wasn’t with us, and no one knew where we were. We both knew what the night was going to be like.

Wet from our legs down and a tad cold, it was dark by the time we stood on the rocky shore. We settled on the bank under an ancient, mossy bole that leaned out toward the sea wanting sunlight. At least the tethered plane floated listlessly in the lee of the estuary. With the big tides we would have to babysit it all night, keeping it off the rocks.

Most of the time I like moody weather – the kind you can see and feel, for colors can easily set your mood. I could feel the cold salt water through my wet pants; the trees shook with the wind and the mist scudded just above the waves.

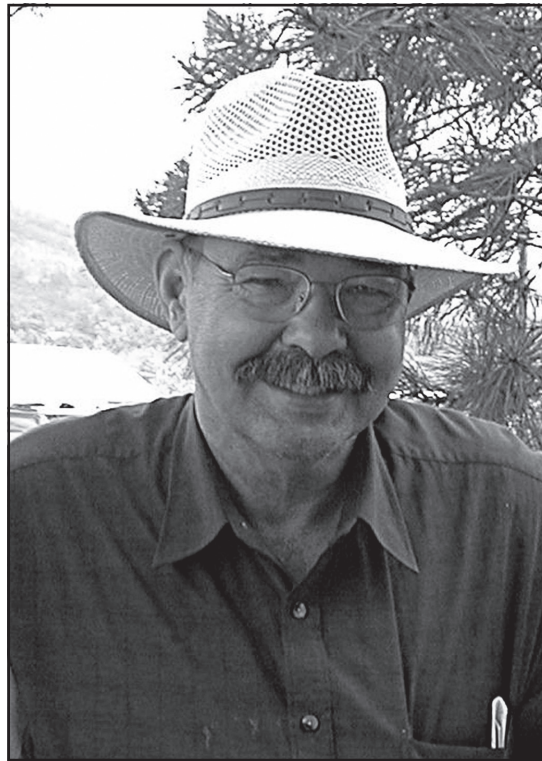
*I’m responsible for this, I thought, but what’s done is done and can’t be undone!* Keeping my mouth shut, I kept thinking *We’ll be all right, but it’s going to be an unpleasant night.*

Time moved slowly, but it did move. It’s always difficult to pass time when you need to do something that circumstances won’t allow. I longed for spiral flames to dispel the night’s gloom. With the wind harping softly in the trees, we sat and listened to the water, taking turns sloggin’ through the shallows to check the aircraft.

This was a place of old fog borne long ago from the mixing of Pacific and polar air – equal parts cold and wet. Each time I waded out to check the plane, warmth hemorrhaged from my legs. With waves bumping against the shore, the plane’s pontoons had to be kept watertight; we weren’t going to walk out!

Of course this wasn’t the first time decisions put me a few steps from calamity; young men often do this, especially if they’re handsome and adventurous. Everyone makes decisions he or she regrets, and no one ever purposely sets out to renew his or her own sense of mortality.

Sometimes we have no choice, for with helping others it takes a lot of patience. We now live in a time where folks have a short, benumbed dislike for having



LeRoy Cook (Courtesy Johnny Kirkley)

to wait for anything, and it seems to be getting worse. In a land congealing under ever-widening slabs of concrete, our impatience can bring on hurried decisions that aren’t thought through.

I’ve come to believe in the “Theory of One.” It only takes one mistake to ruin your day, but it also only takes one more cast to change your luck, only one woman to love, and only one child to change your life. The power of one person and one act of courage.

Each new day may be a blind date, but living a good life does take action. Like fishing, it’s still a game of persistence and chance, a different fish of sorts to catch.

Tides may be the pulse that coastal life lives by, but with today’s speedy, urban life, there

are no tide tables telling us when it’s safe. Life is such a treasure; perhaps our dreams these days are still the same as those past, but on rare occasions, it will be as uninviting as a railroad boxcar on a frigid January dawn.

Like the Pacific mist that time in Peril Strait, today’s fast-changing culture is hard for some of us to cope with. I sometimes feel like I’m living in the eye of a storm. Being patient with others can be very different from just sitting and doing nothing. Love, helping others, and understanding are easily overlooked with today’s new social order.

It would do many good to have all but their most basic needs stripped away – to slow down, put on a flannel shirt, and then go catch the horse that has gotten out of the barn. A little rustic living builds character, helps put things into context, and enables us all to better hear life’s rhythmic ebb and flow.

Yes, morning eventually came to Peril Strait and water drops again fell from the trees; the cold air slowly warmed, but the forest’s mossy giants still held tightly to an eddying fog. Deep in that mountainous bosom, a varied thrush called, its voice oscillating through the “Big Wet” – an eerie call that seemed to accompany the scene of a still-misty morning.

Its voice made me feel better. High tide will come again in the afternoon!

Luke 21:19 – “In your patience possess ye souls.” 🕊

# Son of A Beech

## Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum Update

by Tommy Albert (Cave Junction '64)

**T**he Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was home to seven different types of jump planes during the near four decades of its existence. The Twin Beech was there the longest, from 1954 until 1974. Though it stumbled a few times, overall, it was a steady and reliable workhorse for jump bases throughout the west.

The newly established Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum is fast becoming a popular tourist stop, and the visitors thoroughly enjoy learning about smokejumping and firefighting. The loft, parachutes, jump suits, tools, stories of jumping and firefighting are fine; but how can you tell the full story of smokejumping without an airplane?

**Harold Hartman** (CJ-65) told the museum Board of Directors that we were going to get one. You must

know that our coffers were pretty austere, so we must have looked like deer in the headlights after his announcement. To make a long story short, through his untiring effort and with the invaluable assistance of Jann Taylor, a board member, the museum acquired enough funding to start looking.

Though they aren't on every corner, Twin Beeches are not what one would call scarce, but owners are pretty proud of them. One day in April, **Wes Brown** (CJ-66) was giving tours at the museum and mentioned we were looking for a Twin Beech for static display. One of the tourist said, "We have one in Bandon (Oregon)." Wes passed this on to Harold, who went to Bandon, looked over the airplane and purchased it. Wow, we now owned a Twin Beech. One "minor" problem, Bandon is on the coast of Oregon, just south



*The Twin Beech returns to the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum with the help of the crew. L-R: Wes Brown, Gary Buck, Linda Hartman, Harold Hartman, Ken Swift and Tommy Albert. The 70-year-old-aircraft will be restored this summer. (Courtesy Roger Brandt)*

of Coos Bay, and the airplane is not airworthy and can't be flown.

If you have ever traveled to the coast of Oregon over the coastal range, you know that the highways are narrow, curvy, mostly two-lane roads with numerous narrow bridges. Even with the outboard wings off, the width of the Twin Beech is 17 feet. A "super" wide load is considered to be 14 feet. Did this make Harold nervous? Not on your life. Did it make the rest of us anxious? You bet your life!

Harold began to research routes to get the plane to CJ. He investigated using a route that took us through northern California. Well, have you ever dealt with the California permit system? If so, you'd know you would have had to put your wife and her Mother up for collateral. Harold is a political type and must have pulled some strings but obtained an Oregon DOT permit to move the 17-foot-wide load over Highways 101, 42, and 199, including a 64-mile stretch of I-5 from just south of Roseburg to Grants Pass.

The permit required us to have two lead pilot cars, a trail pilot car, and flagmen at certain points along the route as we had to close the highway to traffic at one major bridge crossing and for a seven mile stretch when going over the coastal range pass. Our rag-tag crew consisted of myself, **Gary Buck** (CJ-66), **Wes Brown**, **Ken Swift** (**Mick Swift's**/CJ-56 son), and of course **Harold Hartman** and his wife, **Linda**. Having been a lead plane pilot, I insisted on being the lead pilot car.

We gathered in Bandon the day before our one-day travel permit. Harold and Ken had already loaded the Beech on to the 24-foot trailer. One look and I said, "Yep, this is a jumper operation." I swear I saw **Murphy** sitting on the wing. How we jumpers got away with some of the outrageous "engineering" we came up with just to get the job done is beyond me. There must be a jumper angel out there somewhere. We reinforced the rigging with whatever materials we could

find laying around and loaded the elevator, vertical stabilizers, rudders, etc. into a separate trailer, then headed back to the motel. The weather that weekend was ideal, no rain, no wind, and no fog. I must commend the **Bandon Aero Club**. They were very helpful, a great bunch.

That night we picked up gourmet breakfast-for-champions, you know, the microwaveable kind, so that we could leave at first light. We briefed the trip and turned in for a restless sleep. All were up before first light and gathered at the airport with our little convoy. We tested the blinking wide load lights, inserted the flags, performed radio checks, and as soon as we could see, headed out (0535 PST).

Other than a flat tire on the trailer, the trip was really uneventful. You would have thought we knew what we were doing. We had to be a curious sight from the reactions of passersby and bystanders, but all went well. The **Illinois Valley Airport** sign was a wonderful sight. We pulled through the gate at 1220. Oh yes, what a relief it was.

The **Twin Beech** was off-loaded onto the ramp where one stood for 20 years. She sure looked at home. The **Twin Beech** makes the **Gobi** look whole.

We still have plenty of work to do and need to find some additional funds to complete the project. The plane has to be reassembled, painted and modified to include some of the smokejumping modifications. You are invited to participate. Harold formed the "**SSB Twin Beecher Club**" which helped get the project off the ground. A donation gets you a membership, a club hat, certificate, name engraved on the plaque that will be set near the **Twin Beech**, and the satisfaction that you are a part of preserving the unique history of Smokejumping. 🌲

*Donations toward the restoration of the Twin Beech should be made out to: SSB Museum Fund, PO Box 2223, Cave Junction, OR 97523.*

## Award Winners Selected for 2013 NSA Scholarships

The National Smokejumpers Association has selected three individuals for scholarships of \$2,000 each to help further their education. There were nine applicants and the three selections are:

**Chris Wennogle** (FBX-07), a six-year jumper enrolled in graduate studies at Colorado State University.

**Ian Dooley** (FBX-08), a five-year jumper and second-year law student at Brooklyn Law School.

**Melissa Tenneson**, daughter of 27-year Fairbanks jumper **Mel Tenneson** (FBX-86). Melissa is a Brigham Young University graduate enrolled in the University of Utah accelerated nursing program.

We will have more information and photos in the January issue.



## Twin Beech Moved To Gobi Museum

*Photos Courtesy: Tommy Albert (CJ-64)*



*L-R: Wes Brown (CJ-66), Gary Buck (CJ-66), Linda Hartman, Harold Hartman (CJ-65), Ken Swift & Tommy Albert (CJ-64)*



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



# BLAST FROM THE PAST



## Missoula Jumpers Led Specialty Unit For Search, Rescue

by Jack Demmons  
(Missoula '50)

THE *DAILY MISSOULIAN* paper of Wednesday, Jan. 19, 1944, had an article with the title "Experiences of parachute jumpers during trials are interesting."

Parachute jumpers of the Forest Service were dropped into the Lolo Creek woods last week to find out what happens in such a winter experience in the backwoods, part of the search and rescue work with which this outfit is associated in cooperation with the Second Air Service Command.

Everything happened.

First, both jumpers, **Wagner Dodge** (MSO-41) and **Bill Wood** (MSO-43), were hung up in trees by their parachutes, and so was their outfit chute, heavily loaded.

The parachuters quickly extricated themselves and made radio contact with the plane from which they had dropped, asking for an ax.

The hand ax which they carried was with the equipment pack in a high tree. So an ax was dropped from the plane and quickly located, and the ship sailed away. But the first blow they struck with the ax revealed a flaw; the blade had crystallized and broke. That left them where they were before.

They crawled up the tree in which their outfit parachute was hung and worked it down to a height of 15 feet from the



ground, then dropped it free. And what was the only thing that broke in the fall? The hand ax, of course. There they were without an ax.

But, being woodsmen, they managed to get along until the next day when the plane came back, to drop another ax.

They had a small tent and gasoline stove, but both proved to be unessential luxuries for that particular trip. They slept in the tent the first night and all but froze to death. The second and third nights they left the tent in the pack and made a bed of fir boughs and slept in their Army Arctic sleeping bags, which proved to be entirely adequate. For a region where fuel abounds they had no need of the gas stove or its accompanying tin of gasoline. Plenty of wood to build a quick fire.

After three days of tugging up and down, over hills and ridges, with their toboggan load, they emerged, with the knowledge that it's best for a man to keep in constant hardy physical condition, if he desires to be at his best for such experiments. Others of the parachute squad will be

dropped during coming weeks as the tests continue.

The following day, Jan. 20, the Missoula paper had an article with the title "Winter jumps made by parachuters."

Parachuters dropping in the Lolo Creek country Wednesday were not hostiles, being members of a Forest Service unit in training as an auxiliary to the Second Air Service Command search and rescue units. And the parachutes that followed the men carried toboggans, stoves, and other winter equipment ...

The Forest Service has two units ready for any call by the Second Air Command for search and rescue work, men of skill in the open spaces, who will be valuable accessories to the medical corps squadrons of the Air Service in connection with such projects. They are ready to go anywhere, mountains or plains, through deep snows, and they will continue in training through the winter months for that purpose. 🌲

## North Cascades Smokejumper Reunion

Mark your calendars now as NCSB is planning a reunion to celebrate 75 years of smokejumping. The dates are:

**September 12-13-14, 2014.** More details to follow in future issues.

# How Windy Was It?

by Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74)

Once upon a time, back in the previous century, a group of smokejumpers on round parachutes made a very windy fire jump. It would probably be best for all concerned that I leave out the spotter's name, jump base and exact location. My intent is not to point fingers but simply describe an extreme situation ten smokejumpers faced that day.

I used Teraserver and Google Earth to estimate distances used in this story and attached a Teraserver air-photo image you can refer to as you read on.

Our selected landing spot was the intersection of two dirt roads in the middle of a sagebrush flat. The streamers showed around 800 yards of drift, meaning winds were around ten mph. With no ground hazards such as rocks or trees, pushing the upper limits of round jumping was not a deal breaker. Being the first two out the door, my partner, **Eric Berg** (RAC-88), and I told the spotter we would give it a try and radio back how it went. So what if a few of us were to land down wind of the arbitrary intersection out there in the sagebrush. We all wanted a fire jump!

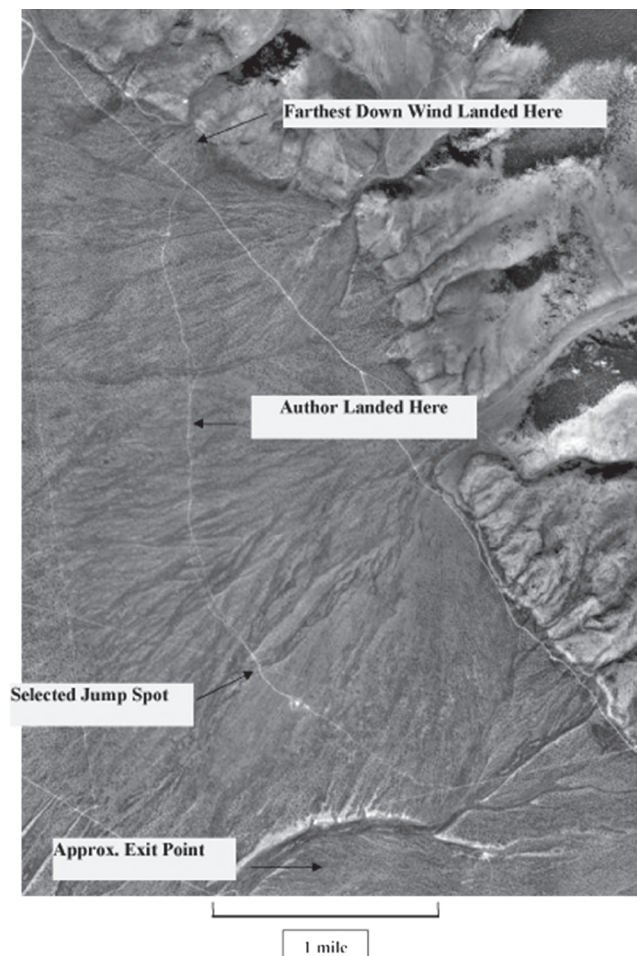
As soon as my chute opened, I checked it for problems then turned into the wind to check my speed across the ground. At first I assumed the spotter must not have carried us far enough upwind I had expected to be carried at least 800 yards upwind of the landing spot, but only a few seconds into the ride I was no more than 100 yards upwind of the intersection and backing up at a fairly fast rate. I held my chute into the wind all the way to the ground, making a brisk, dust-enshrouded, backwards roll as I landed. Eric was so far downwind he could not hear me when I yelled to check on him. We signaled to each other that we were OK. Since the landing was backwards but not really hazardous, I radioed the spotter to drop the remaining eight, but be sure to tell them to face directly into the wind when landing. Each additional set of two jumpers, **Eric Gaylord** (RAC-88) and **Dave Custer** (MSO-70), **Miguel Gomez** (MSO-80) and **Tim Lynch** (RAC-76), landed further and further downwind of us. Not just yards or hundreds of yards down wind but way downwind.

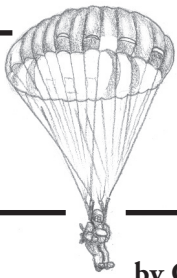
After the second set of two landed far downwind of my location, I attempted to contact the plane and stop the rest, **Jere Seguin** (CAN-76), **Ron Rucker** (RAC-76), **Chad Pilgeram** (MSO-87) and **Bruce Kinney** (MSO-68) from jumping. I could not get through to the plane.

One of the last two jumpers was so far downwind that it looked like he might land in some large boulders near

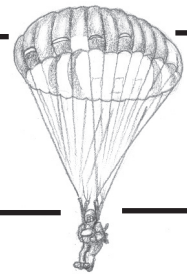
the base of the hill, but he held into the wind just enough to land on the very edge of the sage flat. As we grouped up for cargo, everyone was talking a mile a minute about their backwards landings. Several did make some impressive dust clouds as they landed, but no one was injured.

How windy was it? The air photo puts my landing 1.3 miles downwind of the road intersection we intended to land at. The furthest down wind jumper near the boulders landed 2.1 miles downwind of the intersection. My guess is he made a turn or two before realizing what was happening. If we were carried upwind 800 yards it means from exit, I drifted 1.8 miles backwards while facing into the wind and that last jumper drifted 2.6 miles. One of you math wizards out there can probably tell us what the wind speed must have been over the approximately 60 seconds each of us was in the air. These distances were verified the day we left the fire as we drove the road, from the edge of the hills, south to the jump spot intersection to gather the remains of our cargo. 🌲





# ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to **Watson Bradley** (MSO-74), **Dave Atwood** (RDD-67), **Bob McKean** (MSO-67), **Mark Brondum** (MYC-81), **Bernie Weisgerber** (RDD-60) and **Morgan Whipple** (MSO-89) who just became our latest **Life Member(s)**.

Long-time jumper **Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92) has gone full circle and is now flying jumpers out of Missoula. "Slez" has spent the past few years getting his training and certifications. He was aided along the way by the NSA Scholarship Fund. This is a great example of the NSA helping current jumpers.

**Jack Helle** (MYC-54) recently received the William E. Ricker Resource Conservation Award from the American Fisheries Society. Jack was honored for his lifetime contributions as a leader in aquatic resource conservation and ecosystem management at the international level. His participation in treaty collaborations as a scientist provided insight for international cooperation among U.S., Canadian, Japanese, Russian and Korean scientists.

**Scott "Mouse" Warner** (RDD-69), concerning the death of Redding Smokejumper **Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09): "**Gordon Brazzi** (RDD-66) called with the news about 30 minutes ago. I was coming through Alturas yesterday on the way back from the McCall Reunion at about 1445 with T-heads all around and hot down-strikes to the south and mentioning to my dad that the jumpers would sure be busy. Ironical indeed.

"I actually came to know Luke quite well over the last 3-4 years from the last night at the Redding Rookie Camp, Rookie Parties, T-Parties, going by the Redding Smokejumper Base, and him helping outfit our NSA California Trails Projects.

"Just a few weeks back at 2013 Rookie Camp, Luke came up the rock-filled road to pick up **Murry** (Taylor-RDD-65), **Ralph Ryan** (RDD-77) and me. A bit later, I eagerly went with him to watch the ten rookies saw down a fresh snag about 38-40 inches on the stump with trainer **Gerry Spence** (RDD-94). On the way up the hill, I told Luke that the story would be that I am the Chief Forester who likes to come out unannounced. Gerry Spence went along with it and introduced me to the rookies. Some of the "Rooks"



probably still believe it.

"We three gleefully supervised the rookies, counseling that the undercut should have been deeper and coaching them to keep the handles from drooping: 'Let the saw sing and your balls swing,' and so on. Luke videoed the tree coming down with his phone.

"He and I spoke often during the last few years about the USFS Falling Certification for NSA Trail volunteers and smokejumpers alike. Although Luke worked previously for his uncle's logging company out of Chester, he was just classified as a 'B' Faller. We laughed a lot about that, with the funding to send Luke to the certification finally being recently lined up.

"Luke was a cooperative and very practical, archetypical smokejumper, junior-overhead type, who was good with training and mentoring rookies and more junior jumpers, fitting in just right with his peers and overhead, could hold his liquor, not too loud, and sure as hell knew the odds of being a logger and jumper, and keenly aware about working safely yet efficiently - not safety by rote and guidebooks.

"We happened to have talked about it a lot from a forestry, logging, smokejumping, and firefighting perspective. Luke would be the very first to acknowledge that it could happen to anybody, which includes all of us. We laughed more than once with my sardonic observation that the only way out was 'to be a lop, doing nothing.'

"Yet Luke, more than any others, gave me the feeling by word and deed that his generation of smokejumpers have accepted the USFS of today for what it has become, more than we older types have, yet are committed to maintaining high standards as a way forward to improvement and, after all, there is a job to do.

"Luke was single, in his late 20s, had a place and some acreage near Anderson. He was respected and liked by all - now forever in his prime and 'doing the best job in the world,' which he told me last summer when we were organizing the NSA gear during a fire bust.

"Jumpers Away, Luke On your last jump. See you at the 'Last jump site' for all of us, in due course."

**Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62): "Ten former smokejumpers

and four of their family members honored the thirteen smokejumpers who lost their lives on August 5, 1949, by hiking into Mann Gulch on Memorial Day weekend and placing flowers at each of the monuments. The ten smokejumpers were **Jerry Howe** (CJ-65), **Ted Putnam** (MSO-66), **John Manley** (CJ-62), **John Kirkley** (CJ-64), **Charley Moseley** (CJ-62), **Jim Phillips** (MSO-67), **Charlie Palmer** (MSO-95), **Paige Taylor-Houston** (FBK-95), **Doug Houston** (RAC-73) and **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62). Accompanying the smokejumpers were John Moseley, son of Charley Moseley; Chris Palmer, wife of Charlie Palmer; and Charlie and Chris' children, Skylar and Summer."

**Ozzie Bender** (MSO-47) got a good mention in the *Tacoma News Tribune* (June 9<sup>th</sup>) recently. The article featured news about the 41<sup>st</sup> "Sound to Narrows" running event.

"This year's oldest runner was Ozzie Bender, 86, a remarkably fit-looking Tacoma man who ran the 5K surrounded by his daughters and grandchildren. Bender looked slightly worse for the wear at the finish line, but within minutes, he was chatting and all smiles. Why did he do it?

"To prove that I'm in shape," Bender said. "I'm an old smokejumper and we always stay in shape."

"Bender said he trains daily usually starting at 5 a.m."

**Dayton Grover** (MSO-55): "Thanks for another quality magazine. **Jess Nelson's** (MSO-55) article was good.

**Bob Hewitt** (MSO-56), **Don Morrissey** (MSO-55) and I jumped three small fires above Lake Chelan and could not find them. Don, who hurt his ankle, was helicoptered out. Bob and I began to hike out and found what had been a small fire, but it was not burning. The next morning we got separated on the hike out. Several hours later, I met Bob coming from the other direction. We were picked up by a floatplane.

"On another fire just above Moose Creek, **Don Morton** (MSO-58) and I could not find the fire. We walked up to the lookout and found out that we were dropped on the wrong ridge. Down we went and found the snag barely burning 90 feet up. I hate to admit it but we left it unattended and hiked out to Moose Creek. The fire must have burned itself out.

"I still have contact with **Larry Kofford** (MSO-63), **Major Boddicker** (MSO-63), **Don Morrissey** and **Pete Hoirup** (MSO-55)."

**Tony Sleznick** (RDD-92), smokejumper turned smoke-jumper pilot:

"Well, I hit the ground running up here in MSO. Since last Sunday I have flown four practice jump missions to become mission qualified in the Sherpa, and have been staffing the platform since then. Still patiently awaiting my first fire mission, then some beers will be raised! However, a watched siren never sounds. I have a new airplane, a desk cubicle, a phone and computer. They even still let me do PT. How lucky am I?" 🦋

# Greenbrier's Bill Furman: Smokejumper, Entrepreneur, Movie Producer

by Andy Giegerich

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Greenbrier CEO **Bill Furman** (NCSB-62) blasted the Oregon business climate during an April interview in which he said Gunderson – the company's railcar manufacturing arm – would slash more than 200 jobs.

Here are a few things you may or may not have known about Greenbrier, Gunderson and Furman's film production career.

- Furman earned a master's of economics from Washington State University. He describes himself as a "transportation economist."
- Along with working for FMC Corp., he was a smokejumper for the U.S. Forest Service.

- He went to work for FMC at the age of 23. He eventually started the company's sales finance division in the early 1970s.
- Furman and Alan James started the partnership that eventually led to the Greenbrier Cos. Inc. family of businesses in Furman's Lake Oswego basement in 1973.
- Each initially invested \$5,000. James-Furman & Co. first remarketed rail freight cars and commercial jet aircraft for major financial institutions.
- The company bought Greenbrier Leasing Corp. from Commercial Metals in 1981. The then-five-

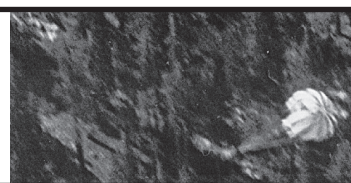
employee company oversaw 169 special-purpose freight railcars that shipped rubber for the Good-year Tire and Rubber Co.

- Gunderson was founded in 1919 and had been acquired by FMC Corp. in the 1960s. "We're stewards of a legacy," Furman said.
- In 1985, Greenbrier and its former general manager Bruce Ward purchased what is now Gunderson from FMC. Ward remains a Greenbrier director. The company restored the name Gunderson to its Portland waterfront entity that makes railroad cars and, since 1994, barges.

- Before James passed away, he and Furman produced movies, including "Without Evidence," about the death of Oregon corrections chief Michael Francke. The movie starred a young Angelina Jolie. The duo also made "The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom," an HBO project that starred Holly Hunter and Beau Bridges.
- Furman described himself during a Portland Business Journal interview as a social liberal and fiscal conservative. He's not registered to vote, but said if he were, he'd likely lean Democratic. 🇺🇸



## THE JUMP LIST



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

### **Richard Grandalski (Redding '64)**

**Now living in:** Bonney Lake, Wash.

**Jumped:** RDD 64, 69-73

**Since jumping:** Looking back, I'll have to say that my experiences in high school were nothing to write home about! I was working evenings and weekends and was not very good at academics but did okay in metal and wood shop. Tried football and wrestling but only achieved second string, mainly sitting on the sidelines except for a few kickoffs and a play or two as defensive cornerback. After graduation, went to work full time at a department store called Unimart (had to be a precursor to Walmart). It didn't take long before I started to get restless but knowing college, even community college, was not in the picture, I began to look for other opportunities. By chance I heard that the U.S. Forest Service was hiring seasonal fire fighters. Applied and to my surprise was hired, which launched me into an unbelievable career.

After a couple of seasons as a fire fighter on engine crews on the Cleveland National Forest, I applied for and was selected to be part of a specialized airborne fire fighting unit called smokejumpers. My rookie year was in 1964 jumping out of Redding. After my rookie year I returned to the Cleveland National Forest and for the next seven years worked in a variety of fire positions along with returning to Redding every spring to qualify as a smokejumper, or as we called it, "retreads." During the summer when additional jumpers were

needed "retreads" were dispatched from their home forest to return to Redding to jump on fires. In addition to working on engine crews and smokejumper, I spent a number of years bouncing around five national forests in central and Southern California working as a fire prevention technician, superintendent of the Los Prietos Hotshots, assistant district fire management officer and district fire management officer. During this time I ventured back into academics and attempted community college. After seven years working full time and taking evening classes, I achieved my goal of obtaining an associate of science degree in Fire Science.

There is an interesting experience that many Chula Vista High School Alumni may find interesting. While I was working as the Mt. Laguna fire prevention technician, I was performing inspections of cabins for fire hazard clearance. I introduced myself to a woman who answered the door at one of the cabins, and when I commented that I had a high school teacher by the same last name, she said her husband had been a teacher at Chula Vista High School. She then asked me if I would like to meet with him. She took me into the living room and resting on the couch was Mr. Harlan, my homeroom teacher. His great smile was unmistakable as it was every morning during our class. He recognized me and we visited for a few minutes. As I was walking to the door to leave his wife spoke to me in a low voice saying her husband was not doing well, fighting cancer. It was a sad moment but it was certainly fate that allowed for a few minutes of happiness between a former teacher and student.

Then some interesting events unfolded that launched me into a whole new career path in forest

law enforcement. The need for specialized training and issues regarding employee safety prompted the Forest Service to make improvements to the law enforcement program. I liked challenges and decided to pursue a career in forest law enforcement. After successful completion of basic police academy training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Georgia, I was certified to work as an armed patrol officer eventually advancing to special agent, criminal investigator. This required a couple more tours at FLETC completing criminal investigation and advanced investigation academy training.

As a special agent I worked as a case agent and supervisory special agent on a variety of criminal and civil investigations, which included timber theft, wildland fire and arson, theft and destruction of government property, illegal drugs, fraud, embezzlement, etc. My work in law enforcement also involved international assignments traveling to Brazil and Greece providing training in wildland fire and arson investigations. After retirement I returned to Greece for five months assisting their government investigate wildland fires.

I also spent some time as the special agent in charge, Angeles National Forest. The forest is a complex and unique forest with many challenges for law enforcement. Violent crimes were common but emphasis continued to ensure forest users, employees and resources were protected. The Angeles N.F. was the first forest in the nation to have K-9 law enforcement officers. I was then promoted to assistant regional special agent, regional office, Portland, Ore., in charge of major case investigations. This encompassed 18 national forests in Oregon and Washington. Following this was a short assignment as the branch chief for a Timber Theft Task Force then I was promoted to assistant director for Law Enforcement and Investigations, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C. I retired from the Forest Service in 1995 after 33 years of service.

Since 1995 I have been working as a short-term consultant, forest law enforcement expert/advisor, for the World Bank with a number of missions to Cambodia as well as missions to Albania, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Armenia. I have also worked as a chief technical advisor for United Nations Development Program, Food and Agriculture Organization, implementing a forest crime monitoring and tracking system in Cambodia along with contracts with the government of Armenia to implement a forest violation and tracking monitoring system. I am a co-author of a World Bank Discussion Paper, "Forest Law Enforcement; Policies, Strategies, Technologies", and a World Bank publication, "Timber Theft Prevention – Introduction to Security for Forest Managers."

As I reflect back on my international work it is with a certain amount of amazement thinking about a kid who barely made it through high school ending up traveling to a number of countries around the world; co-authoring World Bank publications, being in remote jungle areas still riddled with mines from the Vietnam and Pol Pot conflicts, occupied by renegade factions, bandits and illegal loggers all armed, and being in places few Americans or tourist have seen. This has provided a unique experience in learning a lot about the real culture of these countries along with the opportunity to meet and have numerous discussions with ministers, the secretary of state for council of ministers, a deputy prime minister, director generals, military generals, and ambassadors. Many friendships have fostered along this journey as well.

**Richard says:** "I married a wonderful woman going on 16 years ago with two fantastic step daughters and two grandsons. I also have three magnificent children from my first marriage and four grandchildren. My wife and I are living in Bonney Lake, Wash., not far from Mt. Rainer. After 48 years of working my wife has convinced me that it is time to relax and enjoy retirement. In addition to our travels together, she has supported my dreams to "ride hard, live free" so I have ventured into that dream riding my Harley-Davidson Road King. 🍷

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## Get Smokejumper A Month Earlier

**N**SA members are signing up for the electronic version of *Smokejumper* that is delivered via email. It is sent in a PDF file that contains everything that is in the hardcopy issue.

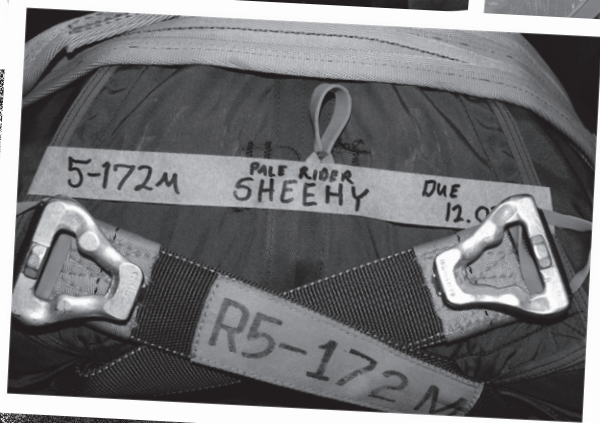
The advantages are: early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings. If you like the hardcopy, you can download and print it at home.

NSA Director **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) says: "I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct \$ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing. I think I mentioned in an earlier message that I'm having other magazines/newsletters delivered electronically. It takes less space to store them electronically and if I do want a hard copy, it is easy to print using the *Fast Draft printer option* which allows printing 48 pages in less than two minutes on my printer and uses a lot less ink."

If you want to be added to the electronic mailing, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59): [cnkgsheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkgsheley@earthlink.net). 🍷



Luke Sheehy  
(May 2, 1985 - June 10, 2013)



*Photos Courtesy: Brett Newell (RDD-12), Nate Focht (RDD-09) & USFS*