



THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2020

SMOKEJUMPER

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|--|----|
| My Interagency Working | 11 |
| Margarita Phillips Memorial Project..... | 29 |
| The First Time I Met Walt Smith | 40 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Message from the President..... | 2 |
| Part II: Canopies Over the Kandik..... | 4 |
| Happy 50th, Earth Day!..... | 6 |
| Sounding Off from the Editor..... | 8 |
| Letters to the Editor..... | 9 |
| How I Value My Interagency Working Opportunities with Federal Agencies..... | 11 |
| On the Road to a National Wildfire Agency: Part III..... | 15 |
| What Happened?..... | 18 |
| Then and Now..... | 20 |
| The Jump List, Men of the '40s..... | 21 |
| Smokejumper Keep the Flame Legacy Jump List .. | 22 |
| Recording Smokejumper History..... | 24 |
| Paradise with a Wind Chill—Part II..... | 27 |
| A UFO Story..... | 28 |
| Margarita Phillips Memorial Project by the TRAMPS..... | 29 |
| A Day in the Lake..... | 31 |
| Snapshots from the Past..... | 33 |
| Red Shirt—Green Shirt Patrols..... | 34 |
| Off the List..... | 36 |
| The First Time I Met Walt Smith..... | 40 |
| Odds and Ends..... | 45 |
| Having Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important..... | 45 |
| Notes from the Ranks..... | 46 |
| Book Review..... | 48 |



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Message from the President



by **Bob McKean**
(Missoula '67)

BY NATURE AND training, smokejumpers are highly independent, self-reliant individuals. We think for ourselves! Ask ten smokejumpers the same question, and you are likely to get ten different opinions, some with expletives added for emphasis!

But, put a team of smokejumpers on the fireline and they become a well-oiled machine. The bump up method is a crystal clear example. I remember it as allowing us to punch in more line with speed than other crews. "Smokejumper line" may have been "ratty," but it was effective.

Through our individual and collective experience, we also form strong bonds of friendship, many lasting a lifetime. This, too, is central to smokejumper culture!

The NSA carries on the proud smokejumper tradition and culture—individualism, teamwork, and strong bonds of friendship—through its vari-

ous activities including history preservation, reunions, Good Samaritan Fund, Scholarship Program, Trails and Maintenance Project Specialists program (TRAMPS), Website, and *Smokejumper*, our quarterly magazine.

Smokejumper is a valuable asset to the NSA. It provides a connection to and among you, our members, that is incredibly valuable and that we would not otherwise possess. Chuck Sheley deserves credit for his tireless work on *Smokejumper* and its evolution from a small newsletter, ***Static Line***, to the quarterly magazine it has become. Over time, in addition to sharing various memories about people and events ("silk stories"), it began to include more historical pieces so that elements of our history would be preserved.

Smokejumper has more recently included articles about today's mega-fires as they have posed ever greater danger to people, property, and resources. The hope is that along with articles about people and historical events, *Smokejumper* may provide a forum where issues that concern today's firefighters, and really all of us and our children, may be discussed. Because *Smokejumper* is by and for smokejumpers, articles, columns, and letters to the editor naturally reflect the kind of independence of thought and diversity of opin-

ion one might find when smokejumpers gather and discuss any topic.

To be clear, the NSA has taken no formal position on issues associated with today's fires, how and when to fight them, forest management, et al. Opinions expressed in articles, columns, and, obviously, letters to the editor appearing in *Smokejumper* belong only to those who wrote them.

You can assist in making *Smokejumper* even better and more representative than it is. We are particularly interested in those of you who have expertise. If you have unique knowledge about a topic that has not been adequately addressed, consider writing an article yourself. If you know of someone with that expertise encourage them to write one or simply inform us, and we will ask them. If you appreciate or take exception to something in *Smokejumper*, consider writing a letter to the editor. An email will do the trick.

The last issue of *Smokejumper* included a piece entitled "Can We Ever Stop Making Up

for Past Wrongs?" that deserves comment. Native Americans have suffered more than almost any other people over the last 500 years. They are still underserved and impoverished. Native Americans have a long and rich history managing wildfire and use of prescribed burning. Native American crews, and at least six Hotshot Crews, are a significant part of the wildfire workforce with distinguished accomplishments. Smokejumpers include Native Americans. Smokejumping has made strides to be a more diverse workforce for women and people of color over the last 40 years. *Smokejumper* has documented and highlighted the achievements and role of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion (Triple Nickles) and women, over time. However, we can never be comfortable with the status quo until everyone enjoys the same privileges of employment and advancement.

Odds and Ends

There is an incredible amount of information to be found on the NSA website. If you have not visited in a while, consider doing so. For example, the news and events section includes recent articles about fire and smokejumpers that are very interesting.

I like to review the obituary section and read about the amazing lives led by our fellow smokejumpers; I also like to read it to make sure my name doesn't yet appear there. Chuck Sheley and Fred Cooper deserve credit for engaging in the research to uncover the names of numerous jumpers who passed without previous acknowledgment in *Smokejumper* and providing that acknowledgment. It is an ongoing project.

You can peruse the "Jump List" using filters to find friends or your jump class. Check out the "Outreach" section to see programs that touch the lives of our smokejumper family. The Smokejumping section includes a plethora of information. I have read with reverence the stories about smokejumpers killed in the line of duty.

And, of course, there is much more on the website. <https://smokejumpers.com/index.php>

Finally, I wish you all good health, good assignments and opportunities, and a safe summer. Hopefully, by the time you read this medical science will have revealed a few more answers to addressing COVID-19! 🧑

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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 |

Part II: Canopies Over The Kandik

by Robert C. Betts (Redding '64)

*Author's note: This is the second part of an article re-published in tribute to **David R. Pierce** (RAC-65) 43 years after it originally appeared in "Alaska" magazine. It was largely due to Dave that the Kandik River jump happened. Dave passed away June 1, 2019, at age 75.*

Once we had the kayaks assembled, we broke camp and piled everything beside the boats. It was a lot of stuff to pack into three kayaks. In addition to our camping gear and food, we had three main parachutes and harnesses, three reserve parachutes, six cargo chutes with assorted cargo straps, and three helmets.

After trying a number of different combinations, we finally took the cargo chutes out of their canvas containers and used a paddle to stuff the canopies into the bow and stern of each boat. By packing in the rest of the gear with great care, we just barely got everything in the boats. Jon took some gear from both Dave and me, but still I was wedged in so tightly, I could barely move.

We took the loaded kayaks out for a trial paddle before actually starting downriver. To my surprise, my single kayak with its two flotation tubes rode higher in the water than I expected. The Klepper was a bit sluggish to turn, but the weight gave it a great deal of stability.

After the test we pushed off downriver. Our starting point was 45 miles upstream from the mouth of the Kandik River and five miles upstream from Johnson Gorge. We wouldn't have much time to get used to the river before we entered the gorge. We had

gotten a look at the canyon from the jump ship and hadn't seen any bad rocks, but you can miss a lot from 1,000 feet.

Jon had the most experience in fast water, so Dave and I hung back and let him lead.

We glided along easily. The afternoon air was warm, and the fall colors blended into a stream of red and yellow as we drifted by. Soon, however, the mountains closed in and the tranquility of the quiet water gave way to the sound of white water ahead.

I checked my spray cover and life jacket. Ahead of us I saw Jon start into the rapids. I watched him completely disappear in the turbulent water, then suddenly pop up again. I was beginning to think we had made a mistake by not jumping below the gorge, but I didn't have long



Dave Pierce and Jon Klingel over the Kandik looking for a jump spot. (Courtesy of Jon Klingel)

to think about it.

The high cliffs of Johnson Gorge rose above me on both sides, their afternoon shadows blocking out the sun as I went into the white water. It was fast but only occasional rocks broke the surface, and even with an overloaded kayak, I was able to stay clear of them.

Several times waves rolled completely over the kayak. The canyon was about three miles long, and the still water at the end was a welcome sight. I joined Jon in a back eddy, and we watched Dave shoot through the final set of rapids. Our spray covers

had kept most of the water out, and our food and clothing were well-protected in plastic bags.

The next few miles below the canyon presented only short stretches of white water. We had covered only about 10 miles from the jump spot but decided to camp early.

By the time Jon and I had camp set up, Dave was back with a string of grayling for dinner. With the three blue kayaks sitting in still water, framed by the reflection of the fall colors, I sat back and sipped a hot buttered rum and watched grayling sizzling over the fire. Meanwhile, Dave – who Jon and I suddenly realized had never been in a kayak before – concentrated on reading a paperback titled *How to Kayak*.

We awoke to another clear day and were on the river early. Jon usually led through the fast water, while Dave and I held back to watch how he set up to enter the rapids. Occasionally, Dave or I would get out of the channel and grind to a stop in the shallow water that usually preceded a set of rapids.

The kayaks were so heavily loaded that I was afraid one of us would rip the rubberized bottom, but the Kleppers were tough and held up well. More of a problem than the shallow water were the cut banks. As the river eroded soil along the bank, trees – known as sweepers – would angle



Dave Pierce at the Kandik River jump spot. (Courtesy of Jon Klingel)

low out over the water, often dipping into the current.

At one of these cut banks overhung by sweepers, Dave got into trouble. I watched him being swept by the current into a tangle of trees and brush, then come bursting out a few seconds later scattering leaves and twigs. Dave was more amazed than I that he was still afloat and right-side-up.

The stretches of calm water were a peaceful contrast to the excitement of the fast water. We quietly drifted along – sometimes together, and other times a quarter of a mile or more apart. We floated all day, stopping occasionally to check the grayling fishing and once to look at a collapsed trapper's cabin, the only sign of man we had encountered since our jump.

By the end of the second day we reached the point where travel by riverboat was becoming possible, and it was only a matter of a couple of miles before we would begin to encounter occupied cabins. We knew the personality of the Kandik would change when that happened, so we stopped early to spend the night on a river that was still exclusively ours.

After a leisurely breakfast the next day, we were on the river again. The Kandik was becoming wider with fewer stretches of fast water. In places

the river undercut high banks of dark permafrost laced with clear ice lenses, which hung out over the water with their mantle of moss and lichen.

The land became flatter; the high mountains of the upper Kandik receded and were replaced by rolling hills of black spruce and birch. At the mouth of Threemile Creek, we came upon the first occupied cabin.

The last two miles of the Kandik proved to be more hazardous than anything we had yet encountered. Earlier, high water had deposited tree trunks and stumps at every turn of the river.

I was leading with Jon and Dave about 100 yards behind me. Floating backward, I had been taking pictures of the other two kayaks when I realized I was coming to a sharp turn in the river. I hastily put my Nikon on my lap and closed the spray cover while maneuvering into what appeared to be the best position to avoid the main current, which swept in against the cut bank and through a maze of logs and brush. As I came around the bend, I was suddenly confronted with a second pileup of logs in the middle of the river.

I tried to keep away from the logjam but the current swept me against a tree trunk lying at right angles to the current, and I hit it sideways. The rushing water caught the edge of the kayak and before I knew it, I was under water with the kayak held upside down against the log by the current.

I broke free of the spray cover and kicked out

of the kayak. My only thought was to get away from the logjam before the current pinned me under it.

I surfaced about 10 feet downstream in chest-deep water. I managed to grab the line from the bow of the kayak and pull it to a gravel bar.

Dave and Jon had seen me go over and had beached their kayaks upstream. I was standing on the bar, dazed, chilled, and watching my paddle drift downstream when they came running up. My Nikon camera was sitting in five feet of water under the logjam, but everything else had stayed in the kayak.

Other than the camera, the only loss was my paddle, and Jon had brought an extra one. Dave immediately started a fire to warm me up, and then he and Jon lined their kayaks past the logjam. After I had dried out, we started down the river again, somewhat more cautiously.

At the mouth of the Kandik, the clear water ended abruptly as we entered the cream-colored Yukon River and floated past towering Biederman Bluff to the north. After a dozen miles on the Yukon, we camped a short distance past the Charley River drainage.

Then the next day, we covered the remaining 60 miles to Circle City with only a brief stop at the site of the abandoned Woodchopper Roadhouse. The weather turned windy and cold, and Circle City, with Jon's pickup parked by the riverbank, was a welcome sight. 🔦

Happy 50th, Earth Day!

by Bill Conrod

The following was sent to me by George Harpole (MSO-49), retired USFS and NSA Life Member. (Ed.)

The 50th anniversary of Earth Day was celebrated Wednesday, April 22. I remember attending the first Earth Day celebration at the University of Utah, a mere 50 years ago.

Earth Day was the brainchild of Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin to bring environmental-

ism into the mainstream and beyond the realm of a few hikers and birdwatchers. Nelson's co-chair was Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey. Wire service news estimated nearly 10 percent of the U.S. population participated in the first Earth Day.

Things sure were different then. The Vietnam War raged on, but in 1969 we planted the U.S. flag on the moon. The year before, an astronaut made the famous photo, "Earthrise," showing

the beautiful blue Earth in inky black space with a lifeless moon in the foreground. There were concerns for our environment down here, like the decline of the American bald eagle and other birds due to DDT-caused eggshell thinning.

But the real environmental “Pearl Harbor moment” came in 1969 when the Cuyahoga River

... the real environmental “Pearl Harbor moment” came in 1969 when the Cuyahoga River caught fire in Cleveland. That certainly made headlines! ... Thus began a mass environmental movement, and Earth Day was celebrated the following April 1970.

caught fire in Cleveland. That certainly made headlines! A lot of the nation’s rivers had become sumps for industrial solvents, chemicals, and untreated city sewage. The burning river, while not the only issue, became a landmark event. Thus began a mass environmental movement, and Earth Day was celebrated the following April 1970.

In this day of sharply divided, money-fueled partisan politics, we must remember protection of the environment wasn’t always a partisan issue, not just a liberal cause. Hard to believe nowadays, but did you know President Nixon signed more environmental legislation than Teddy Roosevelt?

Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. And to show he wasn’t just going along with Democrats, he established the Environmental Protection Agency and signed executive orders to protect wetlands and floodplains and regulate off-highway vehicles on public lands. DDT was banned in the U.S. in 1972 and a phase-down of lead in gasoline began in 1973.

Environmental regulation didn’t stop with President Nixon. Presidents Reagan and GHW Bush presided over stopping acid rain from killing forests back east. They worked with Midwestern electric utilities to make a carrot-instead-of-a-stick solution called “cap and trade.” This set emis-

sion limits and gave utilities incentives to invest in smokestack scrubbers and to use low sulfur western coal. Sulfate pollution and acid rain were greatly curtailed.

Another bipartisan win reversed the growing problem of ozone thinning in the upper atmosphere. Refrigeration chemicals were destroying high ozone, leading to increasingly dangerous levels of ultraviolet light reaching ground level. Federal leadership with international cooperation turned this around during the Reagan-GHW Bush presidencies.

Sometime after that, environmental protection became a partisan issue. Now we have a huge problem of climate change that calls for bipartisan action. We’ve dithered far too long on this.

Here in the west we know wildfires of unreal intensity and early runoff from climate warming. With a warming climate, the world suffers more mega storms, more intensive droughts and heat waves, acidifying oceans, dying coral reefs, melting ice caps, and ... dithering by our politicians. Instead of the U.S. acting as world leader, we deny the obvious and make a partisan issue out of protecting the environment for a sustainable future. It wasn’t always that way and it shouldn’t be that way.

We held the first Earth Day 50 years ago, and then led the world for environmental protection. We provided world leadership to protect the environment! And it was based on the attitude that protecting the environment is in everyone’s interest, not just “tree huggers” or one political group. We had a record to be proud of!

Like a virus pandemic, bad things can take off and balloon faster than you can imagine. I strongly suspect melting ice caps and a resulting rapid, dramatic rise in sea level will be our next existential threat. But like a lot of past environmental threats and our current COVID virus, we can take intelligent, concerted action if we work together and stop wasting time.

Happy Earth Day and remember our past bipartisan solutions to environmental ills. 🌱

Bill Conrod lives in Grand Junction, Colorado, with his wife after retiring from the National Park Service as a ranger and biologist. He greatly enjoys our mountains and desert.



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

YOU WILL NOTICE that the "Off The List" part of the magazine has a large number of obits. As part of the NSA Historic Preservation Project, I'm trying to get minimal information recorded on the men who built the foundation of smokejumping in the '40s and '50s.

We currently have just over 6,000 men and women in the NSA smokejumper database. Not a large number considering the 80 years that smokejumping has been in existence. Of that number, about 1,400 are NSA members and 1,200 are not members. We have about 1,000 obits recorded in our database and on our website. There are just over 2,400 jumpers for whom we have no contact information. I'm sure that many of this number are deceased.

Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) is the expert in finding infor-

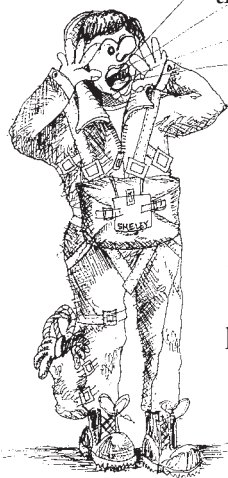
mation on deceased jumpers. He knows the websites and how to do the research. We are currently working on jumpers from the 40s.

Denny Breslin (NCSB-69) has also volunteered to assist in this project.

You might think that researching obits is a crazy way to record smokejumper history. My thinking is that we need to know more about the men (women started in the '80s) who did this job in the early years. Most only jumped for a season or two while going to college. It is amazing what they did in later life and how they contributed to the fabric of this country. Even though they went on to do great things in life, I've found many comments indicating that their time as a smokejumper was key to their success in later life.

All our obit information will eventually be moved to Eastern Washington University. Our History Preservation Project at EWU is expanding.

Stan Collins (MYC-67) is the man who is providing the leadership and coordination with the university and archivist Steve Bingo. In our early work with Steve at EWU, we emphasized that we wanted



this project to be available online—available to anyone worldwide via the internet. Access information to the Smokejumper Digital Archives can be found in the announcement on page 23 of this issue.

If you are a researcher and know the ins and outs of the internet and would like to help us, please contact me.

Hoping to get data on those early jumpers still living, I've been contacting as many as I can find addresses for with the aim of getting more of their personal background information. In this issue we will be doing a new column "From The Fire Pack" to let you know about these men.

One of my smokejumper friends contacted me concerning my column in the July issue. We had a good discussion. He felt that Native Americans have the right to demand and secure contracts for Camp Fire hazard tree removals, that we must welcome diversity in awarding contracts, and we must be proactive to ensure that those seeking contracts have the necessary skills. I can say that I agree with all three points he made. Best thing is that we had a good discussion on that subject. 🙏

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I thought that the *Smokeyjumper* July issue article by Tania Schoennagel, (*Wildfire Trends In The US and Adaptation Strategies To Increasing Wildfire*) was most insightful about the fire occurrence in varying forest types and the impact of different methods of managing fuels buildup. We are clearly operating from behind the curve, given our present-day conditions. The drivers of fires are a warming climate, a buildup of fuels and the expanding WUI. The warming climate has moved to the forefront among those three main drivers. While the WUI is expanding, there is a limited amount that the USFS or the BLM can do to protect the homes and property from fire since a significant percent of those lands are privately owned. To change those losses will largely depend on the stakeholders (state/local governments, property holders, insurance companies, etc.) to exercise stronger zoning and building codes and become more pro-active in fire-wise practices.

With the passage of time, we invariably learn that we have made mistakes and have operated at times under false assumptions. That will continue without a doubt. So, in the meantime, we do research, evaluate past actions, and try to make corrections as we move forward. In our moving forward we cannot simply go back to what we have done in the past. The present calls for new insights and solutions—solutions that may in the future prove to have also been wrong. We can only work to do our best with integrity.

I look at the mission statements of the BLM, the USFS, and the first USFS Chief, Gifford Pinchot:

- The Bureau of Land Management's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.
- The mission of the USFS, an agency of the USDA, is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.
- Pinchot's purpose of conservation: "The

greatest good to the greatest number of people for the longest time."

With the statements above in mind, I have great concern about some of what I have read in the June 12th *Secretarial Memorandum to the Chief of the Forest Service* sent by USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue. I am exceedingly suspect of the current administration so when I read things like the following, I have red flags going up.

The Forest Service will: (the bolding is my addition)

- ***streamline processes and identify new opportunities to increase America's energy dominance and reduce reliance on foreign countries for critical minerals.***
- ***modernize management practices and reduce regulatory burdens to promote active management on Forest Service lands to support and protect rural communities, critical watersheds, and species habitat; and***
- ***expedite broadband development on Forest Service lands to increase internet connectivity in rural America.***

The red flags go up because I have visions of this becoming an open door for expanded mineral and energy exploitation, attacking our wilderness and designated roadless areas, and a reckless selling of renewable and non-renewable resources. Furthermore, I didn't realize that the U.S. was in a contest to obtain energy "dominance." There is a difference between renewable resources and extractive resources. We have examples of what happens with some of our extraction-based communities (i.e. when coal is no longer cost effective to mine or the price of oil drops due to over production or the resource is exhausted). Boom and bust cycles are not helpful. I'm concerned about what hidden and ulterior motives may be behind some of these new government directives. It will be up to the American people to "follow the money" and demand transparency as directives unfold further.

Trees and grass continue to grow. They are renewable, sustainable resources and, when responsibly managed with science standing behind that management, those resources can and

should be used for the benefit of the American people. Those resources should not be simply locked away. They are a living resource. Fire is a natural part of our varied eco-systems—historically present more in some areas and less in others. It represents one tool in our management toolbox.

We need to be always evaluating what represents the highest and best use of resources for the long run, and short-term money cannot be allowed to be the main driver in making those decisions. We have learned through past mistakes and have become better at that but as stated

earlier, we will undoubtedly make mistakes as we move forward. Wind and solar are also renewable sources of energy, and it's likely that parts of our forest and grassland resources are suitable for that type of energy development as opposed to those sources that rely on extraction.

I encourage others to share thoughts on the path forward regarding the drivers behind our present-day fire situation. The NSA membership needs to hear your voice and the magazine is your platform for doing that.

—**Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) NSA Past President

Dear Editor:

I was surprised to see the anti-wilderness article in the July 2020 issue of *Smokejumper*. Surprised because jumpers I know relate readily to wilderness landscapes—landscapes that are remote, wild, and affected primarily by the forces of nature. In our northern Rockies we enjoy significant wildernesses, such as the Bob Marshall, the Frank Church, and the Selway-Bitterroot.

In the 1970s I had the good fortune to work on a FS pilot project in the White Cap drainage of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The purpose of this project was to develop a model fire management plan to allow free-burning lightning fires to occur within the fire-adapted ecosystems. The plan was presented to Chief John McGuire during the summer in 1972 and he approved this departure from the long-standing 10 a.m. fire control policy. Within a week lightning ignited a new fire in the project area and it was allowed to burn according to the plan's criteria. The plan expanded to the remainder of the Selway-Bitterroot and later to the Bob Marshall, Frank Church, and other wildernesses in the west.

In 2002 participants gathered in the White Cap area to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of free-burning lightning fires. Scientists at the University of Montana Forestry School published a paper recently, based on remote sensing data, and concluded that large past fires in the Bob Marshall, Frank Church, and Selway-Bitterroot Wildernesses were regulating the spread and growth of new fires. Several years ago, the northwest portion of a Salmon River megafire was turned loose into the

Frank Church Wilderness—and never heard from again. In this era of uncontrollable megafires it is rewarding to discover that wilderness landscapes can be resilient and sustainable.

—**Bob Mutch** (GAC-54)



Keith Beartusk (MSO-69) and Tom Trusler (MSO-68) in the door of Miss Montana. The DC-3 was in Billings for a fundraiser for the Yellowstone County Museum. (Courtesy Larry Mayer—Billings Gazette)

How I Value My Interagency Working Opportunities with Federal Agencies

Fire Chief John R. Hawkins (ret.)

CAL FIRE Riverside Unit/Riverside County Fire Department

I have been working toward expanding our readership beyond the jumper community and getting input from others in the wildland fire community. John Hawkins is a legend in wildland firefighting. Anyone involved in fire for a number of years will recognize a lot of names in this article. (Ed.)

Every quarter, I look forward to receiving and reading the *Smokeyjumper* magazine. Today, during early March 2020, was no exception. I love reading about many jumpers that I knew or surely heard of over the years. Now, I would like to positively contribute to the magazine.

During late December 2018, I retired from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) after serving for 55 fire seasons and about 52 retirement years. My career was wonderful and allowed me to do many things, accomplish much for the taxpayers and for our firefighters, and work with hundreds of federal firefighters, including many former smokejumpers. The purpose of my article is to share my respect and appreciation to those hundreds of federal firefighters with whom I was lucky enough to work with during my career. My federal associations were very formative to the betterment of my training and experience building. I know it, and I thank many readers of *Smokeyjumper* magazine for helping me throughout my career which seemed to pass faster than a speeding bullet or, in our terms, a flare pistol round.

My last working assignment was as the CAL FIRE Riverside Unit Chief/Riverside County Fire Chief (Southern California) where I oversaw the integrated, cooperative, regional fire protection system including 97 fire stations, three fire camps, and one air attack/Helitack base. We responded to about 500 daily incidents of which 83% were

pre-hospital medical emergencies with over 60% requiring advanced life support or paramedicine interactions. We also responded to hundreds of fires, some of which were the most destructive and life-taking such as the October 2006 Esperanza Fire that killed five USFS San Bernardino N. F. firefighters.

One of the first smokejumpers that I knew and still pretty regularly communicate with is former Missoula and Redding jumper Dave Nelson (MSO-57), Tahoe National Forest FMO, and Type 1 Incident Commander. I first met Dave at the Nevada County Fair, August 1964. It was my first year as a seasonal firefighter with then CDF, and I was assigned to do PR duty at the joint CDF-USFS fair booth. What a treat meeting a genuine dirty-faced firefighter and character! From that time on, I followed Dave and remember him during an October 1967 fire on the TNF. Dave was the first to exit the plane with a load of jumpers that had flown into the Grass Valley Air Attack Base to be trucked to a fire northwest of Donner Summit. To me, Dave appeared bigger than life exiting the DC-3.

My first real USFS experience started when I needed a job in the Fall 1966 between summer CDF work and while attending Sierra College, Rocklin, CA. I found a job with the USFS Tahoe National Forest (TNF) working as a GS-3 CWN firefighter at the White Cloud GS, about 15 miles east of Nevada City. Was a great 6-week assignment employed a couple of afternoons a week and weekends for an old USFS fire horse, Foreman Walt Cruse. We never hit a fire, although I seem to remember one smoke check east towards Bowman Lake.

Much like many fraternal upbringings, the smokejumpers often wave the jumper ring finger in every first or second introductory sentence.



John Hawkins (Courtesy J. Hawkins)

Being a jumper is a privilege, as I well learned and honored immensely, and rightfully so by the airborne firefighter.

After attending Sierra College, I began my forestry education at Humboldt State College—now Humboldt State University. Was a great chance to meet new people including many smokejumpers that included **Harold Hartman** (CJ-65), **Lou Wayers** (CJ-66), **Dave McNamara** RDD-68), **Scott Warner** (RDD-69) and more. All were dear friends and colleagues. My Junior Year roommate was **Michael T. Rains** (Assoc.) who went on to become a Deputy Chief with the USFS Washington Office. I knew then that Mike would promote through the USFS as he well did. One of my other buddies was E. Nelson Dean who retired from the USFS Cleveland National Forest as the Descanso District Ranger.

When I was promoted to Battalion Chief in the CDF Butte Unit, I began working closely with many USFS personnel from both the Lassen and Plumas National Forests. They included Denny Bungarz, Royal Manion, **Mike Daugherty** (RDD-65), Bob Johnson and **Jim Klump** (RDD-64). Early on, I could see that the then CDF, now CAL FIRE, could not do it all alone but had to

rely on our federal and local government partners. Interagency-wise, we began to work more closely due to annual pre-fire season operational meetings. Particularly valuable were the annual meetings held by the Diamond National Corporation which evolved to become Roseburg Timber and to what is well known as the Sierra Pacific Industries. These meetings set in place with me the importance of sharing pre-season information but more importantly building relationships and comradery. I never have forgotten this value. Denny Bungarz was the best USFS employee that CDF had!

Interagency relationships, including familiarization with key players and operational resources, became increasingly important to everyone including CDF. I saw and valued the importance. During the 1980s as a Division Chief in the Butte Unit, I again worked with Denny Bungarz in his new role as the USFS Mendocino National Forest Staff FMO, or what is now often called the Forest Fire Chief. Denny played major roles in building relationships and sharing resources. When we visited, I always valued his USFS pride and sharing his background with me, which was highly informative and valuable. Denny and SJ Magazine Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) helped the Butte Unit with Type 2 fire crews that we deployed at fires and control burns.

Organized Crew 24, or OC-24, was deployed during early September 1983 by the MNF to a vegetation management burn in Hamlin Canyon, south of Paradise, CA. Because of some errant tactical fire actions by a state chief officer, the burn escaped and burned 2,700 acres, 1,800 more acres than planned, and seriously threatened the Town of Paradise. OC-24 was burned over, fire shelters deployed, some firefighters burned and many badly shaken by the near miss incident. FMO Denny Bungarz was there to help settle out the mess and take care of his firefighters. This is the same Town of Paradise that burned during the 2018 Camp Fire.

During the same period, CAL FIRE worked very closely with the Lassen and Plumas National Forests. I developed very fine working relationships with LNF DFMO Bob Johnson, PNF DFMO **Larry Boggs** (RDD-63) and PNF DFMO Jim Klump. All of these notable fire officers and characters helped me become a better

fire command officer. Early every summer, Larry Boggs would lead the PNF Fire School. I always enjoyed attending. Jim Klump was always there for the Butte Unit providing with resources, with muscle and with fun.

Because of my USFS colleagues caring ways and the efforts of then CDF Assistant Deputy Director Bill Teie, I was sent to the Advanced Incident Management class at Marana, AZ. What an experience that class proved to be! It required hard work and was a huge, formative learning experience for me. HUGE! All the big-time federal Type 1 Incident Commanders and Section Chiefs were there; many taught different subjects such as regional fire and fuels, etc. At the time, little did I know what opportunities and experiences this class would promote for me.

Shortly after attending S-520, Denny Bungarz told me I was being placed on California National IMT-1 as a Deputy Operations Section Chief under Incident Commander Jim Stumpf and Operations Chiefs Greg Davis and Jim Klump. Even though I worked for Big Red (CDF) and not the USFS, Jim Stumpf fully welcomed me onto Team 1. He was a great leader and most of what I imagined a dirty-faced, hardworking lead from the front commander should be.

Jim Stumpf taught us many lessons: Be on time for meetings, work hard, lead, be frugal, and get it done. I loved his dirty-faced, hardworking leadership style of leading from the front. As a future CAL FIRE IMT ICT1, I strongly benefited from the mentorship provided by Jim Stumpf.

Peer OSC1 **Jim Klump** was someone that I will never forget and will always cherish for our collegial and effective working relationship. I learned so much from Jim Klump. One time on the CA-Stanislus NF (STF), our CIIMT1 was assigned to the 1987 Larson Fire contiguous to the Yosemite National Park (CA-YNP). While driving Road 1S13, Jim and I found a ¼ acre or smaller slop-over burning below the road. I asked Jim if we should order an engine. He replied, “No Hawk, this is a two-manner.” Jim and I lined the slop-over.

While assigned to the 1988 Dinkelman Fire, Chelan, WA, at a planning meeting a state FSC complained about 40 one-inch nozzles left at a drop point. Jim countered, “Where the hell

should we leave them for retrograde and ensuring we don’t contribute to equipment loss?” No answer was given by the FSC, although Jim’s response stifled any further whining and, as always, set the leadership tone from which everyone benefited.

While assigned to CIIMT1, we often flew from Redding to assignments. At Redding or the Northern California Service Center, North Zone Manager Sid Nobles, being a noble man himself, always took great pride in ensuring that Jim Klump and I had only two travel bags and that the bags did not exceed 55 pounds total. Well, we often flew with three bags: Red Bag, PPE Bag, and flight helmet bag. Jim told me how to get by the weighmaster. Leave the flight helmet bag around the building corner where Sid always greeted us. Once Jim asked Sid, “Do you weigh your mother?” Sid laughed and told us he knew we hid our third bag. Who were we fooling?

After spending 30 years in the Butte Unit, I made the move in early 2004 to Southern California where I always wanted to work. My new assignment took me to the CAL FIRE Riverside Unit where I worked as a Deputy Chief in Special Operations. My strong feelings for my federal counterparts never diminished. The Riverside Unit was surrounded by two L-Shaped portions of the both the San Bernardino NF (BDF) and the Cleveland NF (CNF). We enjoyed many cooperative meetings together, including the annual fire cooperator meeting hosted by the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway at the top of the tram.

On August 1, 2006, I was sworn in as the CAL FIRE Riverside Unit/Riverside County Fire Department Fire Chief and honorably served 12-years in that assignment. With the new post, I created five core values for our operations: Leadership, Competence, Integrity, Safety and Customer Service (Be Nice!). I also lived by what I believed and had learned from many earlier federates, “We must maximize our similarities and minimize our differences.”

Fine federal personalities like Gene Zimmerman, George Roby, Art Torrez, Carlton Joseph, Michael Dietrich, Shawna Legarza, Brian Rhodes, Norm Walker, Freddie Espinosa, Scott Howes, Ken Kempton, and many others were always there with help when CAL FIRE needed assistance. In

fact, my Southern California experience showed me how valuable was our joint response to kill the fire and meet the CAL FIRE containment goal of holding 95% of the fires to 10 or fewer acres. Worked for both agencies and worked well. We used the ICS principles to the hilt: common communications, unified command, sharing resources, et al.

We had many large and damaging wildfires including the 2006 Esperanza Fire that killed five committed BDF firefighters on Gorgonio View Drive south of Banning, CA. Was a terrible day... Never forget it. Then came the 2007 Fire Siege where every agency burned around Riverside County, and we helped everyone.

The Year 2008 brought the Freeway Fire that burned 40,000+ acres into four counties: Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino and Los Angeles. It wasn't over yet because 2013 brought the Falls Fire that roared into Lakeland Village from the CNF under the same wind influence that killed firefighters in the 1959 Decker Canyon Fire. Days later, the 2013 Silver Fire burned and almost in a reverse signature from the Esperanza Fire. During the Fall of 2017, the Canyon I and II Fires burned in the Santa Ana River Canyon. At every one of these fires, our federal brothers and sisters were present and strongly interfaced with all tactical firefighting.

Along the way, I was lucky enough to work with many Hotshot crews (I know—jumpers vs. Hotshots). As such, in Riverside County, off the Ortega Highway that runs from San Juan Capistrano through Lake Elsinore to Palm Desert, was located the California Wildland FF Memorial in the small community of El Cariso. It is the home of the CNF El Cariso IHC. The highway is named "The California Wildland FF Memorial Highway." With the monument work, I got to know the original members of the 1966 El Cariso IHC that fought the Loop Fire on the Angeles N.F. They asked me to MC the recreation of their monument at El Cariso Park and their 50-Year Anniversary. I honorably MC'd the events. Subsequently, they awarded me one of only three El Cariso IHC berets that they have ever awarded to outsiders. It proudly sits in my den.

I retired from CAL FIRE at the end of 2018 after having a heart attack in early 2016 and

returning to active duty. I now work part-time as a Wildland Fire Consultant for the Los Angeles County Fire Department coaching, mentoring, training, etc. It is a fun and productive assignment and allows me to work with the Angeles N.F. including one of the very best cooperators that I have known, Forest Fire Chief Robert Garcia. He is a true professional, team player, and someone who is always present to help.

I must close now but want all the readers who have survived this discourse to know how much I thank all federal firefighters and particularly my jumper buddies. Without what I have learned from my federal interactions, I could not have accomplished what I did. Thank you for everything.



To All Current And Former African American Smokejumpers

by Pferron Doss (Missoula '77)

I am in the early stages of contemplating the arduous task of writing a second book of historical fiction. I'd like to look at the African-American soldier and take the reader back in time. I would like to tell the story from the perspective of being African-American and what it was like to be Black, fighting for Democracy abroad, yet being denied those same principles at home. There is a story to be told of becoming a Triple Nickle despite the inherent prevalent racism.

I would sincerely appreciate the opportunity to interview African-American SJ's post WWII or family members for possible inclusion and dedication for their contributions to firefighting. If you are interested, have knowledge of, or have contact information, I've added my contact information. I thank you in advance.

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On the Road to a National Wildfire Agency: Part III

By J. Jay Jones (Associate)

Previously, in Part 2 (July 2020), I summarized the core elements of a National Wildfire Agency in which I focused on the management teams. In this article, I'll be addressing a few aspects of essential support elements.

But before I do, I'd like to address a couple of central features of creating a new agency. Bureaucracies are like mushrooms; politicians feed them steer manure and then leave them in the dark, so naturally, the bureaucrats quickly multiply. In this particular instance, the National Wildfire Agency will be attempting to prune back a dozen other agencies, and that impacts their budgets and bureaucracies. You can expect politicians will be circling overhead during the whole process.

It may seem obvious, but it has to be said: One idea that is central to any discussion of a National Wildfire Agency is that there is an enormous benefit to eliminating cross billing between all the many cooperator agencies. I don't think that benefit can be overstated. It isn't just the financial gain, either.

The effort spent on converting financial charge codes back and forth—from the United States Forest Service to the Bureau of Land Management, or vice versa, or with any of the numerous cooperator agencies—is a monumental waste of time, a waste of effort, and a waste of human and material resources.

The mere act of creating a National Wildfire Agency will save money by eliminating this unnecessary waste and confusion. However, consolidating into a single agency has other key benefits. Managing budgets and finances will be less convoluted and will require fewer personnel to administer the same essential services. Additionally, developing policy and implementing changes won't need to be vetted and approved by a myriad of competing bureaucracies. The reader is encouraged to use their imagination at this point concerning redundancy and cross-purpose politicking.

This brings us to support services. All these changes will impact personnel requirements. As the

duplication of effort is reduced, the nature of functional support elements will undergo critical revision. The essential nature of the profession of firefighting will require our community to reevaluate how we acquire skills and what skills we need to maintain.

The essential functional support elements in the NWA fall into two broad categories: communications and logistics. We can expect the NWA to make some innovative and necessary changes about these interlocking functions. What kind of model will the new organization be structured upon?

Earlier in this series, I suggested consolidating aviation assets as the biggest priority. Initially, consolidating intelligent, single resources with multiple skill sets into the necessary operational billets is critical.

Here's where things get political. Which people and which skill sets? The wildfire community currently requires three essential skill set categories: fire operations, telecommunications, and logistics. These skill sets are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are necessary, to varying degrees, on almost every wildfire incident. In addition, you need to add aviation knowledge to that list, don't you? If you don't include it, then the national part of the NWA loses its credibility. It's an essential fourth skill set.

And clearly, the wildfire community needs people who can master the fundamentals of multiple skill sets. What is needed is an organizational model, or a paradigm, that facilitates firefighters developing mastery in multiple skill sets. What will that model look like?



J. Jay Jones

Some of you may recall my mentioning the Alaska Mafia. Remember those bulls in the china shop? They were people who got ostracized for having too many talents. The NWA should rethink that. Open up training to increase the reserve pool of candidates for a limited number of operational billets. There's nothing wrong with a little competition. There's nothing new to acquiring competitive status.

I envision the NWA using some form of competition for operational billets. Remember those previously mentioned skill sets? The NWA should only hire firefighters into fulltime positions and should ensure billet rotation through both operations and support positions. This would keep the training requirements high, but it would also maintain a reserve pool of necessary skills in all areas. The intent would be to keep operational experience high throughout the organization even when firefighters are working support positions.

Status should be ranked into a three-tiered organization, much like the U.S. Navy's division of their personnel into enlisted, warrant officers, and commissioned officers. A roughly analogous comparison of tiers within fire would be temporary, seasonal, and permanents.

The NWA would have to restructure these terms in lieu of the increasingly rapid climate changes that are driving the wildfire industry toward year-round operations and extreme fire behavior. The NWA would have to commit to having better trained personnel; they should also be better paid to retain experienced personnel.

Perhaps you, the reader, have met some people who will never be expert at anything but running a shovel and following orders. Those are still necessary skills, and I, for one, have always believed that the best leaders have come up through the ranks; they're the ones who can keep up with the best grunts. It is my belief that mastering the fundamentals is the beginning of subject matter expertise and it's the path to mastering any profession. And there should always be a place for that necessary person who runs that necessary shovel.

Consequently, firefighters in Tier 1 would be best suited for the short duration work of a limited fire season. This tier addresses the changing staffing needs that vary so much from year to year. Also, it vets the individuals who are subject to the *weary firefighter* syndrome, that seasonal condition

of psychological and physical burnout that afflicts so many during busy fire seasons. That means that Tier 1 firefighters are going to need flexible terms of employment that vary in duration and skill sets. Tier 1 should also keep the door open for firefighters who don't want to move up into positions of higher responsibility.

Tier 2 would open the door to vetted firefighters who want the financial security that comes from working a longer fire season; these are firefighters who are anxious to acquire new skills, who are willing to commit to a fulltime career, and who can thrive in a paramilitary environment. This tier would mandate advanced training for all firefighters as they acquire skills as specialists. Specialists would have to complete a series of mandated operational assignments in aviation, communications, logistics, and management positions before becoming a candidate for Type 3 Incident Commanders. Only Type 3 Incident commanders could be advanced into Tier 3 rank.

An important aspect of Tier 2 should include a competitive status component; establishing rank based on training scores clearly indicates which merit-based promotions are justified. The only roadblock to gaining advanced training for firefighters should be their passing the prerequisites for a course. If they need to repeat a course, they should have every chance to do so. It should be seen as an employee right to be encouraged to reach higher and to better themselves.

The politics of competence—that is, how you make a judgment call about granting the authority to command an incident—is a much different matter than making training available. We should always ensure that every firefighter can pursue their training in the first place. I certainly don't believe that being trained and passing a course is an automatic free pass for command of an incident. That is a political call best left for Tier 3 personnel.

Tier 3 should comprise the bulk of the management and the training cadres—Type I & II Teams and the policy, training, and review boards. Tier 3 is made up of the competitive spirits that are driven to take charge of the overall situation, but who also have the skill sets to prepare firefighters, organize operations, and mobilize resources. Ultimately, Tier 3 has to initiate, innovate, and adapt to circumstances that will unite the NWA in achieving mission ob-

jectives and afterwards defend it against its natural adversaries. The competition for Tier 3 billets will be intense. Clearly, the pool of operational billets will have its limits.

What should be implicit in this paradigm is that the NWA staff every position in the organization with a firefighter. The NWA should make the in-house promotion of firefighters into all its agency's positions a primary principle of its charter. But with that commitment must be a concomitant commitment to support its personnel against potential litigation.

Skills in telecommunications and logistics are essential; they are integral to fire operations and aviation missions. The NWA needs to place emphasis on uniting these skills throughout all of its agency's personnel and then diligently pursue this worthy objective until it is met.

There are many good reasons to do this, but there's one reason in particular that I'd like to bring to everyone's attention, one that may not be readily apparent to many readers.

Once the NWA is created, its training cadre would also be creating a reserve personnel pool in translatable skills. Those translatable skill sets are the experience and knowledge in telecommunications, logistics, and aviation. These are skills any government agency can put to good use. When a natural disaster occurs, or any other emergency arises, any agency would be glad to have a sister agency help provide the emergency personnel it needs to face a

current crisis.

This is in the interest of both the federal government and the individual employee. The government expands its pool of available resources, and the skill sets the individual has acquired grants additional opportunities for gaining operational experience and career advancement.

I might add a few thoughts on that. One smoke-jumper I had the pleasure of working with at an airtanker base for a couple of years told me a few stories about a sister agency putting fellow jumpers to work at observation posts in foreign countries. He finally admitted to working overseas himself on aviation related duties—particularly in training others for jumping with ram chutes. I recently read an article on the *Wildfire Today* website that mentioned that the Mountainview Hotshots had four drone pilots on its crew. It may be hyperbole to say that drone piloting is the wave of the future, but it's not hyperbole to say that the necessity of aviation skills is on the rise.

For many, working in telecommunications and logistics has always been seen as some kind of step down—something you do when you retire. You might rethink that. It's really a step up because it immediately puts you in position to command an entire unit and ensure its logistic train is uninterrupted. Those of you who have had the chance to work with the military may have heard them remark—"*Amateurs talk about tactics, professionals talk about logistics.*"

Communications and logistics are essential support services that enable fire and aviation operations. And everyone should see it as a duty to acquire the essential skills in these areas as necessary to meet our mission objectives. And along the way, you may find that you've met your own mission objectives.

What I hope the reader walks away with at this point is to ponder the possibilities. Creating a National Wildfire Agency might not just be a good idea for the government (the politicians, the lawyers, and accountants), it might be a good idea for you. A new organization that supports you, that is willing to train you in multiple skill sets, and that might open up new opportunities for you might be a good idea for you personally. I think it's an idea whose time has come. So, review your resume. You might realize that your options in the new National Wildfire Agency just might serve your own purposes. 🧑🏻

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To request email delivery contact Editor Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) cnkgsheley@earthlink.net. 🧑🏻

What Happened?

by Del Hessel (McCall '59)

It was a beautiful day for a fire call in the first week of September: bright blue sky, calm afternoon. I was supposed to be in school but decided I could use the extra paycheck more than the first week of school back at Colorado State.

It was a two-man fire. We were over the fire around two o'clock that afternoon. It was an interesting approach as the fire was in the bottom of a huge bowl. It appeared that, over the years, lots of large boulders had fallen into the bottom of the bowl. There appeared to be a fairly large, green open space in the bottom of the bowl, a good landing area. The fire was small and smoking and located at the far end of the bowl, and the terrain was sloping downhill to the fire.

The only logical approach was to come across the top of the bowl-shaped mountain and jump into the bottom of the half bowl. Not many boulders had made it to the bottom close to the small meadow. The wind was calm, the streamers landed near the grassy area, so things looked good.

Just before we jumped, the spotter told us that we were a long way from anything and to stay there and a packer would come pack us out. We shot across the ridgetop which opened up into the half bowl. I jumped, had an easy ride down to the little green meadow that turned out to be a small marsh. **Doug Bird** (MYC-57), my jump partner, did a great job guiding himself into the jump site.

We put out our "O.K." markers, packed up, and started downhill toward the fire. We watched the plane go over the fire location to drop the packs. The plane went below the tree line, so we did not see the packs drop. The plane seemed to make a very quick sharp turn and took off and left us. Since we did not see the packs dropped, we had hoped the plane would hang around for a pass or two to show us the location of the packs. That did not happen.

We got down to the fire. It was small but spreading in the grass and small brush. It was a hot afternoon to help the fire along. We did a

quick circular search for the packs and did not find them but did find a small spring about thirty to forty yards from the fire. We went back to the fire to see how fast it was spreading. The fire was definitely spreading at a good rate.

It was a frustrating situation: No tools and spreading fire. Besides the grass, bushes and dead wood, there was plenty of timber. The potential for a big fire was very real. Being the genius firefighters that we were, Doug said, "Let's carry water from the spring to the fire." I looked at him like, "How are we going to do that?" "Take off your Levi's, tie knots in the legs, zip up the flies, and you have a bucket." So, we did.

The spring was wide and about two feet deep. Once we had the Levis filled up, we had to run fairly fast to get the water to the fire. We poured the water on the fire and beat the fire with the wet Levis. It was going great. We did this for about three hours until we had the fire under control.

Once the fire was under control, we made another search for our tools, but we had no luck and decided to head back to the fire. On the way back to the fire, by luck, we walked right into our packs. By now it was around six or seven in the evening. We broke out the tools and started to build our fireline and put out the fire. I think we finally ate around ten o'clock. It was a long day.

Feeling comfortable about the work on the fire, we made camp and climbed into our sleeping bags. I was asleep in a minute. Suddenly, I woke up feeling wet. It was raining! It was a misty rain. We had a canopy of trees over us, but still our sleeping bags were slightly wet. We quickly put up a double parachute tent, and then it really started to rain, accompanied by lightning and thunder. I had never seen or heard anything like that storm. It was pouring rain. The thunder was deafening and the lightning scary. The lightning seemed to be right on top of us. I might be wrong but still think I saw lightning strike those big boulders and zing across the ground. After a long hour or so, the storm moved on, but the rain stayed as a light

shower. We didn't get much sleep after that.

With the rain and cool weather, the fire was out. It was the second day. We poked around the fire area just to make sure it was out. We reorganized the campsite and put out some pieces of cloth and markers in the trees about 100 yards from camp to help the packer find us. It was a slow, long day, and the misty rain was still with us. On the third day by mid-morning, we were getting a little concerned about our situation.

We were laying on our bedrolls under the tent. I was on my stomach looking out through the bushes when I saw brown boots coming through the forest. I said, "Doug, the packer's here," and stood up only to be looking at a large bear about thirty yards away. Those were not boots I was looking at but brown legs and paws! Doug stood up and said, "Oh, crap." I remember that clearly. I believe we were both looking for an escape route or this might truly be one of those situations where you only had to outrun the guy next to you. The bear stood up on its hind legs sniffing the air. It seemed like a long time, but I am sure it was only a minute or so. The bear got down on all fours and walked away. Not much to say after that except, "That was interesting".

By early afternoon, it was apparent that we needed a plan. It was getting colder and the misty rain was still with us. Since we had no idea where we were, Doug decided we should go up the mountain and build a heliport rather than get ourselves lost going down through the forest. So, we packed up in the late afternoon and headed up the mountain. In a couple of hours, we broke out above timberline. We found a large leaning rock, put our chutes over the rock and had a fairly good shelter from the cold. Again, it was a long night and it got colder.

In the morning, the day broke with a bright blue sky, but what really surprised us was the light dusting of snow. It was the fourth day. We worked on the helipad and put up some branches with our streamers and waited. We were both down to a can of soup and our survival kits. You can go a long time without food, and there was plenty of water just down the mountain. At about 10 am, we could hear the helicopter from a long way off. At first, they were searching the wrong area, but suddenly they came around the corner following

the stream below us. It probably made sense to the pilot that we were following the stream down the mountain to get out. We were so high up the chopper appeared very small. After numerous trips up and down the valley and stream, the helicopter left.

During all this time, we tried our signal mirrors and flags to no avail. We were not sure when or if they were coming back. After an hour or so, we decided to pack up and go down the mountain to the stream. This was going to be a long, steep, rocky hike. We were about two hundred yards down the mountain when we heard the helicopter. It is amazing how far away you can hear things like a helicopter coming through wilderness air.

We scrambled back to the heliport. The helicopter came flying around the corner again down by the stream. Doug had his mirror out and I was swinging the streamer on a pole back and forth. Suddenly the chopper changed directions and came directly toward us. We were waving and jumping up and down. I remember the pilot setting there looking at us and smiling as he hovered there looking at the helipad. We had built a good one. We got out of the way as the helicopter settled down.

Doug went over to talk with the pilot. He said the helicopter was big enough to take both of us and the packs in one trip. We loaded up and took off. Boy, did it feel good to be flying toward a good meal. The pilot took us to the ranger station. Apparently, everyone knew we were out there but were not sure where. It was kind of humorous to them. We told them we liked it out there so much, we wanted to stay an extra day. Doug and I had a great lunch and got a ride back to McCall.

The immediate conversation was, "What the hell guys—we were out there for four days." The answer was, "We did not forget you, but no one really knew where you were." The lookout had the fire location from drift smoke and the spotter got hit in the eye by a shovel handle as the packs went out. He was badly hurt, so they headed for medical assistance. Therefore, he did not mark your exact location, and the storm kept the chopper from flying until today. All that sounded like good reasons to be out an extra day. The hot shower and dinner were extra special. After such an experience, I decided to carry an extra can or two of spam. You

can always eat a little more if you have it.

I truly enjoyed my time in the smoke-jumpers at McCall. I did not go back in 1964 because I had qualified for the US Olympic trials in the 800 meters. 🧑🏻

Del returned to Colorado State and was Head Track & Field Coach from 1970-76, 1999-2006. He was inducted into the CSU Athletic Hall of Fame before his retirement in 2006. Del is a nationally ranked USA Track & Field official. (Ed.)

Then And Now

by Jimmie Dollard (Cave Junction '52)

Recently I started thinking about how young, inexperienced, and ill equipped we were in '52 compared to today's jumpers and other firefighters. I was on a fireline when I was 17, a jumper at 18, and leader on a fire jump at 19. I was not unusual. I can't think of any CJ '52 jumper with more than three years fire experience. We did not have Nomex, hard hats, cell phones, radios, fire shelters, GPS, weather reports, thermal maps, water drops or IC's. When you went out the door, it was just you, your buddies, and a cargo drop with a shovel and a pulaski.

Our backpacks were WWII surplus plywood that dug into your back. The gear was secured with rubber bands cut from innertubes. Our chutes were WWII 28' surplus—modified with slots and in 1952 most had no tails for forward speed. Chutes were being modified throughout the season to add tails. Chutes were packed without deployment bags so when the static line jerked the cover off, a pile of nylon was exposed to the prop blast resulting in opening shocks that were often teeth

shattering and even resulted in some injuries. This also resulted in frequently dangerous "Mae West" line overs.

Our food was WWII C-Rations. If you happened to get a can of fruit cocktail, you could easily auction it for the promise of a few beers. Pack-your-own-food started in 1953, which was more popular than C-Rations or the more recent MREs.

We experimented with ways to get large cans of drinking water down. Using large cargo chutes resulted in tree hang-ups, burlap chutes resulted in ruptured cans. When I left in 1954, we still did not have a good way to get drinking water to the crew and certainly no way to get water down for firefighting and mop up. If we were lucky, we got a fire pack with a WWII down sleeping bag which was wonderful if you were under 5'-6". If you were unlucky, you got a paper sleeping bag which was useless, and you ended up trying to sleep wrapped in a bunch of parachutes.

We were expected to work through the night and have the fire contained by 10:00 the next morning, mop up that day, cold trail and pack up a day, then get ourselves out the next day

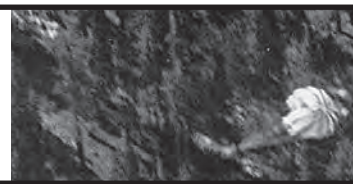
(no helicopters). Navigation was done using a compass and a small map with recommended cross country route to the nearest trail highlighted. There was no terrain information, so marked cross country routes often led to impossible terrain requiring rerouting and backtracking. We had no up-to-date trail information, so the trail that looked so clear on the map often hadn't been worked since built by the CCC in the 1930s. It was often so overgrown and full of dead fall that it was little better than cross country. We had no way to tell our pickup person when we would be out, so it was common for a vehicle to be left at the trail head with the keys in. Against policy we drove the vehicle to the ranger station without a USFS operator's license. On the subject of policy: I don't remember ever having policy training nor ever seeing a policy manual. The base boss was policy.

Even with our youth, inexperience, lack of modern equipment, hazardous night assaults, and 24-hour first shifts, we not only survived but thrived, got the fire out, and then got ourselves out and back to CJ for the next jump. 🧑🏻



THE JUMP LIST

MEN OF THE '40s



ALBERT T. AYLING (MSO-47)

Albert graduated from Michigan State University in 1950 with degree in Forestry and worked with the city of Detroit Forestry Dept. for 10 years. He was head of the Forestry Dept. for the city of Warren, MI, (8 years) before moving on to the head of Buildings and Grounds for Fairmont Parks, city of Philadelphia (2 years).

Albert then worked in sales for Monroe Tree & Landscape, Rochester, NY (10 years) and as an estimator for Wesley Paving and Construction (8 years) where he sold and supervised \$4 million paving and underground work per year. He started Timberland Inc., a company that specialized in clearing land for construction of new highways (3 years). Al retired in 1991 and worked part-time as tree and landscaping consultant.

ALBERT V. BELLUSCI (MSO-46)

Al attended the Univ. of Montana for two years before transferring to Montana State where he graduated in 1952 with a BS in Mechanical Engineering. He was an All-State quarterback in high school and a pilot in the USAF for four years where he was assigned to Special Weapons and Electronic Counter Measures.

Al worked at the USFS

Equipment Development Center for ten years before being self-employed as a professional engineer.

Al jumped at Missoula 1946-47. "We were housed in the former CCC camp at Nine Mile and made all our training jumps from there."

LUKE A. BIRKY (MSO-45)

Luke says he got his education the hard way—high school was by correspondence, one semester at Goshen College (ID) in 1946, a year at Columbia Univ. in 1960-61, and a year at the Univ. of Oregon in 1969-70.

He was drafted into the Civilian Public Service program in 1943 and jumped at Missoula during the 1945 season where he got seven practice, seven fire, and two rescue jumps.

After WWII, he served as a volunteer with the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico for over six years. The rest of his working life was spent in health care administration with the Mennonite Church. He was a Fellow of the American College of Hospital Administrators.

In retirement he and his wife served as program facilitators for Goshen College's studies abroad program in Costa Rica for one year.

Luke is currently living in Goshen, IN, and is a long time

NSA member. "Although I was a jumper for only one season, it was a high point. I loved the mountains/forests of the northwest."

OTTO BLACK (MSO-49)

Otto was born March 6, 1927. He was a Missoula smokejumper in 1949 and 1950. Except for smokejumping, Otto lived in Louisiana his entire life. His wife, Lois L. Black, died in 2008. He is 97 years of age and lives in Haynesville, LA.

LLOYD J. BROWN (MSO-49)

Brownie worked for the Sula RD on the trail crew and as a lookout for four seasons before applying for the smokejumper program. In one of his stints as a lookout, he saw the jumpers in action and figured it was better than walking into the fires. The 1949 rookie class was large (71), but he remembers **Leonard Piper** and **Henry Thol**, who were later killed at Mann Gulch. He spent six seasons as a jumper (three as a squadleader) and working in the logging industry during the off-season.

Brownie said that he handled all aspects of logging during his 42-year career and retired from Boise Cascade in 1992.

In a 2004 interview with *Smokejumper* magazine, Lloyd remembers a fire in

the Salmon River area where they jumped four jumpers to handle two fires. When they were done, they walked to a lookout and were helicoptered out. The chopper was working a 48-jumper fire nearby. When those jumpers were taken off their fire, a 48-passenger bus showed up to transport 52 jumpers back to Missoula. The four jumpers (including Lloyd) from the smaller fires had to ride in the luggage racks for the trip home. That was the bad part. The good part was only those four were asked to fill out timecards for the return trip since they did not have a seat in the bus.

JAMES F. BROWNE (MSO-49)

Jim jumped at Missoula 1949-50 while attending Montana State Univ. He was on the roof detail at Hale Field and watched the Mann Gulch crew depart.

Jim was a Marine Corps pilot in 1952, flying Corsairs and Panthers. By 1956 he was a pilot for American Airlines

until 1987. In 1959 he bought 120 acres at Pablo, MT, and planted 23,000 Christmas trees.

“My wife, Patricia, and I spend spring, summer, and fall residing on the Swan River, five miles east of Bigfork, Montana. We winter in Dana Point, California. We have a son and two daughters, six grandchildren, and one great granddaughter.”

JOHN K. “JACK” DUNNE (MSO-46)

Jack was born in Spokane, Washington. He started his Forest Service work during WWII in 1943 on the Libby Ranger District. He went into the Army Air Force (later in '43) where he was a tail gunner on a B-29. The 29s flew out of Guam and were involved in those dangerous missions over the Japanese mainland. Early on, the bombing was done from high altitude, but the extreme high winds (jet stream) forced the planes down to 5-6,000 feet and the dangers

of the lower level operation. Jack flew 30+ missions and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and several other air medals.

Back from the war in 1946, Jack and a friend applied for smokejumping and were accepted. Both were sawyers and that probably helped as he was the “tool man” at Missoula during his career there. He jumped four seasons (46-49) while attending Western Montana College at Dillon and getting his teaching credential. Jack taught 5th and 6th grade for 33 years, mostly in Whitefish.

To show that jumpers are the same, whatever the generation, in a 2004 interview with *Smokejumper* magazine, Jack recounts the time when a circus moved into town at the Fairgrounds. There was a baby elephant that was “borrowed” and taken to the barracks. When the late night drinkers arrived, some of them must have sworn off the bottle when they opened the door. 🐘

Smokejumper Keep The Flame Legacy Jump List

by **Mike Bina** (Missoula '68)

Editor's note:

NSA Board member Mike Bina voiced a concern that a lot of us have had: “How do we keep the NSA going financially in the future with expenses increasing and our membership numbers decreasing?”

Years ago, one jumper gifted the NSA a sizeable amount from his estate. Would any of you consider do-

ing the same, of course, within your means, and after you took care of your top priority—your family.

You are one of 6,025 smokejumpers who, since 1939, have “given it your all.” Now, as a retired jumper, you realize that smokejumping, in return, later benefited you in your

career and family life.

Our gratitude

At any smokejumper gathering, we hear expressions of gratitude for having been afforded the privilege of having had this unique job. Stories are told how smokejumping made a lasting, positive difference in their lives.

With the passage of time, we increasingly feel the need to “give back” to others who influenced us. We realize we owe them a debt of gratitude for bringing out our very best. *But how can you best show your appreciation for the smokejumping experience that benefited you?*

To provide a way to “give back,” the NSA ***Smokejumper Keep the Flame Legacy Jump List*** was established to preserve smokejumping traditions, values, and culture to ensure its future legacy—including your own.

The invitation

You can become a ***Smokejumper Keep the Flame Legacy Jump List*** member by making a planned gift donation.

Planned gift options include a “living monetary donation,” a bequest in your will, naming the NSA as a life insurance or retirement plan beneficiary, or a gift of real estate, other property,

stocks, or bonds.

If you're interested, please contact **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) at cnkgsheley@earthlink.net or (530) 893-0436.

You can make your gift in memory or honor of a family member, mentor, or other special individual. Requests to remain anonymous will be honored.

You, as one of 6,025 jumpers, have already played an important role in shaping the well-respected profession of smokejumping. Please consider this opportunity to include your name on the ***Smokejumper Keep the Flame Legacy Jump List***.

Since we started the program a year ago, we learned that four jumpers already had the NSA in their wills, and five others are in the process of doing so.

It is important to remember that no gift needs to be made now. To become a member of the ***Smokejumper Keep the Flame Legacy Jump List***, all we need is a commitment that you will place the NSA in your will. When your will is settled, then the NSA will receive your gift. If you have an existing will, it is quite easy to amend it to include the NSA as a beneficiary. Please consider doing so. 🙏

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Visit this NSA and EWU website to view these collections:

- National Smokejumper Association Meeting Minutes
- Publications on Smokejumping
- Smokejumper & Static Line Magazines
- Smokejumper Base Crew Pictures
 - Redmond
 - Cave Junction
 - NCSB
 - LaGrande
 - Silver City
- Tom Carlsen Film on Smokejumping (1939)
- Triple Nickle Photographs from the National Archives



RECORDING SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY



*The following are excerpts from newspaper and magazine articles from **Dave Burt's** (MSO-47) scrapbook saved and forwarded to me by **Karl Brauneis** (MSO-77). Not all sources were listed and will have to remain unknown. (Ed.)*

Last year *The Timberman* described smoke-jumping operations as seen from the airplane. This year we attended commencement exercises of a class at the Nine Mile training camp near Missoula, Montana. Under the direction of Victor J. Carter a class of nine young men made their 7th jump and were ready for duty. At the same camp, new classes were started on June 5 and June 16.

The Timberman-An International Lumber
Journal August 1947

The comparative speeds of ground and parachuting crews were recently dramatized in a remote section of Yellowstone N.P. Simultaneous alarms went to fireguards stationed in the park and to a crew of jumpers in Montana, 225 miles away. About an hour later six jumpers were parachuted onto the heavily-timbered fire.

Twenty-four hours later, as the parachutists packed their equipment for the long walk to the road, the ground crew arrived.

Coronet magazine July 1947

The storm lasted only 30 minutes, but this was enough for 14 separate fires to flare up along remote, timber-packed ridges. Nine smokejumpers and a ground crew were waiting at the Moose Creek Ranger Station. The ground force was dispatched to the four most accessible blazes, all at least 18 trail-miles away.

Eight of the nine jumpers were parachuted onto eight of the more dangerous fires. The ninth was dropped between two fires with orders to suppress both.

Merle Lundrigan (MSO-41) likes to tell this story to prove that the modern smokejumper is worth more than his weight in old-fashioned fire-

fighting methods.

"The four fires we didn't have men to drop on were out of control before the ground crews ever got there. One spread and burned two months. It took 800 men to suppress these four fires at a cost of \$300,000. But my nine jumpers had their **ten** fires under control within 24 hours and not a single one spread more than a quarter of an acre."

Such a sterling record in no way intimidates the 24 adventurous young men under Lundrigan's command. Thirteen of the 24 are ex-paratroopers, with war records from Okinawa to Arnhem.

Coronet magazine July 1947

James Waite (MSO-40) describes a typical mission: "On July 24 at 1:30 p.m., **Jim Alexander** (MSO-40) and I left the field for a fire. The hot and gusty air was the worst I've jumped in.

"When I was 100 feet above the tree tops, a gust sent me down the canyon. I was facing into the wind and traveling backwards. Pulling hard on the left riser, I slid between a snag and lit 125 feet up in a spruce.

"Jim and I arrived at the fire at 5:55 p.m. It had spread over two acres, but by 10 o' clock we had it under control."

Coronet magazine July 1947

Cliff Marshall (CJ-46), **Danny On** (CJ-46), **John Thach** (CJ-46) and other ex-paratroopers are quick to emphasize the difference between paratrooping and smokejumping.

"I learned more about parachuting in those 20 training days at Missoula," says Marshall, a veteran of Normandy, Holland and other European hot spots, "than I did in the three years with the 101st Airborne."

A Chinese-parented Danny On, whose war record with the 101st included Normandy and Holland says, "This is cinch jumping. You're not loaded with guns and grenades, and you know you are not entirely expendable. I've seen a lot of paratroopers freeze in the door during the war, but

here I've never seen a man refuse to jump."
Coronet magazine July 1947

In 1939 professional jumper Frank Derry (MSO-40) was dressed in a padded suit, a football helmet, a high leather collar and a wire face protector and dropped into a remote section of the forest. His chute got tangled in a treetop and he swung helplessly until a rescue crew could free him.

Once rescued, Derry had numerous suggestions. The suit was too cumbersome, the harness didn't allow the jumper to detach himself from the chute. How could a man get down out of a tree without a rope? A more steerable parachute—all these were necessary if parachutists were to fight fire.

Coronet magazine July 1947

Miles off, a stringy wisp rises from the great forest of the Rockies. Smoke! Even before the patrol plane can reach it, the plume is a billowing whorl of flame. To get firefighters to the blaze will take hours in which thousands of acres will become ashes.

But Uncle Sam's forest firefighters have learned how to cut those hours to minutes—Smokejumpers.

The Rotarian January 1941

Early last year, the Forest Service began its first peacetime recruiting. Most of the applicants were ex-paratroopers. The applicants soon learned that chuting into tall timber was more exacting than dropping behind enemy lines. They would not be shot at, but would be slapped against a giant tree trunk or inched onto a steep ledge covered with jutting boulders.

If the young men who live so daringly at Redwood Ranger Station (Cave Jct.) are any criterion of smokejumping caliber, America's forests are safer than they have ever been.

The most fireproof argument comes from **Cliff Marshall** (CJ-46).

"I didn't choose smokejumping because I had been a paratrooper," he says, "I enlisted in the paratroops because, after the war, I wanted to become a smokejumper."

Coronet magazine July 1947

A few days later (after the first fire jump), another smokejumper made the first air-crash rescue jump to a plane which had crashed while dropping cargo to a fire camp. **Chet Derry** (MSO-40) landed close to the crash, found the pilot dead, and the cargo dropper seriously injured. Two days later a pack string, which had fought dense timber and some of the toughest country in the Rocky Mountains, found the injured man comfortable and well tended. If Derry had not been able to give him quick first aid, the man probably would not have recovered.

Colliers December 1944

Paradoctors—parachuting doctors—and air-rescue squads have changed the picture (downed aircraft). There are now six paradoctors west of the Mississippi, who have rescued 79 men in less than a year's work. Recently, one of them, **Lt. Amos Little** (MSO-43), jumped on a bomber crash in Colorado. He had the survivors treated long before the ground crew arrived.

The toughest part of both air crash rescue and smokejumping is precision jumping at high altitudes into dense timberland. The special training was originated by the USFS.

As far back as 1942 Capt. Frank Wiley was commissioned to organize an air rescue section. A former pilot with the Johnson Flying Service, Wiley chose to work with the Forest Service.

As a result, 13 medical officers arrived at Seeley Lake in the fall of 1943 to take smokejumper training.

In the meantime, the US Coast Guard saw what was going on and planned to send nine enlisted men to take the training.

Canadian air officials were the next to ask that a group of their men be trained to operate in the wilderness of northern and western Canada.

The manpower shortage (WWII) has affected the smokejumping personnel. Out of the 55 men trained from 1940 through 1942, more than forty are now in the Armed Forces, 15 are officers. As the war progressed, a small number of medically discharged veterans were available and conscientious objectors have been accepted and are working very well.

Colliers December 1944



Your Good Sam Funds At Work

Photos Courtesy Maggie Wright



All of us involved in the project to renovate Rainey Jensen's house, widow of Lee Jensen (MYC-69), would like to thank the NSA Good Samaritan Fund for the contribution for this project. Rainey's house has been completely re-sided with the funds and the hard work of old smokejumpers Clay Wright (MYC-79) and Mark Lothrop (MYC-80). What a great organization! Rainey couldn't be happier, which makes all of us happy too.



L-R: Mark Lothrop (MYC '80), Maggie Butterfield Wright, Rainey Jensen & Clay Wright (MYC '79)

Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

Paradise With A Wind Chill—Part II

by Walt Vennum (Fairbanks '62)

This is meant to be a follow up to Gary Shade's (MSO-69) article in the July issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. Between 1990 and 2013, I spent eight Southern Hemisphere summers (Dec.—Feb.) giving geology lectures on and driving zodiacs for cruise ships visiting Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic Islands. If any of you are interested in seeing exotic wildlife (lots of it!) and beautiful mountain scenery, I strongly recommend one of these trips. Having worked for several different companies, I highly recommend Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris. They have very knowledgeable, enthusiastic staff and do an excellent job of not only making the most possible landings, but also giving you maximum time on shore, something that not all the other companies do.

In spite of Antarctica's remoteness, tourism in that part of the world is very strictly regulated. It is thus quite important to carefully select the ship you travel on. Except at Stanley in the Falkland Islands and at Gritviken on South Georgia, there are no docking facilities for cruise ships anywhere in that part of the world. Therefore, passengers will virtually always be transported from ship to shore and back again in zodiacs, inflatable rubber boats that carry 10-12 people. No more than 100 passengers are allowed ashore at any one time at any landing site. If you travel aboard a ship which carries several hundred passengers, 100 people will go ashore in a fleet of zodiacs, spend one hour there, then go back to the ship and wait while a 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. group lands. This eats up a lot of time which greatly cuts into the number of overall stops you can make, plus you get a very limited amount of time on the beach.

The largest ships (500 or more passengers) just cruise and do not make landings. In addition, many of the larger ships are not ice strengthened which greatly limits the places they can visit. Go on a smaller ice-strengthened vessel that carries 100 or fewer passengers.

Even if you've never previously taken a photograph in your life, buy a decent camera and learn how to use it before you leave home. You will need

a telephoto lens (preferably a zoom) to shoot the wildlife, especially the birds. You must take every precaution to keep your camera dry. It will rain while you are there. It will be foggy, misty and windy. Spray and waves will slosh into the zodiacs. You will get wet. Cameras do not like salt water, even minute amounts of salt water.

The Antarctic tourist season lasts from November until late February-earliest March. Early in the season, pack ice can potentially restrict your access to numerous areas. Toward the end of the season, "the pack" will be at its minimum extent, but much of the wildlife will have already gone back out to sea and the rookeries will be nearly empty. Go between mid-December and early February.

Because of the cost, most of you will do this trip only once. For many of you, it will be a lifetime trip, so do it right and go on a three-week adventure that visits the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and the Antarctic Peninsula instead of just going down to the Peninsula from South America and back again.

Cheesemans' is one of the few companies that make landings on Steeple Jason Island in the Falklands which is a shame as Steeple Jason Island is a magical spot that makes the Galapagos Islands look like a children's petting zoo. Visiting the Falklands without going to Steeple Jason Island is criminal. South Georgia is an incredible place. The easily approachable wildlife colonies are immense, and the mountain scenery is simply stunning. You will not see as much wildlife on the Antarctic Peninsula as is encountered on South Georgia, but the scenery, if anything, is even more superlative. From Paradise Bay south through Lemaire Channel must be one of the most breathtaking coastlines on this planet, and you will be very, very close to it.

It is also possible to do Antarctic cruises starting in Hobart, Tasmania, or Bluff, New Zealand. These trips visit the Australian and New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands, then go south into the Ross Sea. Except for being almost totally uninhabited, most of the islands you would stop at on one of these cruises are similar to the Falklands. The most

interesting of these is Macquarie Island, which is a smaller scale version of South Georgia albeit without the magnificent glaciated mountainous terrain. Further south in the Ross Sea, you will cruise by the 14,500' peaks of the Transantarctic Mountains, the 12,500' active volcano Mt. Erebus, the Ross Ice Shelf, and have a chance to see the huts left behind by Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton, which were used by those explorers as base camps during their attempts to reach the South Pole in the early 1900s.

Hobart and Bluff are, however, 600-700 miles farther north than the South American ports (Ushuaia, Argentina, and Punta Arenas, Chile) used for travel to Antarctica, and cruises into the Ross Sea consequently spend a considerably longer amount of time at sea just traveling from place to place. The view out the front window doesn't change much.

Seasonal employment (like Gary applied for) with the independent contractor who does construction, maintenance, logistical, or support work at one of the Antarctic scientific stations (McMurdo, South Pole, Palmer, Byrd) is not a particularly good way to see much of Antarctica. Unless you become

romantically involved with one of the military helicopter pilots or are fortunate enough to work on the search and rescue team you will, for all practical purposes, be confined to the immediate vicinity of the base you are employed at during your time off. Joining the Antarctic SAR team is highly competitive, requires extensive mountaineering experience and most of those highly desired positions are filled by New Zealanders who, in general, are some of the best alpinists in the world.

If you have a background in geology, geophysics or to a somewhat lesser extent biology, have some mountaineering experience and/or can maintain and repair snowmobiles you might be able to land a slot on a remote field party working in the interior of the continent. If interested in doing this contact National Science Foundation's Division of Polar Programs in Washington, D.C. and ask for a list of people and organizations they have recently awarded grants to for scientific projects in Antarctica. Good luck! My first season as an Alaskan smokejumper and my first season as an Antarctic field geologist with the US Geological Survey are easily the two biggest highlights of my life. 🧊

A UFO Story

by "Wild Bill" Yensen (McCall' 53)

In 1973 we had a very poor fire season. The Payette Forest has many backcountry trails that are needed for deer and elk seasons. The S.O. decided to use us on some of those trails. We would jump several miles from Chamberlain and work the trail back to where we could be picked up. We started around the first of August and had sleeping bags, tools and food for two days. Two things were accomplished: The trails were cleared for the fall hunters and we were happy getting a jump

and doing productive work in the backcountry.

Dave Butler (MYC-70), **Jack Firestone** (MYC-75) and myself jumped near the Salmon River on the Three Blaze Trail. We worked all day clearing the trail before stopping at a good campsite and fixing dinner around a small fire. When the sun went down, we crawled into our sleeping bags and looked at the stars.

A moving point of light came out of the east, and I said, "Look at that satellite,"

and we all watched it as it continued east. It then did a 90-degree change of direction and went south. At the same time, we all said, "Did you see that?" It kept going until it disappeared over the horizon.

What we saw happened does not obey the laws of physics and momentum. A point of light going that speed had to be traveling the speed of a satellite, about 17,000 mph. We saw it stop and start going another direction with no change in speed. A UFO? 🧊

Margarita Phillips Memorial Project by the TRAMPS

National Bison Range Refuge, August 18-23, 2019

By Irene Saphra (Redmond '86)

Margarita Phillips (MSO-88) was a force of nature. She didn't take "no" for an answer. That was why, gathered around a bonfire telling Margarita stories during the celebration of her life in December of 2018, a few of us decided we weren't ready to say good-bye. Instead, we came up with the idea of doing a "TRAMPS Trail Project" in her memory. What started out as a seed, took root and grew into the Margarita Phillips Project at the National Bison Range, near Charlo, MT.

The National Bison Range (NBR) was established in 1908 "to provide a sanctuary for the American bison." It consists of approximately 18,800 acres and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. About 350 to 500 bison reside there, as well as deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, black bear, and an occasional grizzly. The refuge receives 250,000 visitors per year, making it one of the most visited wildlife refuges in the U.S.

We contacted the NBR, told them our idea, and they readily agreed. Who could refuse a group of well-qualified volunteers eager to run chainsaws and haul slash, all for the good of improving wildlife habitat? And what better place to do it, than overlooking the valley where Margarita was born and raised? It seemed like the perfect fit. As Amy Coffman, Refuge Manager, put it, "Smokejumpers are a special breed." We put out the call, and the list quickly filled up.

We were quite a diverse group. Our ages ranged from late 30s to mid-70s. Several of us were veterans of the infamous NSA "no-manner" project of 2014 organized by **Kim Maynard** (MSO-82), including **Sarah Altemus** (MSO-01), **Leslie Anderson** (MSO-84), **Robin Embry**

(GAC-85), and **Kelly Esterbrook** (RAC-86). Maynard played a major part setting everything up and scouting out the camping area and work sites. **Deb Yoder** (RDD-00) also joined us. **Sara Brown** (RAC-03) had to bow out at the last minute, however, she ended up playing a critical role.... more on that later. **Irene Saphra** (RAC-86) was "squadleader" in name only, as this was a true "group effort." In addition to us ladies that knew, loved, and worked with Margarita, we had two more crew members of the opposite sex: **Scott Bates** (MYC-69) and **Jim Snapp** (MSO-65). These two were, in crew member Deb Yoder's words "token brave retired smokejumper men that joined our group, and we were beyond grateful for the balance they brought."

Our cook for the first half of the week was Annette Dusseau, another NSA "no-manner" veteran. Betty Violette relieved Annette during the second half. Major props for keeping us well-fed and nourishing our souls as well! Annette regaled us with stories of her and Maynard's recent D-Day re-enactment jump over Normandy from the restored DC-3 Miss Montana. Betty supplied us with bottomless tortilla chips and kept us laughing right up until the last piece of micro trash was retrieved.

Our crew convened on a warm summer afternoon in late August at a stellar campsite, just down the road from the NBR Visitor Center. We had everything we needed for a comfortable stay. A lovely creek flowed next to camp, allowing for cool refreshing dips at the end of shift. To the east, the Mission Range provided a dramatic backdrop as we watched Harold, the local resident elk, pay his nightly visit during evening cocktail hour.

The first morning, we met with NBR repre-

sentatives who lined us out. Our goal for the first 2 days consisted of opening a series of “trails” that contoured around the steep hillsides of the NBR, directly above our campsite. These “trails” were paths that would allow riders on horseback to herd the bison for the annual bison capture that takes place each fall. Once they are herded into corrals, the bison are health checked, and calves receive an ID chip. They are then sorted for donation or released back to the Range. This year 14 bison were donated to the Blackfeet Nation and 10 to the Northern Arapaho of the Wind River Reservation. These donated bison will become part of tribal managed conservation populations.

We split up into three groups of three sawyers/swampers, “rolling our own” in true smokejumper style. We completed our first assignment in two days and moved to a different location the 3rd day. Our next mission was to fall Douglas fir trees that were encroaching on a stand of old-growth Ponderosa Pine.

The NBR hopes to maintain the old-growth pine component by conducting a prescribed burn in the future. The trees were felled and the slash dragged away from the Ponderosa “leave trees.” The sound boles of the felled trees were to be

unbucked and left in place for future utilization. Some of the trees that were marked for felling were well over 30 inches in diameter, which gave our crew a little pause since it had been awhile since some of us had cut anything that large. However, after a thorough safety briefing, we were only too happy to give it our best shot. Once again, our three crews dispersed into pockets a safe distance away from one another, and soon the woods were ringing out with merry shouts of “down the hill,” “across the hill,” and, finally, “Lunch!” It was a great refresher for those of us that had not sawed in a while.

This wasn’t your typical NSA project, in that it involved extensive chainsaw work. At the end of each shift, crew members would relax with a cold beverage or two while doing saw maintenance and sharpening.

All too soon, the fun was over on the 4th day, and it was time to reward ourselves with a little tour of the Range. We drove the Loop Road, pausing for our obligatory crew photo overlooking Red Sleep Mountain, as well as various bison “selfies.”

On the way back to camp for our final evening, a beautiful rainbow appeared over the mountains



L-R: Scott Bates (MYC-69), Irene Saphra (RAC-86), Deb Yoder (RDD-00), Sarah Altemus (MSO-01), Leslie Anderson (MSO-84), Robin Embry (GAC-85), Kim Maynard (MSO-82), Kelly Esterbrook (RAC-86), Jim Snapp (MSO-65).

to the east. Margarita was indeed watching over us. Her spirit stayed with us all that week, reminding us of why we were together and giving us even more reason to enjoy the company of friends old and new, present and absent.

In Scott Bates' words: "All of you lady smokejumpers proved yourselves in my mind, and you brought me up to speed on how the organization has progressed. You were pioneers and deserve credit for sticking with it even when the smokejumpers were growing as an organization. There wasn't one lady smokejumper when I was jumping. It is never easy to be a pioneer in anything. It is good to see that there is more balance in the smokejumper and fire world now. It was a pleasure to celebrate the life of another smokejumper pioneer—Margarita Phillips. She was an amazingly resilient and courageous woman who never gave up on anything, even at the end of her life. Thanks for the opportunity to be on the crew."

The last morning was bittersweet for all of us. Sara Brown had a beautiful stone inscribed and transported to the NBR. The NBR generously offered us a space to remember Margarita in an interpretive kiosk next to the visitor center. The kiosk display was about fire and tribal history in

the Northern Rockies. It was the perfect place to pay tribute to Margarita, a woman who loved the natural world and the forces that shaped it. The only issue facing us was how to install the stone? We had invited folks that knew and loved Margarita to join us in remembering her, including Margarita's husband, Doug, and their son DJ. Many other jumper alumni showed up. As our group gathered, we discussed a creative way to place the stone in the kiosk, in a way that visitors to the site could learn about who Margarita was and understand her role and contribution to the Wildland Fire Community. The MSO "bros" eagerly stepped up and volunteered for the task. After they complete their work, the stone and words describing Margarita will be placed in the kiosk, overlooking the Mission Valley where she was born and raised.

This is the first time the National Smokejumper Association has worked with the NBR, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Let's hope this is the beginning of a "beautiful friendship" as we continue to work together to enhance and improve wildlife habitat.

In memory of Margarita Kay Phillips 1956-2018, MSO 1988-2010. 🌲

A Day In The Lake

by Gene Jessup (North Cascades '57)

I am blessed and fortunate to live on a small lake in North Central Washington State. The lake has an abundant supply of bass, perch, blue gill, crappie and some catfish. And my lovely wife loves to fish. Life is good!

A little fishing outing on a quiet lake can become a long-remembered adventure. You never know what will happen with that next cast.

It was mid-July and a warm beautiful day, a perfect time to get the boat on the lake and catch some fish. But before I hit the lake, I noticed the rear seat on my Gamefisher 14-foot boat was getting a little wobbly, and I decided it required a quick fix.

The boat seat is located at the rear of my boat, near the right side, and is easily removed. It didn't

take long and the seat was back in the boat. I was ready for a great afternoon on the lake.

I circled the lake and hit all my favorite bass fishing spots. It was a good fishing day, and I caught and released several nice 3- to 4-pound bass. I decided to try my luck and catch a few crappie to finish out a good day of fishing.

I anchored next to a fallen tree which was about 30 yards from shore. My first crappie was a nice size, but my line was around a small tree limb. I leaned back in my seat to free the line, and I felt my boat seat give way.

My feet went up in the air, and I did a reverse somersault into the lake. I was completely underwater and had to paddle hard to get back up to

the surface.

It took a minute for me to assess the situation. My life jacket was in the storage shed at home, the boat was anchored, and there was no way for me to get back into the boat.

Fortunately, there was an underwater limb to stand on, rest for a minute and consider my plight. I remembered to put my hearing aids in the boat, but forgot my cell phone in my pants pocket. (My wife would remind me later how much a cell phone costs.)

I decided to work my way, hand over hand, to the front of the boat and attempt to pull the anchor up. As lots of luck would have it, I managed to get the anchor back in the boat. On my way back to the rear of the boat, I was able to grab a seat cushion to use as a "flotation device." The next question to be addressed was how to get back home across about 100 yards of lake.

So, standing on my underwater limb, I said to myself, *I have a couple of options*. I could yell for help in hopes that a neighbor would come to my aid, but they would probably dial 911.

The firemen would arrive, followed by a newspaper reporter. The headline would read: *81-Year-Old Local Man Falls Out Of Boat But Avoids Drowning When Rescued By Firemen*, and the story would read: "When this reporter asked if the old fellow would like the phone number of an assisted-living facility, his reply was quite uncalled for and unprintable."

After reading the headlines in my mind, I decided on my second option – I would let the boat pull me home. I could reach up, turn the electric motor on, and guide the boat and motor by holding and turning the shaft of the motor with my hand.

It worked! I did remember to tie myself to the boat after a vision of the boat heading for home while I clung to a tree limb. And after several yards of travel, I thought it might be a good idea to keep the prop away from the front of my body and all those valuable body parts.

The trip across the lake didn't take too long. I even managed to sing a few lines of the University of Montana fight song: "Up with Montana boys, down with the foe, Good ol' Grizzlies out for a victory; ... da da da da ... from the tummy of the Grizzly Bear!!"

But while I was busy singing, steering the boat and keeping the prop away from you-know-what, I missed my little boat landing.

I had swung into some brush along the bank and was trying to maneuver the boat back to the landing when my pants hooked a tree limb. The motor was running, the boat was moving forward, and my pants were being pulled off by the limb. I kicked and cursed, but I lost the fight along with my pants.

Finally, at my boat launch, I was wondering what my neighbor's wife would say when I showed up on her doorstep, dripping wet in my underwear, wanting to use her phone. But while I was standing in the water beside my boat, up popped a red and white bobber attached to my 4-wheeler key. It had been in my pants pocket. Figure that one!

Anyway, my neighbor's wife was off the hook. I had avoided those nasty headlines and headed for home, thinking that a better headline would read: *Local Top Rod Fisherman Performs Daring, Brave And Innovative Self-Rescue After Defective Boat Equipment Causes Fall From Boat*.

Needless to say, many a "Thank you, Lord" was said after I threw the damned boat seat in the garbage can. This is a TRUE story, and "you never know what's about to happen after that next cast." 🙏

This story will be just one in Gene's book "Between Heaven and Earth The Adventures of A Smokejumper" to be published by Fulton Books. (Ed.)

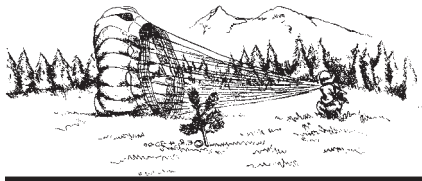
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Helping Other Smokejumpers

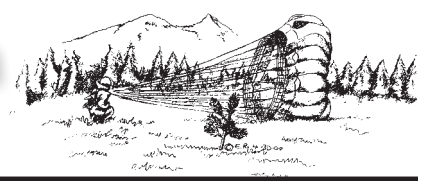
and Their Families

Send us your Smokejumper or other pins, Trail Crew pins, and/or patches that are hiding in your sock drawer. We'll sell them to collectors on eBay with all money going into the NSA Good Samaritan Fund and acknowledge you in a later issue.

*Send to: Chuck Sheley—10 July Ln—Chico
CA 95926*



Snapshots from the Past



by Jeff R. Davis
(Missoula '57)

THE DATE WAS June 16, 1957. I'd arrived at the Forest Service's largest smokejumper training base, the Aerial Fire Depot, from my home in Duluth, Minnesota, to begin new man training. (In later years we were called "rookies".)

Since it was Sunday, I had the day to myself. I'd only had one ride in an aircraft before and, of course, landed in it with the rest of the passengers. The thought of jumping out of one was beyond me. I discovered an old AT-11 parked on the ramp. I sat in the open door, my feet perched in the outside step, and tried to imagine leaping out of that thing at altitude. I almost quit the jumpers before I'd begun. That imaginary "jump" scared the bejesus out of me.

But I buried my fears, caught a restless night's sleep in the dormitory and presented myself for duty the following morning. The first entry in a diary I was to keep for the next

ten years read, "1957, June 17, 0700-0800-exercise and obstacle course."

Let me tell you about exercise and obstacle course, smokejumper style.

The jumper training foremen were huge monsters who at one glance showed us they had no use for flimsy wimps like us. They made it clear from the start they didn't expect a one of us to finish the rigorous four-week training course. Some didn't.

We showed up the first day in work clothes and logger-style boots. My first pair were Buffalo's. From then on, I stayed with Whites. My first pair of Whites cost \$29 and change, and I thought that was terribly expensive.

Our exercise started immediately. We warmed up with jumping jacks, squat jumps, and other insults to nature, but I had the feeling this was only a prelude of coming attractions. I was right. The next thing I knew I was pounding down the asphalt in those six-pound loggers, running at full tilt. It occurred to me in later years that this caused more shin splints than it did good, but that was the jumpers in 1957. If you didn't like it, how bad did you want to be a smokejumper? I wanted badly to become a jumper. I ran!

After a week the exercise

became tolerable, and I got so I didn't pitch my breakfast at the mere thought. I can't say the same for the other goodie they had in store for us: the obstacle course. It looked innocent enough, lying there among the gentle slopes of the training grounds: some overhead ladders, a couple of rows of truck tires, a few ropes hanging from various structures, and little ramps going nowhere with piles of sawdust under each one. To this day the smell of sawdust makes me wince.

We didn't run it once for time, as I'm told they did in later years. We ran it for *endurance*. Squad leaders were stationed at each sawdust pit. About the third time around that sucker, as we ran off each ramp and practiced our landing falls, the squad leaders used their Whites to kick us to our feet to resume our ragged trek to nowhere.

I learned early on never to eat a meal before I was slated for the O-course. No matter what I did, I was going to puke on that course anyhow. It just saved a lot of time and effort to puke on an empty stomach.

They had another damned contraption they actually called the "torture rack." **Fred Bauer** (MSO-41), my first Project Superintendent, really loved this device. He swore

by it. It consisted of a long, peeled log mounted parallel to the ground and about eight inches above it. You stood behind it with your legs strapped to the log around both calves and bent over backward until your head touched the ground behind you. As with all the other joys the training units were to offer us, we kept our opinion of their values to ourselves, and we got out there and we *did* it.

We were out digging cold line. Half our training was for fire suppression. Digging cold line was how we learned to become firefighters. The absence of a fire close by was the only thing cold about digging cold line. We were sweating like pigs. Water was on short

ration. The foreman in charge explained that “short ration” meant no water at all. We worked all day long in that hot Montana June weather digging line, and anyone who whined about being thirsty was met with a snort and an obscenity. Any notions we had that smokejumping was heroic, glamorous work were quickly dispelled. Firefighting was just plain damned hard work.

But the sweating, puking days on the Units and the cold line digging passed. Other days passed climbing Ponderosa and Douglas fir, dropping snags, estimating fire sizes, mapping, learning radio use, compass training, rescue training, fire behavior lectures

until we were blue in the face, plus seven training jumps into increasingly difficult terrain. Finally it was all behind us and we prepared to graduate into the elite ranks of the smokejumpers.

Jon Rolf, one of us in our graduation picture, would die later in a fiery Ford Trimotor crash at the Moose Creek airstrip along with a fellow jumper and a Forest Supervisor. Others died in future years, many left the ranks after only a season or two. But on July 12th, 1957, we were all present and accounted for, eager and ready to take on the world. My smokejumper adventure had begun, and it was worth all the blood, sweat, and tears of new man training. 🙏

Red Shirt—Green Shirt Patrols

by **Karl Brauneis** (Missoula '77)

Within many regions of the old Forest Service, we enjoyed the craft of a “generalist” ranger. Every forest ranger was a firefighter and performed law enforcement duties. We also got to ride some very good horses, to boot. It was fun.

In Wyoming, the game wardens and biologists wore the “red shirt.” We wore the “green shirt.” In the fall we paired up for the “Red Shirt—Green Shirt Patrols.” The patrols presented a boundless opportunity to learn more about wildlife and the inner workings of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Wildlife officials truly served in an exceptional outfit. The men and women I worked with remain lifelong friends, hunting partners, and rifle range enthusiasts.

Law enforcement was our focus on patrol, but we often designed forest and wildlife management proj-

ects together. The patrols provided an opportunity to share ideas one-on-one with other resource management professionals in the field. On one occasion, Bob Lanka (Wyoming Game and Fish Biologist) and I stood on a rim overlooking the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie River. I produced a topographic map, and we drew in cutting units and prescribed burn units to improve bighorn sheep habitat. When finalized, the project looked almost exactly as we had drawn it out.

On to law enforcement. It had recently snowed one fall morning. I was patrolling with John Emerich, the local biologist with Game and Fish. John is a remarkable man and knew the wildlife and their movements like the back of his hand. John later advanced up to the Deputy Director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Patrolling in a 4-wheel drive pickup truck we found ourselves

on one of the many “two track” open roads on the district. We stopped at a hunters camp where several recently killed elk were hanging. We checked the elk, their tags, and the hunters licenses. A short discussion took place on where the elk were killed. We also noted an old, narrow base Willys jeep that belonged to “grandpa,” who had killed one of the hanging elk. Saying goodbye, we hopped in the truck and headed up the road.

John turns and says; “Karl, did you see any rub or drag marks on grandpa’s elk?” “No, come to think of it, I didn’t.”

John said, “Let’s drive up there. If he shot the elk where he said, then he would be on a closed road. I am interested to see how far they drug that elk.”

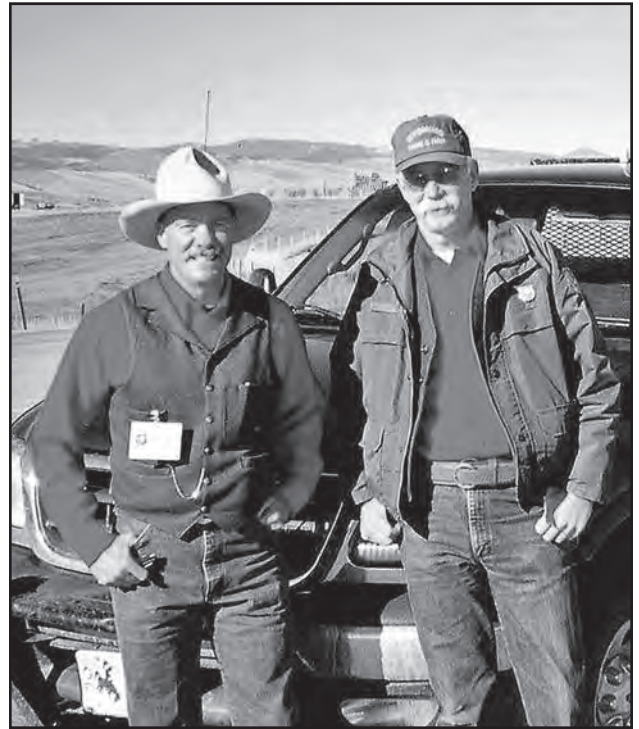
We soon arrived at the closed road. Sure enough, plain as day were the narrow wheelbase jeep tracks heading up through the fresh snow on the closed road. We got out and hiked the tracks. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of mile up the road, we came to the elk gut pile. Case solved.

We drove back to the camp and I cited grandpa for the off-road travel violation. That evening we returned to town. The gossip had already beat us. A chorus reverberated through town: “The ranger and the game warden finally caught grandpa doing what he’s been doing for the last 30 years.” There was no ill feeling. It was simply a game of hide and seek. The success of the game that day depended upon the paired Red Shirt and Green Shirt.

Little known is the fact that forest officers can enforce state wildlife regulations on the National Forests as specified by the act of 1897. We use this authority only in concurrence and at the request of the local Game and Fish. This relationship will vary by state and location. In North Idaho, the game wardens were few and far between with little support staff. The local warden asked if several of us could help by checking fishing and hunting licenses and reporting back to him on radio. We did.

Only once was I asked by a game warden in Wyoming to use my federal authority on a case that crossed state (Illegal Outfitting) and federal jurisdiction (Conducting Business Without a Permit). We approached and questioned the individuals involved, together in Red Shirt—Green Shirt fashion. We then decided to use my federal authority for a number of reasons.

Upon retirement from the Forest Service, my

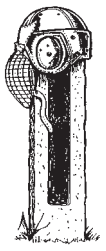


Author (R) with good friend and Game Warden Kent Schmidlin. (Courtesy K. Brauneis)

Game and Fish friend Tom Ryder insisted that I wear the Red Shirt. I jumped at the opportunity. I was soon working the check station outside of Lander, Wyoming, to sample for Chronic Wasting Disease. The amusement in expression and double take by hunters in our community who saw me in Red Shirt is memorable. We had fun and lively conversations about the switch from green to red as I checked the deer.

There is a beauty of community in cooperation when officials and agencies work together in service to the land and citizenry. I always felt that Lander loved her forest rangers. They might not agree with Washington policy or the edicts cascading down through the system, but they understood our job locally and supported us. We gave back through community involvement in service clubs, church, Boy Scouts, and other civic organizations. It was a time-held tradition of the old Forest Service.

The Red Shirt—Green Shirt Patrols proved a benefit to both the men and women who worked together, the local citizenry and our National Forests and wildlife. For me, it was a wonderful experience. Through the cooperation and efforts of the Game and Fish and Forest Service, the program continues locally. As a retired forest ranger, I find that very reassuring. 🌲



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

You will see obits for jumpers who have died in past years. Getting an obit on as many jumpers as possible is part of the NSA History Preservation Project. Fred Cooper (NCSB-62), Denny Breslin (NCSB-69), and I are working on this project. If you can't find an obit on someone and you can help, please forward that information. (Ed.)

Donald E. Hertzog (McCall '48)

Don, 92, died June 27, 2020, in Lacey, Washington, after suffering from Parkinson's Disease for several years. He graduated from high school in Caldwell, Idaho, and served in the US Army as a MP in South Korea. Don started work with the USFS at an early age due to the lack of manpower during WWII. As a teenager, he manned a lookout and later worked building trails.

Don graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in engineering and spent over four years with the Washington State Dept. of Fisheries designing facilities for salmon migration. He later spent 10 years with Boeing and supervised a group of engineers responsible for the design and construction of the "world's largest building," the 747 manufacturing plant in Everett, WA. From there he worked as City Engineer for the city of Hoquiam, Washington. Don then moved to Lacey to be the Director of Public Works and served for 17 years as City Engineer. Don jumped at McCall 1948-50 while attending college.

Richard "Dick" Wessell (Cave Junction '56)

Dick, 82, died May 22, 2020, in Silverton, Oregon. After graduating high school in Reed-sport, Oregon, in 1956, he and a buddy went looking for a town with a semi-professional baseball team, as they hoped to play pro ball one day. They stumbled on Cave Junction and the Siskiyou

Smokejumper Base. His buddy wanted no part of jumping, but Dick "jumped" at the chance. Dick jumped from 1956-61, then went to the Gold Beach Ranger Station 1962-66.

He returned to Cave Junction and resumed jumping from 1966-72, including time as the Base Foreman. Dick also was a high school referee, EMT and volunteer ambulance driver. He transferred to Brookings in 1973 as the Fire Management Officer on the Chetco Ranger District. In 1979 he transferred to the Umpqua NF Supervisor's Office in Roseburg as the Assistant Fire Staff Officer and retired from the Forest Service in 1988.

During his career he also served on various forest and regional fire and incident command overhead teams as an air attack officer. After his forest service retirement, he spent six years with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office as a patrol deputy. Other than his family and 62-year marriage to Sandy, Dick was never prouder of anything more than being a smokejumper. In his later years he would not be caught in a shirt without the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base emblem.

Dale L. Schmaljohn (McCall '60)

Dale died April 25, 2020. He worked on a trail crew for the Payette NF in 1959 and, after graduating from Emmett High School (Idaho), rookied at McCall in 1960. Dale received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Idaho State University in 1965 and his master's degree in 1969. In 1971 he moved to Greeley, Colorado, to get his Ph.D. from Northern Colorado University, which he received in 1973.

After getting his Doctorate, Dale moved to Boise to begin his career as a school psychologist working for the Boise School District. In 1982 he authored a book for young readers, titled *Smoke-*

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

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| Karen Moen..... | "This donation is in honor of Lee Gossett (RDD-57) upon publication of his book <i>Smokejumper to Global Pilot</i> , and in appreciation for the friendship and support both Mary and Lee Gossett have extended to my daughter and me ever since meeting them in 1968." (Karen's husband, Ed Weissenback (CJ-64), was shot down on December 17, 1971, when working for Air America in Laos.) (Ed.) | Christopher Bright..... | Bud Filler (MYC-52) |
| Tim Castle (Assoc.) | CIA Historian Ret. GSF | Don Spence (RDD-64) | GSF |
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Contributions since the previous publication of donors July 2020
Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$214,590
Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:
Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926

jumper—A Summer in the American Wilderness.
Dale retired from the Boise School District after 33 years of service.

One of his favorite pasttimes was skiing. Dale skied even at the onset of Alzheimer's disease in 2010. Eventually the Alzheimer's became more debilitating, and Dale spent the last seven years of his life at the Emerson Memory Care center. Dale jumped at McCall 1960-69 and 1972.

Thanks to Leo Cromwell for this obit. (Ed.)

Edward L. Hastey (Missoula '54)

Ed died February 22, 2020, at home in Citrus Heights, CA. He worked for the BLM for more than 40 years, including being California State Director for over 20 years. He spent his retire-

ment years as a consultant, enjoying camping and hiking trips with family and walking his dog. Ed jumped at Missoula during the 1954 season.

In 1986 Ed was given a special award. From *The Washington Post*: "President Reagan yesterday presented Distinguished Presidential Rank Awards, the highest honor in the elite Senior Executive Service, to 44 winners whom he described as 'the best of the best in serving the American people.' "

"They lead the leaders of the federal establishment," Reagan said in a ceremony at the Old Executive Office Building.

Robert Charley (McCall '93)

Bob, 52, died April 3, 2020. He graduated

from Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. Bob joined the Flagstaff Hotshots and then went on to Krassel Helitack in Idaho. He joined the McCall Smokejumpers in 1993 and jumped there until 2014 when he retired. Bob had 180 fire and 391 total jumps.

Bob loved reading, painting, drawing, and anything involving art, such as designing t-shirts for the McCall Smokejumper Base.

Mark L. Romey (Missoula '75)

Mark died on December 3, 2019, after suffering a massive stroke. Prior to his passing, Mark fought a gallant battle against Parkinson's Disease. After graduating high school in Buffalo, New York, Mark entered the Coast Guard where he spent a tour on a river gunboat in Vietnam—a tour that saw more than its share of action. After leaving the Coast Guard, Mark attended the University of Montana where he graduated with honors.

In 1977, Mark began the Forestry Trainee Program at Spotted Bear R.D. on the Flathead N.F. After two years, Mark was assigned to the Libby and the Canoe Gulch Districts on the Kootenai N.F. In 1988 he transferred to the Hebgan Lake District on the Gallatin N.F. In the late 90s Mark moved to Manistee N.F. in Michigan, then on to the Kootenai, where he retired in 2005 as the Forest Fire Staff Officer.

Mark will always be known as a Steward of the land, a loving father and husband. In 2018 Mark was inducted into Montana's Foresters Hall of Fame. He had a keen sense of humor, and if you were lucky to be his friend, you were lucky enough.

Thanks to Dick Rath (MSO-73) for doing this obit. (Ed.)

Richard F. Garner (McCall '56)

Richard, 82, died April 26, 2020. He was a Boise High School and College of Idaho graduate. He was living in Mesa, Arizona, at the time of his death. Richard jumped at McCall in 1956 and 1958.

Robin F. Twogood (Missoula '56)

Robin, 82, died in the afternoon, Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at his home in Darby, Montana.

Lester E. Bradford (Missoula '50)

Lester died March 3, 2019, at his home in Mount Vernon, Washington. Upon his graduation from high school, Lester joined the Army in June 1944 and was trained as a tail gunner.

Lester took advantage of the GI Bill, attending Yale University, graduating with a MS in forestry. Lester had several jobs with the USFS, including smokejumping. In 1950 Lester had seven training jumps and two fire jumps. In 1951 he had two refresher jumps and five fire jumps.

At Yale, Lester met Winifred Smith, a young doctor who as a missionary went to Sierra Leone, West Africa. Lester took a special course for missionaries in agriculture at Cornell University with a plan to join Winifred in Africa. He took a freighter to Sierra Leone, docking in Freetown on December 20, 1952, and they were married on December 23. They continued to live in Sierra Leone for the next 17 years. Winnifred ran a birth and pediatric center and Lester an agricultural test farm. While there, they were joined by five of their children.

In 1968, the family moved to Bogalusa, Louisiana, with Lester working for the Louisiana State University extension service and earned a PhD in education. After several years in Louisiana, the family moved to Mount Vernon, Washington, where Lester worked as a County Agent in charge of 4-H programs, education, and forestry for Skagit and Island Counties.

In 1979, Lester accepted a job with a contractor for the U.S State Department's Agency for International Development. He and Winnie traveled to Sudan and Pakistan. After Lester officially "retired," he traveled overseas for many short-term volunteer jobs in Zimbabwe, Bolivia, Brazil, Ukraine, Indonesia, and Haiti. Lester studied and spoke many languages, including French, Spanish, Latin, German, Russian, and African languages including Kono, Mende, and Krio.

Lloyd E. Whitaker (Redding '66)

Lloyd, 77, died March 7, 2020, at the University of Kentucky Medical Center. Lloyd and his twin brother, Floyd, were born at Carmel-by-the-Sea in Monterey County. They lived in Monterey, California, and graduated from Monterey High School in 1960. In 1961 they began working as

permanent, year-long employees for the USFS on the Los Padres NF.

As a member of the “retread smokejumper program” that started in 1963 at the Redding, California, Smokejumper Base, Floyd began smokejumping at Redding in 1965 and Lloyd followed his brother in 1966. They took their smokejumper training in the spring, returning to the Los Padres NF to their regular positions as Engine Operators until they were needed for smokejumping assignments during the summer at Redding. (The Retread Program ended in 1974.)

Lloyd was a smokejumper for five years at Redding, from 1966 through 1970. He transferred to Missoula and jumped there in 1971, 1972, and 1979. From 1979 to 1981, Lloyd was the Lolo NF Helicopter Foreman in Missoula, Montana.

In 1981, Lloyd transferred to the Daniel Boone NF in Kentucky working as a District Fire Crew Foreman on the London Ranger District.

Ronald K. Price (Cave Junction '56)

Ron, 84, died December 4, 2019, in the Philippines where he lived after his retirement. He retired from the Marine Corps as a colonel and jumped at Cave Junction 1956-59 prior to his enlistment.

Ronald E. Marker (McCall '52)

Ron, 84, died August 4, 2019, in Watsonville, California. He graduated from the University of Idaho in 1957 and served as an officer in the Navy from 1958-62. After his service, he went to work in the private section as a certified public accountant.

Ron eventually moved to sales and management in the frozen food industry where his most recent title was as a Chief Financial Officer with VPS Companies in Watsonville.

Ron jumped at McCall 1952-55 and at Idaho City in 1956.

Joe N. Blackburn (Missoula '51)

Joe, 88, died December 17, 2019, at his home in Plummer, Idaho. He graduated from the University of Montana in 1953 and entered the Army as a Second Lieutenant assigned to

the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg. Joe was later assigned to the 12th Special Forces Group and retired as a Major.

Joe then became a Conservation Officer with the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game and eventually was a regional supervisor. After retirement from that position, Joe served as an enforcement agent for the Idaho Outfitter and Guides Licensing Board. In 1996 he was elected as Benewah County Sheriff and served a four-year term. Joe was an avid runner competing in 13 marathons and 12 triathlons. He jumped at Missoula 1951-53.

Larry A. LaPlant (Missoula '62)

Larry, 78, died April 11, 2018, after a long battle with cancer. He was a graduate of the University of Montana with a degree in Wildlife Management, after which he served two years in the Army at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Larry initiated a Game Warden Program while in the service and returned to Fort Rucker after his discharge where he was employed as the installation's Fish and Wildlife Biologist from 1966-71.

In 1978 Larry moved to Roswell, N.M., to work for the BLM as a District Wildlife Biologist. He was also involved in the fire management program. Larry retired as a Multi-Resource Supervisor in 2000. He jumped at Missoula during the 1962-63 seasons.

Gene R. Little (Missoula '47)

Gene died February 18, 2018. He was born in Seattle, Washington, and lived in the southern Puget Sound area his entire life, graduating from Highline High School in 1946 and attending Washington State University, earning a degree in Natural Resources.

After graduating from WSU, he worked for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources until his retirement in 1982 as head of their Technical Services Division.

After retirement, Gene was active as a caregiver to his wife until her passing. He served on the Washington State Noxious Weed Control and the Olympia Symphony Boards. He worked on his 30-acre farm raising Scotch Highland cattle and horses.

Gene jumped at Missoula in 1947 and was a Life Member of the NSA. 🕊

The First Time I Met Walt Smith

By Roger Cox (Missoula '69)

It was July 5, 1975, and we were in the Twin Otter circling the McKnight Fire on the Gila National Forest in New Mexico. The fire was small, as most were in the area of the historic McKnight Burn that covered thousands of acres years before. I knew that cat's claw and oak brush awaited us on the ground. It was early morning, and the wind was calm as usual early in the day. It would pick up by midday, but this fire did not seem to be a threat. A single snag smoking near the base with perhaps a little ground fire, a product of last night's lightning show.

It was my sixth season of jumping, my third in R-3. This looked to be as easy as they get. I couldn't ask for a better jump partner. **Walt Smith** (BOI-71) was new to R-3 but not new to jumping and was as dependable and capable as any jumper I knew. The fire was going to be routine, no surprises here. The spotter called for two, and Walt and I waddled to the door, soon to be under a T-10 looking for a landing spot in the scattered timber near the fire.

Walt did his rookie training in Boise and after a few years had transferred to Missoula. He had gone to school in Hamilton, Montana, started on the football team as a linebacker, and I suspect a good one. When Walt transferred in, I was helping with the training of new jumpers. One of the items that Walt had not trained in was a water landing. **Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69) and I loaded up a truck and, with several other jumpers, drove to Frenchtown Pond where we demonstrated the process of landing in water and getting yourself, plus your main chute to shore. It was my first contact with Walt that I could remember.

Walt had served in the Marine Corp and had done time in Vietnam as a grunt, as I had. That I knew and it interested me, but we never had discussed our experiences. Maybe it was too recent. Only eight years earlier, we were living the dream in Vietnam and, as usual, we really didn't ever discuss our experiences. No good reason, it was just the way it was. I had noticed that Walt had

some of the habits that combat creates. He didn't like people approaching from behind and would keep track by standing so the sun would cast a shadow if someone



Roger Cox (Courtesy R. Cox)

walked in behind him. He also put his back to the wall or sat with his back to the wall so that he had total control of the area in front of him. I did the same thing, still do. But it wasn't worth commenting on, and I never brought up the subject.

The fire was routine and we had it controlled very quickly. Digging was easy and a line went in without challenge. Then we broke out the cross-cut saw and dropped the snag. It shattered when it hit the ground, so we had some mopping up to do. That took a while and we worked quietly, just doing our job. By evening the fire was cold, and we would be spending the night with a promised helicopter pickup the next morning. Time to break out the hot dogs and enjoy the evening.

I'm not sure who brought up the subject first, but Vietnam became the subject and the story was just starting.

February 27, 1967, I was dug in with my company north of Highway 9 just south of the DMZ in the I Corps sector of Vietnam. My unit was Lima Company of Third Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment. I was a rifleman, the basis for the Marine Corps. My time in Vietnam had just started, and I was not yet a combat-hardened Marine. I had done little more than march days and dig in every night with the other 140 men in my com-

pany. The Regiment had been in country for over a year and my company was filled with Marines with combat experience.

The night started out like every other night—establish a perimeter and dig a fighting hole, heat a can of c-rations, and try to get some sleep before your first watch. This part of the process I had figured out. But I wasn't expecting to be awakened at o-dark-thirty and march the rest of the night for who knows what.

A recon unit, usually six to eight Marines, had made contact the day before with what turned out to be a regiment of NVA. From the after-action report published by the Marine Corps:

*"The morning of the 27th, a Marine reconnaissance team 5000 meters northwest of Cam Lo attempted to ambush what appeared to be only two enemy soldiers. The team actually engaged an enemy company which proved to be the lead element of the 812th Regiment 324, B Division. By 1045 the reconnaissance team reported that it was surrounded by at least 100 NVA. The closest friendly force was Captain Alan Hartney's Company L, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines." ***

They were on the run with wounded and needed help. We were the closest unit and were directed to immediately make our way to their assistance. This was an unusual request for we never moved at night except for listening posts and ambushes preplanned and requiring travel only over very short distances. I don't remember much about the march. It was darker than the inside of a cow, and we never used any lumination for the fear of giving our position away. Travel was quiet shuffling for several hours as we made our way south down a road that was little more than two-wheel tracks. I just kept track of the man ahead of me as I felt my way down the trail.

By first light, we had arrived at our destination, now having been joined by tanks. Their firepower is appreciated, but it means that we did not arrive unannounced. Tanks are not quiet. With the rising sun, we left the trail and climbed a small

ridgeline, soon to be noted as Hill 124. At that point we were eight miles or so from salt water, so it was not a major climb. As we were spreading out, my platoon was ordered to advance across a small saddle and secure it as a landing zone.

My squad was advancing across this area when the first mortar rounds were fired by the NVA. Those sounds of dropping in the tube are a sure sign of a bad day off to a bad start. This started the artillery barrage that would continue non-stop for the next three days. The 82-millimeter mortars were not just random, and the first round landed in the proposed LZ. One of my squad members was killed with the first round and another Marine was badly wounded. As our platoon commander directed, we quickly set up a perimeter and prepared to dig in as the mortar barrage picked up in intensity. Chaos prevailed for minutes until we got lined out, and the company prepared to defend itself. So far, we were only taking mortar rounds, rifle fire was yet to come but come it did.

I was paired up with an experienced Marine, and I followed his lead. His courage and calmness were infectious. Our first action was to defend ourselves while hoping to get a foxhole dug for protection. Off to my left was a tank reinforcing our perimeter and bringing tremendous firepower to our line. As the battle built in intensity, I was



General Lew Walt presents Marine Walt Smith with the Purple Heart. (Courtesy Tony Beltran)

occupied with firing into my assigned sector as targets appeared, and digging like hell to get us below the incoming fire. I kept my rifle hot.

Although I had experienced some action in my brief time in Vietnam, I had not endured a major battle as this one had just become. The noise was overwhelming with our return fire and the tank's guns. We were realizing we were in contact with a superior force and were fighting for our lives. Rifle, machine gun and mortar fire were now joined by RPG's. Their first objective was the tank.

In short order, the tank received multiple hits and was burning. A Marine crawled out of the hatch and leaned up against the turret. He was obviously still alive but with all the rounds hitting the tank was in mortal danger. My foxhole mate, Fred Lopez, says, "I can't watch this," and jumps up running to the tank. He made it through the rain of bullets and mortars and was trying to pull the Marine off the tank. I jumped up to assist, but Fred was able to move him to behind the tank before I arrived (Fred was recommended for the Silver Star for this action). In my absence, our foxhole took a direct hit from a mortar round, the fortunes of war. We returned to our position and took up the fight again.

The remaining afternoon, we were in constant contact. They did pull back, but the shelling never stopped. As the day wore on, we were resupplied with ammunition from our wounded and dead and prepared for a long night, not knowing what to expect, but expecting the worst. The M-14 is a reliable rifle, and I continued to monitor my sector occasionally firing with or without targets just to keep them honest. Staff Sargent Boyer, our platoon Sargent, made the rounds checking our position, water, and ammo. He mentioned that we might pull back and consolidate our perimeter to adjust for our losses.

Now we were being supported from every direction. The surrounding firebases were making the night miserable for the NVA. So was lumination. The "star shell" or flares would give us several minutes of light, then another star shell was on its way. This support was probably keeping us alive.

The company had some badly wounded Marines, men that wouldn't make it until daylight. Sometime during the night, a "dust off" (helicop-

ter) came in to our perimeter. And again, "If we called, they came." They referring to those pilots who did the impossible daily.

Our LZ was designated as "hot," referring to the fact that any incoming helicopters would be under intense fire. A flashlight was placed in the bottom of a hole on the LZ. Only the helicopter could see it. They hovered over it and dropped straight down. The only visible sign was the glow of the exhaust pipe. The NVA could hear the operation and, by sound alone, the night was filled with green tracers. That, in turn, gave us targets on the perimeter. The extraction was a success thanks to the courage of those pilots to do the impossible.

At dawn they came. At first the shelling increased, and then the probing of our lines started. For several hours, the "situation was in doubt."

*"At 06:30 a vicious mortar and infantry attack stunned company L. More than 150 82-mm mortar rounds hit the company's position and NVA forces struck from three sides with heavy automatic weapons, small arms, and antitank fire. By 0900 the Marines had repulsed three enemy attacks. Captain Hartney and his artillery observer called in artillery fire to within 30 meters of the company position."***

Incoming was continuous. So was the support fire from nearby Camp Carroll and Dong Ha. The NVA reaction to this was to get as close as possible to our lines. "Danger close" is the term for fire support request for shelling so close to our positions. The situation was still in doubt.

Back on the Gila

I enquired about the nature and circumstances of Walt's purple heart. That can be a forbidden question, but among Marine veterans, it is acceptable. His story revealed the "First time I Met Walt Smith."

Walt said his Battalion was stationed at Camp Carroll, soon to be in route for a new operation area in a place called Khe Sanh. His company was reassigned to an urgent request for reinforcements. There was little information as to the nature of this assignment, but that was not unusual. Walt had been in country for some time and had combat experience. His company was dropped off on Highway 9 directly south of Hill 124, only a few clicks off the road.

Walt's fire team, four Marines, was assigned the point position. Walt said they could hear the battle, so there was no illusion of what lay ahead. They traveled a well-used trail that appeared to give access to the battle scene. The NVA were expecting them. Walt noticed the trail had been prepped with mortars, meaning it had been zeroed in in anticipation of Marine reinforcements. Walt was the 4th in line.

As the point element slowly approached the area, Walt detected movement off the trail. Before he could react, gunfire swept the point killing the other three Marines and wounding Walt. He crawled/scrambled his way back to the column in a hail of fire. The officer in charge told him to hold his position and they would fight their way up to them. Walt said he was the only survivor and had been shot multiple times.

As the firefight developed, more Marines were wounded and Walt was placed in a bamboo grove with the other wounded. Before long, the NVA had surrounded Golf Company and Walt asked for his rifle back—the NVA were trying to break thru the bamboo. When they climbed up on the Bamboo to gain access, they were easy targets. Walt was firing with his right hand only. He had multiple bullet wounds in his left arm and shoulder.

Golf Company continued to advance and fought their way to the Lima perimeter where they created a corridor that the dead and wounded could be carried through.

"At 1035 on the 28th, as Company G began moving up the hill, it came under fire from well-concealed positions on both flanks. The fighting was heavy, casualties mounted on both sides. Among the Marine dead was Company G's commander, Captain Bockewitz." (Received the Medal of Honor posthumously.) **

The tank was now a burned-out hulk. The Marine who Corporal Lopez had assisted died of his burns. The tank served no purpose in defense but could be used for protection from incoming mortar rounds. By digging out under the tank and closing the forward opening with dirt, we created a mortar proof bunker.

As the wounded Golf Marines entered into our perimeter, some were directed to our "bunker." Walt said he had lost too much blood and

wasn't stable. The Lima Marines formed a line and passed the wounded into the space under the tank. I did not know which one was Walt. The war was still ongoing and the mood was tense. Very little was said; no Marine complained. We finished placing the wounded under the tank and hurried back to our positions.

Lima Company had more than 100 casualties by this time. The enemy closed within 20 meters and attacked with small arms and grenades. The Marines returned fire and forced the enemy to withdraw. At this time the helicopters arrived to pick up wounded, but were unable to land because of heavy fire in the landing zone.

Other Marine Units had joined the fight for a total of five other companies in contact with this NVA regiment. That still gave the NVA a three to one advantage in manpower. We were on the defensive and the objective was to break contact. That was not to happen very easily.

"... all radios had been hit and casualties continued to mount. Moving the dead and wounded out of the killing zone required feats of bravery beyond comprehension. The NVA were everywhere. Lieutenant Colonel Ohanesion, Battalion Commander, was carrying the last of the wounded Marines toward the perimeter when an explosion mortally wounded him." (Received the Medal of Honor posthumously.) **

The battle drew more and more resources until the NVA, in their normal practice, had began to withdraw. They knew at some point the power that could be brought to bear would overwhelm them. As they broke contact and retreated north, the Marines picked up their dead and wounded and withdrew to the south. The battle for Hill 124 had ended.

Walt was sent to the Repose, a hospital ship that was stationed offshore. While there, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Lew Walt, decorated him. My Battalion was sent to Okinawa to rest, recover, and receive reinforcements. There were only 40 of us left. I had eight more months and many more battles to endure before my third wound would send me home.

Afterthought

We were both amazed that Walt and I had made contact in Vietnam. Of course, we had no

idea that smokejumping was in our future and we would meet again. But the mere facts of our meeting had to be unique or we would have never realized our meeting. We both had made passing contact with many Marines that we would never recognize if we met later in life. The fact that the burned-out tank was used as a bunker was very unusual. I never saw it happen again. Nor would Walt be wounded and placed under a burned out tank ever again. When he mentioned the tank, I knew instantly that he was one of the Marines I helped out.

The discussion triggered memories we usually do not want to recall. The conversation slows and

then drifts to silence. We slept on the ground again that night just as we had eight years earlier—only no green tracers to fill the night skies to entertain us. We got to take off our boots and not worry about taking the 0130 to 0300 watch. We were back to “the world.” Welcome home. 🇺🇸

*** U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Fighting the North Vietnamese, 1967* by Maj. Gary L. Telfer, USMC, Lt. Col. Lane Rogers, USMC, and Dr. V. Keith Fleming Jr., History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.



Aerial delivered firefighter during Covid-19. (Courtesy Gary Jensen)



ODDS AND ENDS



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Chuck Blanton** (MYC-47) who just became our latest Life Member.

Hans Smith (WYS-00) was killed in September 2019 while doing storm recovery work near Ely, MN. We were put into contact with his widow, Traci, and have helped her with the Good Sam Fund.

From Traci, "We are ever grateful for the bit of help from the NSA. This kindness I won't soon forget! Now I can get those shoes my son needs and pay for our vehicle's new brake pads. Buy groceries without stressing out. We love our firefighter family!"

Even though we have a tough time getting the current generation of smokejumpers to become part of the NSA, we are there in times of need. Thanks to all of you who have remembered the NSA Good Samaritan Fund. You should be proud.

Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61): "A big thanks to **Bill**



Mader (Boise-75) for pulling together the facts of the Mann Gulch Fire. He did a great job keeping the facts visible in his narrative *The Run For The Top* in the April 2020 issue of *Smokejumper*. His article will become a historical reference about how smokejumping came into focus.

"In the summer of 1954, I got my first seasonal job with the USFS at the Powell R.D., Lolo N.F. under Ranger Bud Moore. When I reported in, Bud told me my boss was Fire Control Officer **Wag Dodge** (MSO-41). He was a wonderful boss and teacher and carrying a large load of tough memories from the Mann Gulch Fire.

"When I got back to the University of Montana campus that fall, my Botany Teacher was Dr. Diettert. His son Eldon perished in the Mann Gulch Fire. Professor Diettert was a natural teacher and a consummate friend to his students. He was also carrying a large load of tough memories." 🧠

Having Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important

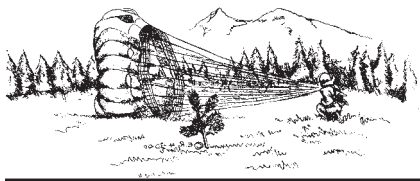
IN ORDER TO SAVE the NSA time and money, I'm mailing the *merchandise flyer* to you via email. There is a significant amount of money spent in printing and inserting the merchandise flyer into the magazine. Sending via email is a good cost-efficient move.

In addition, I've done over 5,000 reunion mailings this year. Remember that the National Reunion has been postponed until June 4-6, 2021, in Boise. With good email addresses, we can cut

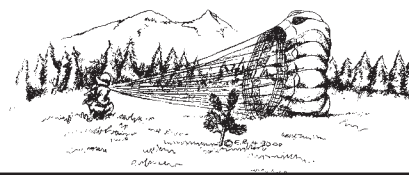
that USPS mailing in half.

To see if we have your correct email address, go to the NSA website at www.smokejumpers.com. Click on "News and Events" at the top of the page. Click on "JumpList" on the pull-down, type in your last name.

That will bring up the email currently listed for you. Please contact me if we need to update your email. Contact information on page three. (Ed.)



Notes from the Ranks



Pat McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

Fire in the Age of Covid

THE SUMMER is just ramping up as I write this from Silver City (SVC). I left a pleasant late snowfall a week ago in West Yellowstone for the shimmering Burros, Black, and Silver City ranges, seen through the mirage across the tarmac while the Twin Otter waits for the next call. Tankers are flying in and out as a reminder that there are such things as wildland fires happening out there already. Alaska and Boise bros have been getting fires up north, and here in SVC so far, four fires have been jumped and a whole bunch of water thrown to spiked-out shot crews.

I have a few masks scattered in my pockets, PG bag, and jump gear. You'll get turned around for entering a gas station or grocery store without a mask. Things are quite different from Montana.

Within our response area

from SVC are several Covid epicenters. Chief among these are tribal lands, each with its own sovereignty and worry that the virus may be particularly fatal to its members. Under the auspices of good will, tribes have suffered much over the centuries. How smokejumpers respond and who they interact with while demobing is a huge deal.

The "essential worker" isn't much of a debate as far as smokejumpers are concerned. We have skills that are rare and irreplaceable. Smokejumpers are made to adapt, and our missions are critical. We are particularly suited to minimizing the production of particulate matter from large forest fires if we catch them early. Downstream population centers with already poor air quality don't need another factor augmenting the respiratory effects of COVID-19.

Day-to-day base life is slightly different. New policies for intra-base risk mitigation include daily temperature checks, contact tracing, about an hour of base facilities sanitization (e.g., cleaning the packing tables when switching riggers, disinfecting frequented areas, no base tours allowed, high scrutiny on sanitation of workout facilities), and minimizing exposure to home district personnel. Supervisors are required to provide proof that relative risk assessment and alternatives analysis is conducted for all activities

and training. Agency flights and rental vehicles replace commercial flights for boost requests. Those lively evenings at the local watering hole with the bros, well, those aren't as enticing as the several weeks of fire pay that could be missed if it turns out that tourist who caught your eye was also carrying the COVID.

Rookie training was conducted separately in Region One. WYS offered the first ever rookie class trained completely in house. Some bases have been able to offer extended hours for the production of masks for local emergency services who may be running short.

Each region has a Type 3 IMT working on COVID response and risk mitigation for the associated forests. The Chief's Letter of Intent for the 2020 fire season includes investing forces only when there is a "reasonable chance of success," "maximize(ing) the skills of the entire workforce," and responding to new starts with the "predominant strategy being rapid containment." Bingo for smokejumpers. Each region has a public information website that provides information on current COVID response.

Another critical element for the summer is keeping our pilots healthy. As it's impossible to be more than six feet apart in the jump plane, the outstation model has become a solution to keeping jumpers dispersed

in smaller groups while also decreasing IA response times. Cursory glances at the Smoke-jumper Status Report shows several fires jumped out of the BLM outstations just in the last week of June here. Good deals all around. Again, while the bros in Galena can't leave the shack for town or the bar, a group of eight to twelve is a much smaller pool than fifty people sitting in one mega-base and dispersing through town each night.

Hours are down overall, however. Spring prescribed fire was all but cancelled this year once the major shutdown started. It's unfortunate to be behind the prescribed fire curve, and further, the loss of potential training opportunities. To follow guidance to minimize the number of personnel on fires, the "trainee" roles are difficult to fill this year. Why expose another person when we already have a qualified individual? We fall behind the curve on experience development while we flatten another curve.

The USFS did luck out and score some relief package funds for 500 permanent and 500 seasonal new fire positions. Perhaps this is the beginning of a Fire Force. Local fire managers will have more engines staffed to the full NWCG complement, which is good. That many new permanent positions means retention could be better, as well. Future jumpers got their start this summer with these hires.

Operationally, local FMOs tasked with rapid containment have greater leeway to approve things like retardant drops in

or near wilderness, chainsaw use in the wilderness during IA, and ordering smokejumpers for, say, small starts in old burn scars that could probably be left alone on other years. Fire use is a term meant to adapt strategy to environmental changes. The health effects to responders is part of that iterative design process for an incident's management decisions.

The big current experiment is with the Hotshot crews and interregional travel, especially as states shut down again. From some of my Hotshot buddies, I gather that crews are operating proactively on their own to mitigate exposure risk, as well as the risk of transmitting the virus from their home stations. Crews are bringing their own food on their trips from, say, MT to AZ, rather than going into gas stations twenty persons at a time. Similarly, rest stops require a quick disinfecting of the facilities prior to the entire crew using them. Masks may be counterproductive to safety as they tend to make drivers sleepy at the wheel; crews operate in such close contact anyway that such a formality is useless. When interacting with the public, masks are on.

Fire camps are of course a major point of concern due to population density and communal use facilities. Who hasn't gotten the Camp Crud before? So, crews are spiking out away from camp. It sounds like MREs for everyone this year. In some large fires, the caterers have been able to make single meals packaged up for each person. This and several times the

typical number of porta-potties, hand sanitizers conspicuously placed everywhere, and 6-ft social distancing at morning briefings give a new look to camp life.

Again, demob is a big priority. Demob materials from fires near known COVID centers are routed differently to specific caches. Cache folk on the receiving end are grouped distinctly and, in theory, don't interact with materials or folk moving between other caches. Luckily, we smokejumpers do most of our activity with in-house materials, but just as how poison oak on a chute that was jumped in Redding can make your eyes burn after packing it in Missoula, well, it's a good metaphor for operations here in the COVID age.

So, I guess you could say that for a huge ship with sometimes too small of a rudder, the fire world is doing the best it can. Fire is a feature of nature just as much as disease goes hand in hand with life. Just as risk can be transferred in fireline leadership decisions, off-the-clock decisions in this interesting time can affect the capabilities of the entire organization. It'd be a privilege to just sign a waiver and accept the risk of the virus, especially for us young guys in the peak of physical health. But that argument is one with too small a lens. All it takes is one unsanitized gas pump handle, one interaction anywhere and all of a sudden, we don't have a full load of jumpers to throw on that fire to catch it.

Rookies and fools try to predict fire season, but one can

BOOK REVIEW

High Mountain Two-Manner

by Frank Fowler

Review by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

For most of us, public libraries have been off limits for the past couple of months, so I've returned to my personal library that I've built up over the years. Thanks to advancing years, I've forgotten many gems that I read years ago. And among them is a very entertaining read by Frank Fowler (MSO-52) of his three seasons of smokejumping and four years of college.

Frank recounts in great detail those now early days of the "best job in the world."

In addition to his meticulous diary entries and research of Missoula smokejumper records, he was a diligent letter writer, recounting for his mother his almost daily activities at work and school. He retrieved those letters at her passing, and they are the basis for most of his silk stories.

Rather than a traditional book review, I've decided to do a little something offbeat: I'm going to contrast my experiences of jumping with Frank's, and I invite you to do the same. I'm sure you'll find just as many—or more—changes as the job and equipment evolved during the years.

I began my smokejumping at Missoula just four years after Frank's last year, 1954. But oh, the differences between his experiences and mine during that short passage of years.

Qualifications for smokejumping were far more lenient in Frank's time. He was a young and healthy University of Montana forestry student but with absolutely no fire experience. Obviously, that's all it took. By the time I signed up, I'd had two years of Forest Service fire experience. And even that was far, far short of the firefighting background that's demanded now.

Helicopters were just coming into use in the fire organization during my five-season tenure as a jumper, but they weren't even on the horizon during Frank's years. Consequently, he and his fellow

jumpers of that era had "loooong" packouts.

They bore their gear on flimsy and horribly uncomfortable Clack frames. That gear was heavy, too: single-point release boxes, cotton jump suits, harnesses and letdown ropes made of the same material, leather helmets and canvas girdles. Most of my gear, after my first season, was nylon, and packing it out, as I recall, was in elephant bags. By that time, we had nylon letdown ropes and modern (at the time) football helmets.

By the time Frank rookie'd, the Forest Service had gotten rid of the earlier Eagle and silk parachutes of the jumper project's first years and entered into the era of white, green, and (occasionally) candy-striped 28-footers. Their chutes did have Derry slots, but those with tails were a rarity that he and his fellow jumpers hoped would be strapped onto their backs.

Candy-striped 28-footers were the normal chutes for use by me and my bros, but in the ensuing years 32-footers were available for those of us who weighed more.

In Frank's day, jumper aircraft were very primitive by today's standards. They were the legendary Twin Goose (the corrugated aluminum Ford Tri-motor) and the cloth-covered Curtiss-Wright Travel Air. During his years he was able to jump the Twin Beech and the DC-3 only one time each, but four years later, those were our usual jump ships.

For this review, I'll omit Frank's school tales, but they, too, are an entertaining read, especially for those of us who shared those school years.

But they were also far different than they are today. Back then, if you can believe it, students actually attended in classrooms and sat right next to one another!

High Mountain Two-Manner, published in 2006, is still available through Amazon. It's a very well-written and detailed journey through what now qualifies as the real old days of the smoke-jumper project. 🔦