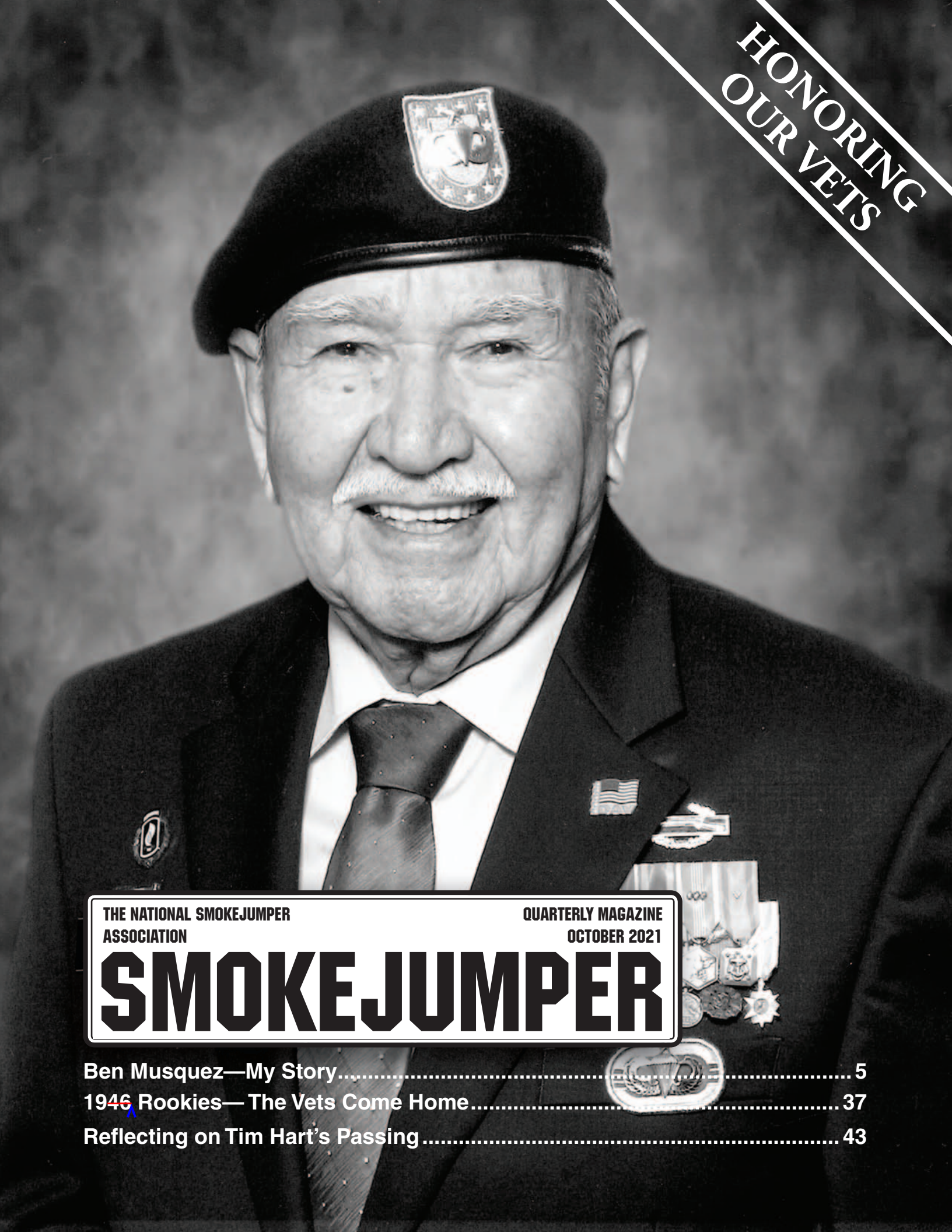

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
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SMOKEJUMPER

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Message from the President

by Bob McKean
(Missoula '67)

Tragically, the smokejumper community lost one of its own this past June when **Tim Hart** (GAC-16) succumbed to injuries received on a fire jump in New Mexico. Tim's loss was mourned by the entire wildland firefighting community. Of course, all jumpers were particularly impacted. And Tim's family has suffered an incalculable loss!

Patrick McGunagle (WYS-19 and NSA Board Member) knew Tim well. His reflections about Tim's passing are included in this issue of *Smokejumper:* "Living Our Best Life—Reflections on Smokejumper Tim Hart's Passing."

Patrick's account is compelling. Beyond the tragedy itself, there are the smokejumpers who stood vigil for Tim. There is the breathtaking courage, wisdom, and love expressed by Tim's mother, Pam; Tim's wife, Michelle; and Tim's sister, Meg. Tim's wisdom, love for family, and love for life as a smokejumper comes shining through in their words as shared by Patrick.

Also striking are Patrick's reflections about what it means to be a smokejumper, the people it attracts to its ranks, and the bond all smokejumpers share. In his words, "Once a smokejumper, always a smokejumper."

Whether one jumped in the 50s or jumps in the 2020s, we know we are all bound together. We are a tight-knit community. Every individual in the greater smokejumper family feels Tim Hart's loss and is concerned for his family. I personally visited with numerous smokejumpers (mostly inactive) who were also concerned about jumpers close to Tim in life and on this particular fire jump. All who were close to Tim need and absolutely have the support of their entire smokejumper family.

The following poem is offered for those close to Tim and those close to smokejumpers previously lost in the line of duty.

Young Life Cut Short – for the brother of a dear friend

Author Unknown

Do not judge a biography by
its length,
Nor by the number of pages
in it.

Judge it by the richness of its contents
Sometimes those unfinished are among the most poignant

Do not judge a song by its duration
Nor by the number of its notes
Judge it by the way it touches and lifts the soul
Sometimes those unfinished are among the most beautiful.

And when something has enriched your life
And when its melody lingers on in your heart
Is it unfinished?
Or is it endless?

National Smokejumper Reunion
August 12–14, 2022
Boise, Idaho

NSA Members—Save This Information

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***Smokejumper** base abbreviations:*

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

Having Your Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important

In order to save the NSA time and money, I'm sending renewals and the merchandise flyer via email. The National Reunion has been **postponed until August 12–14, 2022**, in Boise. I will be sending information on that event via email whenever possible. Sending via email is a good cost-efficient move.

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 "**Jump List**" on the pulldown, type in your ***last*** name.

Please contact me if we need to update your email. My contact information is on the left column of this page. *(Ed.)*

Get *Smokejumper* One Month Earlier

Many NSA members are switching to the digital version of *Smokejumper* delivered by email instead of the printed edition. It is sent as a PDF identical to the hard copy issue.

Advantages include early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings.

NSA Director **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) says: "I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct $ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing. I think I mentioned in an earlier message that I'm having other magazines/newsletters delivered electronically.

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

A Tribute to Chuck Sheley—A Great Brother

Ben Musquez (Missoula '56)

I'm sure many of you would agree with me that many of us could not do the work or as much as our bro' Chuck and his wife have done for the NSA and its mission. I think they have done an outstanding job since the first issue of *Smokejumper* magazine (Oct. 1999). Every issue has lots of information, great pictures and stories. Way back, **Jack Demmons** (MSO-50) was doing a good job with the *Static Line* newsletter keeping us all informed. At that time, I was living in Texas and never knew who was doing all the work putting it together. I either did not read it or I forgot. I did keep all letters and copies of the *Static Line*.

One in the group was **Don Courtney** (MSO-56). After Jack Demmons, he took the job of temporary editor and with the help of **Roger Savage** (MSO-56) and others, kept the *Static Line* going. However, Don wrote a letter that appeared in the summer '99 issue as to how hard it was to keep the newsletter going. A few of us from 1956-57 who stayed in contact knew it was a problem because it takes a lot of time and work to gather all the material and put it into a newsletter or magazine for publishing. We were incredibly sad and wondered what we could do.

During this time, my friend **Tom McGrath** (MSO-57) flew his small plane to Hondo, Texas, to visit us. I had told Tom that we were planning a trip up north to the high line, then across through Missoula, then to Seattle, stopping along the way visiting friends. He said great and, that while we were in Missoula, to get in touch because he would be at the smokejumper warehouse for the summer.

We started the trip and along the way we met with **Roland Stoleson** (MSO-56) and **Joe Gutkoski** (MSO-50). We arrived in Missoula and had a great get-together with Roger Savage, **Bob Whaley** (MSO-56), **Ted Nyquest** (MSO-54), and **Robin Towgood** (MSO-56). That evening I met my friend Tom McGrath. We realized that the future of the *Static Line* was dim.

My wife and I proceeded on our trip, and our last stop was to see **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) in Chico, CA. This was the first time I had met him. When we met, I told Chuck about a jump I did out of Redding fighting several fires with six other jumpers at the Shasta/Trinity N.F. I thought that was a good story and I talked about some other memories, too. Of course, he told me some of his stories. I really love talking to a former jumper no matter where they jumped, because to me, a jumper is a jumper, a "bro' of the trade," and the main thing is the mission. Many smokejumpers, me included, have said smokejumping has been one of the greatest jobs to have because you form so many comrades/bros'.

Throughout my almost 30 years of military service, I have made many friends; however, smokejumping and Forest Service work, developed more bonds. My wife, Mary, and I met with Chuck for breakfast and had a nice visit and, as we were talking, the *Static Line* newsletter came up. We all were sad about it, so we started thinking about what we could do. Chuck said, "I've been doing some research and gotten some good leads to publish a magazine instead of a newsletter." We thought that would be great for the NSA. We had a problem—it would take a lot more work for a magazine. Chuck's contact said he could publish a quarterly magazine, but even with a fair price, it was still more money, eight hundred dollars to be exact. I said, "That's chicken feed. We (the NSA) raised $100,000 for the Smokejumpers history video, surely, we can raise $800." I told Chuck, "Give me three to four days to get back to San Antonio, I think I can help. I think I have a source!"

My brother-in-law, Chris Rodriguez, and the rest of the Rodriguez family are proud of our family and our past accomplishments. I do not remember if it was during this time frame or after

that they, and all of Chris' employees, became Associate members of the NSA to help the cause. I called Chris the next day after our arrival home. One of his first words after welcoming us back was, "Did you see the smokejumpers and how are they doing?" I told him I had a great time and a great trip and visited many; however, I had a project to help the NSA with a magazine instead of the newsletter.

Chris knew about the *Static Line* and asked how much they needed to raise. I told him it was lots of money. He asked again and I answered $800 for the first year. His reply was, "Brother, that is just chicken feed." I laughed and told him that's what everyone would say. Chris asked, "When do you want to pick up the check?" "I'll drive over, right now!" After receiving the check, I added a quick note and mailed it.

Now, you know the rest of the story. Chuck, the team (he, his wife, Johnny Kirkley, and Ed Booth), and all contributors make each issue wonderful reading. Good information keeps us all connected. My brother-in-law has passed on; however, like all smokejumper brothers and many of my combat veterans that have departed, they left many wonderful memories that I will live with the rest of my life.

Please remember all bases and jumper associates and others that contribute towards the mission and develop friendships along the way.

Many thanks to Chuck, his wife, and the many contributors that make it possible to publish the *Smokejumper* magazine.

In closing, may I say that Missoula is very dear to me and my family. We have many fine memories all because of having had the opportunity to serve with the smokejumpers there. May God bless everyone.

My Story

Ben Musquez (Missoula '56)

It has been more than 49 years since I met the boys of Charlie Company at Fire Support Base Hawk Hill in a place called NAM. The following is my story, my history, and memories that I will have for the rest of my life.

Over the years, there have been many people, like me, who have served overseas for months or even years. When we returned home, there was a great feeling that we were home. It made one feel like kneeling and kissing the ground, and I can attest to doing just that. After being away in foreign lands, I realize how lucky we are with our freedoms that many do not have.

During WWII many young men from our town of Sabinal, Texas, were drafted. Eleven of these men did not return home, and our community felt the loss. I felt a sense of patriotism, and it was then that I thought that I, too, would join the Armed Forces. I joined the U.S. Army in January 1949 at age 17.

I served for almost 30 years through the Korean conflict and two tours in Vietnam. I operated as a platoon sergeant from the top of the Delta

Ben (left) with squad in N.C. 1952

in the south through the central highlands to the DMZ. I'm proud to say that I accomplished all assigned missions without losing a single soldier on my watch.

My life started on my grandfather's ranch where my father was working. He met my mother

there. My mother died when I was 18 months old, and I was mostly raised by my grandparents. We moved to Sabinal, Texas, when I was six years old, and I was raised by my Aunts and Uncles.

When I joined the Army at age 17, I was assigned to AA Artillery at Fort Bliss, Texas. We were ready to deploy to Korea, but the mission was cancelled. Later, I requested Airborne duty and was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. After three years, I Ieft to become a smokejumper and continued serving in the Army reserves.

Before I left the 82nd, I married my childhood sweetheart, Maria Rodriguez, and we were blessed with two sons and four daughters.

I jumped at Missoula 1956-57 and decided to go back into active military service and started at the bottom as a buck private. I soon was selected for drill sergeant duty and later would become Senior Drill Sergeant at Ft. Polk, Louisiana. We were getting feedback from Vietnam that the trainees from Ft. Polk were some of the best.

I thought that we were losing too many soldiers and that this could have been prevented. At the time, no Drill Sergeants were allowed for combat duty as we were needed more at the training centers. One evening I talked to my wife and said that I had to go and do my duty in Vietnam. I felt that if I went and was able to save even one life, it would be worth it. At the time, my wife was expecting our 5th child and had four children

Ben with radio operator Chu Lai Vietnam 1971

at home, but she agreed. I had to push and pull some strings, but I went off to Vietnam in for my first tour of duty.

On September 16, 1968, while serving in the central highlands, I received word that I was the father of a baby girl. Twenty five years later, she would join the military and do her own combat duty overseas.

Through the ups and downs it has been a wonderful journey. Now you know the story. "We were Soldiers Once and Young."

What Torch?

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks '69)

The July issue of *Smokejumper* gives one much to think about. Articles by Supervisor Carl Pence, Spotter Tim Quigley, Forester Doug Stinson, and Ranger Karl Brauneis speak to their experience and convey lessons we might consider no matter the task. Pence and Stinson's articles should be required fire management reading in Washington DC. Most of us have learned a skill by watching someone like Quigley work, and in turn, we practice that skill for others to learn by. District Rangers like Brauneis set an example of the involved land manager that is a reference point for our actions as we take on leadership roles in life.

Sheridan Peterson and the unnamed military contractor tell good stories. Peterson tells what could be a story of frustration in a manner completely devoid of anger showing a positive attitude that served him well in life. Our military contractor is a good writer and conveys a sense of both responsibility and caring for the people and the mission in his timely article.

Tommy Albert reaches out to help others when he himself has just suffered loss showing leadership by example. Your editorial, "The Sheriff is Dead," is well told and includes a timely message on several fronts. What we respect in a good editor.

All these writers represent what I think of as the smokejumper story. The names change but the faces remain the same. Each time I read the magazine, I think these people never stop trying, and these are stories that should be told.

What confuses me is the anonymous article on the challenges of being a current smokejumper. We all know the pay is not equal to State and Local agencies. Want fire department pay and benefits? Smokejumpers and hotshots are a primary hiring pool for many fire agencies.

And when have there not been challenges? No generation has been handed an ideal work world. What happened to this being a great job? Jumping can be the best stepping-stone to the next thing you do in life. That thing shared by all the authors in the above articles. What Wally Humphries describes in the July issue—caring about the land. What happened to people that can have fun no matter what predicament they find themselves in or what sorrows they must carry?

Where are the base reports? Stories from current jumpers? That great writing style that for so many years described the feats and follies of the bases and anybody else that fell in their sights? This certainly has not been the age of communication.

The only thing I draw from the anonymous article is that maybe the Forest Service made a big mistake complicating what used to be a relatively simple seasonal job. When jumpers start to resemble the system they are working for, it's not a good sign. But guaranteed OT, and non-competitive promotion to GS-12. Are you kidding me?

Pat McGunagle is making a good attempt at bridging the gap. I enjoy reading the thoughts in his column and was impressed with his good reporting passed on through threads in the jumper community following Tim Hart's tragic death. His word was the jumper story those days and report of his news was quickly spread and shared. Pat is to be congratulated for keeping people in the loop.

In other matters, I admit I don't always get the drift of what he is saying, so I must ask: What Torch? Who is passing a torch? Most of the jumpers and land managers that write for *Smokejumper* are still running, as far as I can tell. Many have been deeply affected by the increasing fire threat and are currently involved with change needed to adapt to new fire conditions. From editorial writing, burn councils, and regional planning to State and Federal testimony and legislation at the highest level, public involvement in fire is not something in the past but part of who these NSA members are today. And that's just the folks involved with fire. Our members are key supporters and leaders in so many humanitarian business

and professional enterprises it would be difficult to list them all.

I know some will not agree, but I still believe smokejumping should be a simple job with one purpose—put the fire out. And in learning that job, we learn a lot. I say to all with encouragement, do that job to learn, get a step up in life and move on, or not. It's your choice. Jumpers have taken both paths to great success. It's an imperfect world and so is smokejumping. But the jumpers have always made smokejumping a functional program that makes a difference in our world. I have full faith current jumpers will continue to do so.

John is a retired Administrative Fire Captain, Santa Barbara Fire Department, with wife, Kathy, run J.N. Culbertson LLC Fire Management doing fire risk assessment and research, is a Trail Steward for Montecito Trails Foundation, works in educational field with Friends of Franklin, is an ocean and open water swimmer and writer.

A Smokejumper's Dream

Cecil Hicks (North Cascades '62)

The other night I dreamed that I was still a smokejumper back in my prime years. In my dream, I was suspended in mid-air, hanging beneath the canopy of a round 32-foot orange and white Forest Service parachute. It was a mid-July morning with a light breeze blowing. I was jumping a two-manner in a remote wilderness of Washington's Northern Cascades.

There were still some snow-covered peaks in the surrounding mountains. We had jumped from a Twin Beech about 1,000 feet above a tree-covered ridge top. As the airplane circled, my jump partner and I drifted earthward.

As I looked down between my boots, all I could see were trees, trees, and more trees. About an hour before we arrived from our base back at Winthrop, a spotter in a patrol plane, tracking behind a small lighting storm, threw a roll of toilet paper over the trees where he had seen smoke drifting upward.

When we arrived over the fire's location, nobody in our plane could see any smoke, but the spotter decided two smokejumpers would jump anyway to check out the potential fire. On the mountainside there were no clearings, or larger openings in the trees to use as a jump spot, so this would be strictly a tree landing.

With no landing spot, I knew I had to hang my chute over the top of a sturdy, live tree and keep away from Tamaracks, as I was warned they had brittle tops that could easily break off. Of course, avoid the snags with their angry spikes pointing skyward that were mixed in with the rest of the evergreens.

As I descended, I steered the chute to the top of a tall Grand fir. I crashed down through the top limbs and finally came to rest with my back against the tree trunk. The canopy had stopped my fall and was draped securely over the crown of the tree. I checked for my jump partner and saw he had safely landed in a tree some 100 feet away.

From the leg pocket of my jump suit, I pulled out my 150-foot letdown rope, ran the end through the rings on the front of my jump suit, and tied it off to my parachute. Next, I threw the rope to the ground where it landed with about 20 feet to spare. I figured I was nestled in the top of a 160-foot tree. I was just glad I wasn't on a backup crew and jumping out of Cave Junction, Oregon, into their tall trees. When Winthrop jumpers headed for Cave Junction, also known as the Gobi, they replaced the 150-foot jump rope with 300-footers. I rappelled slowly to the ground.

The year in my dream was 1962 (my rookie year, NCSB) and we didn't have a radio dropped on this fire. We located a very small clearing near our jump site and laid out our double LL streamers for the signal to the airplane that we were safely on the ground. The plane made a low pass checking us out. Then it circled back around for a cargo drop.

As the plane roared by, the spotter kicked out two

fire packs attached to white cargo chutes. They, too, hung up in the trees. On the final pass, the spotter freefell the climbing spurs in a small bundle with a long, orange-colored streamer attached. We had to climb two trees to get the fire packs and cargo chutes. Later, we would climb to retrieve our chutes after working the fire, if we could find them.

Personally, I was not fond of climbing trees. Over my smokejumping career, consisting of seven seasons and 91 jumps, I hung up in tall trees four times. Once I had to use the smaller one-inch pole spurs in attempting to climb a huge Ponderosa pine. This involved climbing the tree with a small, folding saw tucked in my back pocket that I would use to top the tree so my partner could pull the chute down using the letdown rope. Sometimes, if you were lucky, you could pull and slide the chute off the tree top.

Picture, if you will, spurring your way up a large Ponderosa pine, hoping to get to the first limb some 40 feet up, and then climb up through the limbs. Ponderosas have thick bark, and I found out it comes off in pretty large slabs if your pole spurs do not reach the trunk. After nearly falling out three times and only reaching 20 feet up, I decided it was unsafe and came down. Using the saw and Pulaski, we felled the tree to retrieve my parachute.

After I made my last rookie training jump, I was involved in another climbing incident. We were spotted over trees, but I managed to steer my chute to the ground. Later, after all the gear was retrieved, the plane returned to make cargo drops. As there were 17 rookies, there were 17 bags of cargo kicked out. Nearly all the cargo hung up in trees.

Each rookie had climbing spurs and a small folding saw and was assigned a bag to retrieve. The bags, used for packing out from a fire, were called elephant bags and were each filled with 100 pounds of rocks. Once everyone had their bags safely out of the trees, we shouldered them and had a five-mile hike back to the base. To prevent any rookie from dumping out some of the rocks on the hike, the top of the bags were tied off securely with a parachute riggers seal.

Anyway, I climbed the tree with no problems and sawed off the tree top. The chute and bag fell about 20 feet and hung up on a tree stub some 85 feet above ground. I climbed down and kicked the stub breaking it off. I didn't have a safety line around the tree when I was climbing up and around the upper tree limbs. When the stub broke, it flipped the line around my right boot nearly pulling me out of the tree. For a few seconds my hands maintained a vice-like grip around the tree and my left spur was planted solidly into the trunk. With my right leg hanging in the air holding the full weight of the 100 pound elephant bag, 20 pounds of cargo chute and probably 50 pounds of the tree top, I frantically kicked my boot trying to free the line. Fortunately, after a couple seconds and a quick prayer, it slid off.

Back to my dream jump. I woke up and realized the dream was actually what had happened during my first fire jump onto toilet paper some 50-plus years ago. I guess as a smokejumper you never forget your first fire jump as it is forever ingrained in the recesses of your mind.

Smokejumpers: CIA Clandestine Weapon In America's Secret Wars

Dr. Paul T. Carter, Ph.D., retired US Army Intelligence officer, recently put together an outstanding YouTube presentation about this interesting and unusual bit of history. Dr. Carter served as the 82nd Airborne Division Chief of Intelligence Operations in Afghanistan and also at the US Defense Intelligence Agency. He currently lives in Bangkok, Thailand. His presentation received over 2,000 views in the first couple weeks that it was online.

Beginning in 1951, the CIA begin to hire smokejumpers for its unconventional war operations, employing at least 115 during the Cold War. Why did the CIA hire smokejumpers? What operations did they execute? Where were they deployed? How did the CIA first find smokejumpers? Dr. Paul T. Carter in this 48-minute video, "Smokejumpers: CIA Clandestine Weapon in America's Secret Wars," provides the answers with this fascinating, action-packed, non-monetized video with interviews, old film footage, war scenes, declassified documents, rare photos, and more at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfB_yydD-FbsAwZwzWozjSHQ

RECORDING SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY

1946 Rookies—The Post WWII Era

NSA History Preservation Project

I'm going to jump from the 1943 rookies to the 1946 rookie group since the emphasis in this issue is our veterans. Smokejumping moved from the Conscientious Objectors to the vets at the end of the 1945 season. Thousands of vets came home from WWII and the ranks of the 1946 rookie class was filled with them. I've always wondered, how do you handle a group of rookies who are chronologically 24 years old but, through combat, are aged another 30 years? You can see that many took the GI Bill and received an education they otherwise would have never gotten. Smokejumping moved from the hard-working Mennonites to the hard-to-handle combat vets. I'm almost overwhelmed with the records these men achieved in their lifetimes. There's a reason Tom Brokaw called this the "Greatest Generation." There is so much information that I'm going to have to do a very short bio on each individual—there is a lot more saved in our History Preservation Project. There were 197 rookies in 1946. What follows is only about a third of them. (Ed.)

Ed Adams (CJ-46)—Airborne Master Sergeant WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. Jumped at CJ 1946-47 and went back into the Army.

Jim Allen (NCSB-46)—101st Airborne, jumped Operation Market Garden (A Bridge Too Far), wounded Battle of the Bulge. Base Manager at Cave Junction.

Norman Allen (MSO-46)—82nd Airborne, Purple Heart/Bronze Star, Jr. H.S. teacher and USFS career.

Dick Anderson (MSO-46)—Tail gunner B-24, flew more than 50 missions, shot down over northern Yugoslavia, USFS career.

Francis Anywaush (MSO-46)—Airborne, Bronze Star, USFS career.

Al Bellusci (MSO-46)—All State quarterback Missoula County H.S., USAF pilot and Special Weapons and Electronic Counter Measures.

Mike Bober (MSO-46)—Airborne, Bronze Star Battle of the Bulge, career CIA.

King Brady (MSO-46)—Airborne WWII, Doctor of medicine 1954-89.

Bob Caldwell (MYC-46)—Patton's 80th Infantry Div., PH.D. professor of Philosophy at University of Arizona.

Jack Carver (MSO-46)—Navy, was with Bombing Squadron 14 when he and his pilot were credited with inflicting heavy damage on the Japanese battleship Yamato. His photograph of that bombing has been reproduced in the U.S. Navy's official story of the 2nd Battle of the Philippines and has been used in many newspapers and magazine to illustrate the actual sinking of the Yamato. He received a Navy Unit commendation Ribbon, the Air Medal, and the Silver Star Medal.

Paul Clabaugh (MYC-46)—Airborne medic D-Day, captured and was a POW.

Dick Courson (CJ-46)—Para Marine, 30 days on Iwo Jima, evacuated due to wounds, District Court Judge and D.A. for 25 years.

Bob Crowe (MSO-46)—Airborne, Battle of the Bulge, decorated, career in private forestry.

Harry L. Cummings (MSO-46)—Air Corps, architect of 50 years, designed and supervised construction of hundreds of projects in Seattle area, including 40 schools.

Harry L. Cummings (CJ-46)—101st Airborne D-Day and Market Garden, two Purple Hearts, USFS career.

Oroville Dodge (MSO-46)—Major US Army Guadalcanal, Ph.D., head of education department at Carroll College (MT).

Jack Dunne (MSO-46)—Tail gunner B-29, over 30 missions over Japan, career elementary school teacher.

Bob Dusenbury (MSO-46)—Petty Officer LST Omaha Beach D-Day, career BIA.

Bruce Egger (MSO-46)—Army infantry Sergeant, Bronze Star, described by Stephen Ambrose in his book *Citizen Soldiers*, "Among the best of these are Bruce Egger and Lee Otts, G Company's War:

Two Personal Accounts of the Campaigns in Europe, 1944-1945." Career USFS.

Loren Fessler (MSO-46)—OSS D-Day, China, Ph.D. Harvard, author, and expert on China.

Hank Florin (MSO-46.)—B-17 pilot, when asked which 15 minutes he'd like to live over, it was the bomb run over Berlin. That was the most intense year of his life and remained riveted in his memory ever after.

John Frankovich (MSO-46)—Tail gunner, lawyer, lead council Anaconda Mining.

Howard Gorsuch (MYC-46)—Airborne, Battle Bulge, career USFS.

Roy Goss (NCSB-46)—Battleship USS Indiana, Ph.D. Agronomy.

Bob Gossett (MYC-46)—Son of Idaho Governor Charlie Gossett, Navy pilot, founder of computer and business accounting firm.

Les Grenlin (MSO-46)—Combat veteran South Pacific, CIA Formosa.

Bill Gropp (MSO-46—Marines Iwo Jima, "I was lucky to come out in one piece."

Al Hammond (MSO-46)—Airborne, USFS career.

Bill Helman (MSO-46)—Marine Corpsman, killed at Mann Gulch.

Steve Henault (MSO-46)—Major US Army, two tours Vietnam, Air Medal with 10 oak leaf clusters.

Wally Henderson (MSO-46)—Navy pilot, USAF pilot, 72 missions over North Korea, Colonel.

John Hydes (MSO-46)—Enlisted in Marine Corps at age 16, saw action Kwajalein, Guadalcanal, and the Marianas.

Ed Ladendorff (MSO-46)—B-17 pilot 29 missions Europe, Vice Pres. Lipton Tea Company.

Jack Larson (NCSB-46)—Airborne, Battle of Bulge, Operation Varsity, Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

Jack Lyman (MSO-46)—Sergeant 82nd Airborne, USFS career.

Steve Maciag (MSO-46)—Airborne, Purple Heart, retired as Lt. Colonel.

Bob Manchester (MSO-46)—Sergeant 10th Mountain Div. Italy, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, USFS career.

Cliff Marshall (CJ-46)—Master Sergeant Airborne, D-Day, Market Garden, Battle of the Bulge, foreman at CJ in 1947.

Joe Martinez (MSO-46)—Army Air Corps crewman, 29 missions over Japan, career public school teacher.

Glen "Ace" Nielsen (MYC-46)—Navy pilot.

Dan O'Rourke (CJ-46)—Marine Corps, part of all-military 1946 crew at Cave Junction.

Clayton Ogle (MSO-46)—B-17 ball turret gunner, 25 combat missions, Purple Heart, three air medals, career US Soil Conservation Service.

Danny On (CJ-46)—101st Airborne, Battle of the Bulge, Purple Heart, career USFS, noted nature photographer.

Dick Peltier (MSO-46)—11th Airborne South Pacific.

Bob Petty (MSO-46)—Army Air Corps, Distinguished Flying Cross, career newspaper editor.

Clem Pope (CJ-46)—Airborne, OSS China, career lumber industry.

Bob Reed (MYC-46)—Army, Bronze Star, career free-lance writer.

Carrol Rieck (MSO-46)—Marine paratrooper age 17, South Pacific campaign, career Washington State Dept. of Game.

Kenny Roth (MYC-46)—Gunner's mate USS Sunmer, career Johnson Flying Service Pilot.

Joe Saltsman (MSO-46)—Army Holland, POW Stalag 2A, career CIA.

Neil Shier (CJ-46)—Joined Navy at age 15, career USAF retired as Chief Master Sergeant with rank of E-9.

Jerry Sparkman (MYC-46)—82nd Airborne, career Anchorage public works.

Stan Sykes (MSO-46)—Marine Corps, career railroad.

John Tauscher (NCSB-46)—Army, wounded in action.

John Thach (CJ-46)—Joined Army at age 17, was wounded at Schofield Barracks on December 7, 1941, in Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 101st Airborne, Market Garden and Battle of Bulge, Bronze Star, Chief Accountant for Colorado State Treasury Dept.

Gar Thorsrud (MSO-46)—Pilot Montana National Guard, 35 years with CIA, planner of many covert operations, founder of Mountain West Aviation, and a lot more unknowns.

Jim Ward (MSO-46)—Marine Corps, Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, high school Athletic Director/Football Coach, private industry.

Wayne Webb (MYC-46)—Airborne, Battle of Bulge, career USFS, loft foreman McCall, 175 fire jumps.

Bud Wyatt (MYC-46)—WWII, Korea, Vietnam, career Army, Colonel.

Herb York (MSO-46)—B-29 crewman, career teacher, National Science Foundation Presidential Award as Montana's Science Teacher of the Year in 1983, University of Montana Distinguished Alumnus 1984.

Ernest Zecha (MSO-46)—2nd Lt. killed in Korea 1953, graduate of Keene Teachers College in New Hampshire.

NSA PUBLISHES 4TH BOOK

Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)

Thanks to the work of **Stan Collins** (MYC-67) and **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74), we now have our fourth book completed by the NSA History Preservation Project.

La Grande Smokejumper Base—A Base History is now available on the NSA webstore or via the merchandise insert in the May "Special Issue." *The History of the Siskiyou and North Cascades Smokejumper Bases* are the other two base history works.

Stan has recently updated *Smokejumpers and the CIA* adding **Johnny Kirkley's** (CJ-64) *Air America, The Ranch and the Veil of Secrecy* from the April 2021 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine.

When I was going over the text, I re-read the start of Chapter 41 and was again impressed with the words of **Jim Veitch** (MSO-67) from one of our communications twenty years ago.

Chapter 41: "Back in November of 2002, I was communicating with Jim Veitch (MSO-67) while working on a story about the 'Ravens.' We were communicating about Jim's time in SEA, and I asked about recording smokejumper/CIA work in that part of the world. His response was very thought provoking:

"I was in charge of Saravane (Laos) for about six months. One Raven died there and two others were shot down. As far as giving info on what went on with the Agency, it's fine with me. I would like to see the emphasis put on smokejumping.

"There have been a lot of smokejumpers involved in Agency work over the years and basically, no one knows about it. I don't know why the Agency chose jumpers, but there had to have been a reason. I think it was because we could go anywhere, anytime, and do a tough, confusing job and then keep our mouths shut. I think smokejumpers have what it takes. They are not just fit and strong but have the ability to think independently and work towards a solution, no matter what the odds.

"The real story is about the type of people it takes to make a smokejumper because you can take that type of person and drop them anywhere.

"One thing that amazed me then, and now, is how the war in Laos was so much like fighting a forest fire. I think that was because smokejumpers set the pattern in the early 60s in Laos. They must have started running Ops like they'd run a fire out near Huslia with four village crews. Same damned thing, except I ran four battalions and over 1200 soldiers.

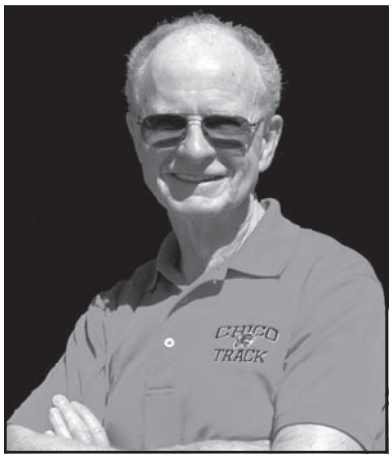
"If you ever do write about the Smokejumpers and the Agency, I think it would be a great contribution to the history of smokejumpers and to that of the Vietnam era. Big project though, big."

A lot of thanks goes out to Stan Collins for his expertise. Writing individual stories and articles and putting them into a magazine is something that I have become proficient at over the last 20 years. Arranging that information and putting it into a book, editing and publishing is another thing. Thanks, Stan.

Need not to forget the editing work done by my wife, KG. She has meticulously gone over thousands of pages of text and articles correcting punctuation, spelling and fact checking. I have a habit of speed reading and going by obvious mistakes in text. She does not.

Next—Who is going to step up and do histories of the remaining smokejumper bases? Missoula and McCall would be a daunting task but it could be broken down into eras. If one of us does not do it, it will be lost. What a shame if that happens.

SOUNDING OFF from the Editor

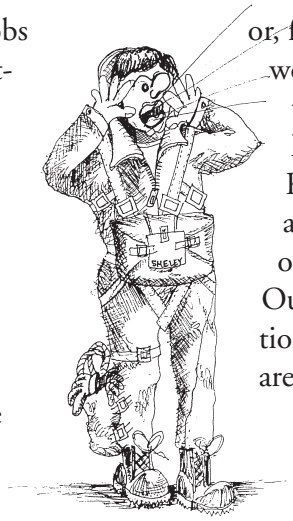


by Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)
Managing Editor

To Solve a Problem, You Have To Recognize the Roots of the Problem

The news (July) is filled with articles about federal wildland firefighting jobs that are not being filled. By the time you read this, we will see the results of a workforce that is unable to meet the demand. Let's identify some root problems and see if they are being solved.

Pay is the issue that is always at the top of the list. The current administration has proposed that the minimum hourly rate be increased to $15 per hour. Good that there will be an increase, but common sense will tell you that this won't work. All over town, and Chico is not much different that other university communities, there are "help wanted" signs. Way more jobs than workers. Starting hourly pay at Subway is $16. Pay for helpers at local landscape companies runs $16-$20 per hour. Local labor goes at the same rate. None of these jobs is as labor-intensive as wildland firefighting.



I saw this coming six or seven years ago. There are very few jobs as labor-intensive as building fireline. As a person who has worked long after retirement age, I have found that our young people are lacking in work ethic. There is a job that is about as close to wildland firefighting as it comes in labor-intensiveness—field workers.

A third of the nation's vegetables and two-thirds of the other crops come from this state. We have over 500,000 farm workers. In Chico, we sit in the middle of a 6.3 billion $$ a year industry in almonds alone. Add in the walnuts and rice, and you have a lot of income involved.

2022 will be the 60th year that I have been coaching or involved with high school-aged youth. With the move away from a hands-on working society, I've found out that our young people are not skilled or, for the most part, want to work in jobs that involve intense physical labor. Result: less potential labor force. Rather work at Subway in air conditioned place at $16 or on the fireline for $15? Our youth are not conditioned to hard work, but they are also intelligent.

As an experiment, at least seven years ago, I took seven of the top hard-working athletes from Chico High School and we worked three days of farm labor with the Hispanic workers. I chose Cross Country runners and Wrestlers as I've found out that these kids are the toughest workers in athletics. Reason: Each sport is individual, no teammate help, and, most importantly, you can give up at any time it hurts too much. Similar to SEAL training when the recruits can "ring the bell" when they want out.

Of the seven, two were women (white), four were Hmong males, and one was an African-American male. We worked for three days, started at 0600 and quit at noon. The work was backbreaking, intense; picking up limbs from an orchard that had been torn up and loading them on the back of a tractor and trailer that moved at the speed at which the throttle was set. It did not stop until it reached

the end of the half-mile row and turned around. You did not fall behind or you would be left out.

I thought that we would be ahead of the Hispanic crew by showing up at 0600, but they had been on the job for an hour already. I took the kids home at noon, and the Hispanic crew continued on for the rest of the day. Sacramento Valley—temperatures 105/110. We could not keep up with those guys.

Were my athletes subpar? No way. The African-American young man went on to Cornell on a wrestling scholarship, placed in the NCAA tournament four years, and was National Champion his senior year and has been a contender for the U.S. Olympic Team.

There are a couple bottom lines with this story. Every young person said they wanted an education so they never had to do this work again, AND, the Hispanics are some of the hardest working people I have ever seen.

Ironically, I concluded that editorial with something like, "If I had a crew of these guys (Hispanic field workers), I could build fireline from the Mexican Border to Canada. I still feel the same. Very few in our culture can handle the intense work of building fireline. Look at the highest paid firefighters in the nation—Cal Fire. Their hand crews are inmates from the prison system.

One of our NSA board members, who is active in fire, related his experiences from the 2020 fire season when he was in California where we burned four million acres. The need for hand crews was great. Trying to get Engine Crews to build fireline is a wasted effort.

How do we solve this lack of firefighters? Let's go back to the Green Card farm-labor system of the '70s and hire 5,000 of these hard-working Hispanics. There will always be a number of our young people who will thrive in the wildland firefighting scene the same as there will always be people willing to jump out of an airplane and put out a fire.

Will there be enough of these people to meet the need? No, in my opinion. The youth of today are better suited to find fires via satellite and send someone else to put them out. I was working out today at my local fitness club. Saw all these people, men and women, cut with muscle, very small body fat—they would have been statues. Also saw they had developed a curvature of their neck as they couldn't look up from their cell phones during their workout. And they are the people who bothered to show up to work out. Would they last on the fireline—not a chance.

Fastest to Get There

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

I met Norman Maclean in either 1978 or '79 at the smokejumper base in Missoula. Foreman **Laird Robinson** (MSO-62) assisted Norman at the time as his guide and technical advisor for a book "Young Men and Fire." Laird introduced us. Norman asked if I could accompany them over the weekend to Mann Gulch. They wanted to time me hiking up the gulch on the path of **Wagner "Wag" Dodge** (MSO-41) and his smokejumper crew of 1949. I declined as I was in the top ten on the jump list and planned to jump a fire and come back to Missoula and drink beer. Both Norman and Laird roared with laughter. I was puzzled. Did they not know I was working to earn my 50 jump wings? In retrospect, my response proved a key point in Norman's yet to be completed book. Smokejumpers live to jump fire and drink beer. It's what we do.

I ran cross country and track at Colorado State University for **Del Hessel** (MYC-59), who jumped out of McCall 1959-61. Unknowingly, he was the reason I received the invite to accompany Norman and Laird. Coach Hessel's workouts were the stuff of the gods of winged feet. They were

brutal but they produced results. At peak "Hessel" conditioning, one experienced a sense of no chest, lungs, or body. Only air flowing in and out, unrestrained. Sometimes I would stop by his office and marvel at the smokejumper pictures displayed there. What better combination for a budding young forester: Cross Country, Track and Smokejumping. Coach Hessel set the blade for me in physical fitness and character. The smokejumpers honed the edge.

Years later I took my family to visit **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) at his home in Missoula. Earl, along with **Rufus Robinson** (MSO-40), made the first fire jump on July 12, 1940, on Marten Creek in Idaho. The kids were overwhelmed with Earl's bowling alley in the basement, and that gave me time to ask questions and soak in the history of the early smokejumpers. Earl spotted the Mann Gulch jumpers on August 5, 1949. He said that when he next saw foreman Dodge, he still wore his trademark Stetson Fedora as worn on the fire. Earl remarked that the hat was not even singed. It was a physical tribute to the wisdom of his escape fire.

It's been 42 years since I earned my 50 jump wings. Still, I keep that outfit with me every day. Colorado State Cross Country, Track, and the Smokejumpers gave me a thirst and eye for tradition, history, excellence, and quality. When you run and jump with the best, it simply absorbs you.

Today I wore one of my old Stetson Fedora's in the Wind Rivers. It has a price tag of $12 dollars and 95 cents inside the brim to fix it in time with Wagner Dodge and the Mann Gulch jumpers. Even my Ruger 357 Magnum (the grizzly bears are out) brought back those fire jumps in Alaska when I first strapped the revolver on after I sprayed down with bug repellent while taking off my jump gear. I thought about Wag and his crew and Norman and his son—John Maclean's fire books and Del Hessel and all the smokejumpers—as I hiked up a trail along a river that cuts though the Wind River Mountains near our home. I thought about woodsmen past and present and fire and parachutes and horses and time and the first to get there.

I also marveled at the Maclean correlation between parachutes, horses, and "outfits" in the "magic realm" so eloquently described in the *Young Men and Fire* manuscript. A horseman and a smokejumper will grasp it. I did and I do. It is perhaps my favorite line in American Literature.

They were the fastest the nation had in getting to where there was danger, they got there by moving in the magic realm between heaven and earth, and when they got there, they almost made a game of it. None were surer they couldn't lose than the Seventh Cavalry and the Smokejumpers.

Fire can either renew or destroy. It also tempers and sharpens character. "Fastest" is a virtue of youth. I suppose that is why Norman Maclean called his endeavor "Young Men and Fire." It is an open-ended book about an event that quietly whispers to a future wherever an outcome is held in doubt. This is the place where time becomes blurred. I can see that now. Fortunately, for the Christian, our end is never in doubt. That victory was decided 2,000 years ago on a cross. It is in faith, hope, and love that we honor the giants whose shoulders we stand upon and the "13 Stations of the Cross" at Mann Gulch near a river that Maclean might say "Runs Through It."

Sorry, Forest Service: Fire is NOT our Friend

by Congressman Tom McClintock (R–California 4th Congressional District)

Congressman McClintock's op-ed taken from Mike Archer's "Wildfire News of the Day". This piece is edited to shorten.

On July 4th, lightning struck a tree in the Humboldt-Toiyabe N.F. igniting a small fire that smoldered for days in a quarter

acre. According to Sheriff Rick Stephens, Cal Fire dispatched a crew to put it out. But they were told to "stand down" by the USFS, which proceeded to "monitor" the fire instead. That is to say, they did precisely nothing. Twelve days later, the Tamarack Fire exploded out of control consuming nearly 70,000 acres.

One of the towns in its path was Woodfords, California. In 1987, the Woodfords Fire Department responded to a report of fire on Forest Service land near their town. They too were turned away. Federal officials threatened Woodford's residents with arrest for even trying to extinguish the small blaze. Hours later, the fire exploded to 6,500 acres, costing 25 families their homes. Apparently, the Forest Service has learned nothing in 34 years.

This "let burn" policy of federal land managers began in 1972, during the height of the radical environmental movement. Essentially, it holds that "fire is our friend." It stems from the premise that fire is nature's way of cleaning up forests, and that active suppression of fires leads to a build-up of excess fuels.

That's right, as far as it goes. An untended forest is like an untended garden. It will grow and grow until it chokes itself to death and is ultimately consumed by catastrophic fire. That is how nature gardens. The USFS was formed to remove excess growth before it can burn and to preserve our forests in a healthy condition from generation to generation. Or more simply, to do a little gardening.

In California, active land management reduced acreage annually lost to wildfire from more than four million acres in pre-Columbian times to just a quarter million acres during the 20th century. Federal foresters suppressed brush growth and auctioned off excess timber to logging companies that paid for the harvesting rights. Those revenues funded local governments and the Forest Service.

Environmental laws adopted in the 1970s now require years of environmental studies at a cost of millions of dollars before forest thinning can be undertaken. That essentially brought the era of active land management to an end. The result? California's wildfire damage has returned to its pre-historic level: *more than four million acres* burned last year. Nature is a lousy gardener.

In 1988, when the federal "let burn" policy produced the disastrous Yellowstone fires, President Reagan reversed it. "I did not even know (the policy) existed. … The minute that this happened out there and Don Hodel went out, he made it plain that, no, we were withdrawing from that policy," President Reagan said. Reagan left. The policy returned. And the devastation it has caused since then is tragic, avoidable, and incalculable.

Especially given the hazardous condition of today's forests, sensible policy would give top priority to extinguishing small fires before they can explode out of control.

Scrambling to explain their obvious dereliction of duty, Deputy Forest Supervisor Jon Stansfield complained that the Forest Service just didn't have the resources to put out the small fire when a single water drop by helicopter could have stopped it cold. Yet they had the resources to photograph it by helicopter, had the resources to do countless air drops after they allowed it to explode, and apparently even blocked a Cal Fire crew from putting it out.

The federal government owns 96 percent of Alpine County, leaving it with virtually no tax base and entirely dependent on tourism attracted by the national forest. The fire has not only taken people's homes and destroyed their businesses, but it has severely damaged the forest resource that the entire economy depends upon for tourism.

It is dangerous nonsense to "monitor" fires in today's forest tinderbox, even if they seem to pose no immediate danger. No person in his right mind would "monitor" a rattlesnake curled up in his bedroom because it isn't doing much of anything.

In our national forests, only the Forest Service can prevent small blazes from becoming forest fires. It's time they did.

As stated in this issue of Smokejumper, *there were at least 80 or more smokejumpers available each day preceding the blowup of this fire. Twenty-five of them were an hour away. I wish there was some way to let Congressman McClintock and the USFS know that smokejumpers were available and can put out fires. I've tried every avenue possible. (Ed.)*

Off-Duty Jumpers

Chuck Pickard (Missoula '48)

L-R: Dave Burt, Jack Nott, Chuck Pickard, George Harpole, John Scicek, Bill Rude.(Courtesy C. Pickard)

Now called skydiving, this group of off-duty jumpers performed on weekends at rodeos and other events. Delayed openings were the order of the day. A bag of flour tied to the leg and released by a string left a trail for viewers. A bit about these guys:

Dave Burt (MSO-47): Dave would try anything from wing walking to dangerous delayed openings. He was technical director for the old TV series "Ripcord." One time he jumped into the Grand Canyon with Starr Jenkins (CJ-48) and floated down the canyon in a rubber raft for a few days. Dave died in an automobile crash in later years.

George Harpole (MSO-49): George continued jumping at fairs and air shows and was a career USFS employee. His team in Madison, WI, developed OSB board (chip board). George was NSA Life Member living in Colorado. He passed away April 8, 2021.

Jack Knott (MSO-47): Jack and Dave worked out some fancy maneuvers during those days that thrilled onlookers.

Chuck Pickard (MSO-48): Went on to join Ft. Lauderdale (FL) Police Dept. As a Detective Sgt., he left and started a private investigative firm. Made jumps dressed as Santa Claus and made last allowable jump at Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood Airport during air show. Resides in Florida and is active at age 95.

John Scicek (MSO-49): When not in smokejumping, he was employed by a power company as a "high climber."

Willis "Bill" Rude (MSO-49): Very cool with delayed openings. Later years unknown to me.

Snapshots from the Past

by Jeff R. Davis
(Missoula '57)

The Dry Run Near Black Mountain

It was close to the end of another intense fire season in Silver City, New Mexico, with the jumpers covering the Gila National Forest. Twenty-four of us had been battling fires for nearly three months. We'd had all the action even us fire-hungry smokejumpers could handle. Most of us had made at least fifteen fire jumps apiece, and I, as foreman, had been in the air for weeks at a stretch, dropping men and equipment on wildfires when I wasn't busy jumping them myself. We'd received notice we were being shipped back to our individual home bases up north, and the termination party was on for tonight.

This final day, I took a skeleton crew to the Grant County Airport—four men and myself. We weren't expecting any fires, and frankly no one even wanted one. We'd all had a belly-full of fires and jumps, which is a rarity for smokejumpers. But around 1500 we got a request for four jumpers for a fire up on the northern part of the forest on the Beaverhead District. It was a half-mile southwest of Black Mountain Lookout, who'd reported the smoke.

Shit! We all echoed the same word of disgust, but that's why we were here, enjoying perhaps the heaviest concentration of lightning-caused fires in the entire country.

I loaded up the crew and within minutes we were airborne to the fire. "Control One, this is Jumper One, rollin' for the Black Mountain Fire with four aboard." I made the radio call to the dispatcher's shack in Silver City as I'd done hundreds of times before during this busy fire season. Within a half-hour we were over the fire; it was a jumper's dream. A tiny little smoke, snugged up against one of the many open meadows of the Beaverhead. The smoke indicated almost no drift at all. I went "ten-seven" on the AirNet as I crawled back to the aft end of the AT-11 Twin Beech we called Jumper One. The first set of streamers validated the glimpses of smoke we'd already seen. There was almost no drift at all and the jump was a certainty. I prepared to drop my jumpers in two-man sticks.

As I got them ready, I couldn't help but notice the long faces of my crew. They'd been on enough fires this summer. They knew this one was a "go" and they didn't want to go. Hell no, they didn't want this jump. They wanted to party with the rest of us tonight at 2100. I didn't have the heart to continue my drop. These guys had seen plenty of action all summer long, and they'd never once let me down. I considered.

"Tell you what, guys. This fuckin' smoke suddenly looks like it's too windy to jump, and we're probably gonna, hafta take you back home." Then, "Control One, Jumper One, we're dry-running this fire—wind—and returning to base."

The lookout on Black Mountain had an AirNet radio too, and he was listening in on the whole conversation. "Whaddaya mean, there's too much wind?" he blurted into the transmission. "I'm only a half-mile from the fire. I can see it from here and there's no wind here at all!"

"I don't know what kinda wind Black Mountain's got, Control One, but it's blowin' up a storm here and we're comin' the hell home!" The dispatcher at Control One, Cal Salars, was the best dispatcher I ever worked with. He and I worked closely together like a well-oiled team. What one said to the other went without question.

"Ten four, Jumper One, I copy you're dry-running Black Fire and returning to Grant County," came Cal's response. I told the pilot, Tuck Grimes, to

head 'er back to pasture. Tuck knew exactly what was going on, but he kept his mouth shut and his hands on the throttles as we headed back to base.

Maybe I was more of a renegade than some of my fellow foremen, but maybe also I was a bit tired of all the hoopla and activity of a ball-breaking fire season. I never regretted my decision over Black Mountain that day and neither did my men. Their grins of relief in the aft-end of the Twin Bitch said it all for me. There's more to this job than being a gung-ho fire-eater, any time.

We Need Your Biography

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

I did a "special issue" of *Smokejumper* in May. One of the main reasons was to further the NSA History Preservation Project that we are working on at Eastern Washington University. My goal is to write and preserve the history of those, just over 6,000, individuals who were smokejumpers in the U.S.

"A biography, or simply bio, is a detailed description of a person's life. It portrays a person's experience of these life events." Your response has been good and each day I get letters and emails with information that I can format to preserve in history.

As I type these life stories up, I sit at my computer in amazement. The level of achievement is so high, I wonder if there has ever been a singular group in U.S. history that has done what you have done as smokejumpers and citizens of our country. All of this has pushed me to get it into some sort of a document, book or whatever if time allows.

At the same time, I have been going through the 1,000 obits on the NSA website and our NSA database trying to add information to that obit. I'm about halfway through that list. I hate to see just a single sentence obit—John Smith (MSO-??) died in 19??. Is that all we can put down for a person? I know there is more there to this person's life story.

The biggest problem when doing research is the lack of information given by the hiring agency. I'm finding out that there are many names misspelled. Also, it was not uncommon for a person to go by their middle name or a nickname. There is no indication of what part of the U.S. a person came from. I just must take a guess. Sometimes, after an hour of research, I come up blank. However, every now and then I come up with a published obit—just like finding gold! Sorry if that sounds morbid.

Bottom line: Help me out and give me your bio. I love it when it comes via email as that saves me a lot of typing and time. However, when it comes in written longhand via a letter, it is just as valuable.

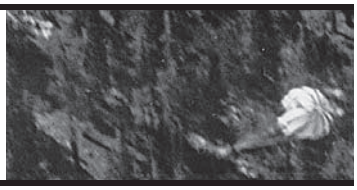
Please sit down and send me this information in this order:

- Born (day, month, year, city, state)
- Grew up—where?
- Graduated from High School: name of school and location
- Further Education—where, when and what degrees received
- Career—chronological order
- Honors—anything special? World Champ or person of the year?

I know where you jumped and the years that you jumped. This may not seem important to you now, but it is very important that the future generation know the makeup of the very few individuals in U.S. history who were smokejumpers.

Thanks to you who have responded. A kick in the butt to you who are putting this off. All men so far, come on ladies. What a group, what an organization (NSA)! Let's keep it going.

THE JUMP LIST
MEN OF THE '50s



This column is part of the NSA History Preservation Project. All information will be kept in the Smokejumper Archives at Eastern Washington University. (Ed.)

ROBERT I. "BOB" GARA
(McCall '51)

Bob was born in Chile in 1931 and graduated from Haddonfield H.S. in Haddonfield, N.J., in 1949. He graduated from Utah State with a degree in Forest/Range Management in 1953. Bob met **Jack Price** (IDC-50) and **Reid Jackson** (MYC-49) while at Utah State which reinforced his interest in smokejumping. After working on a TSI crew in 1950, Bob rookied at McCall, where he jumped the 1951-52 seasons and the 1953 season at Idaho City.

"I was taught more about firefighting by the 'old timers' Bob Caldwell, Clyde Hawley and Richard Peterson. Working and listening to these squadleaders vastly enriched my life from learning to recognize the value of classical literature, to learning how to be a pleasant and thoughtful human being." Bob was in the USAF 1953-57 and became a navigator at Ellington AFB, Houston, Texas.

He left the Air Force in 1957, became a forester for Kirby Lumber Co. (Texas), then enrolled at Oregon State, where he graduated as a Forest Entomologist in 1959 and got his Ph.D. in 1964. After teaching at Syracuse University, he accepted a professorship at the University of Washington, where he taught for 40 years. Bob retired in 2006 and is living in Anacortes, Washington. "I have been consulting in forest products entomology as well as trying to keep fit by rowing twice a week."

DONALD R. HEINICKE
(Missoula '51)

Don was born in St. Louis, MO, and raised in Sand Springs, OK. He graduated from Oklahoma A&M with bachelor's in Horticulture/Forestry in 1954 and the U of Maryland with MS and Ph.D. in Horticulture in 1960. He is a self-employed Orchardist since 1972 when he bought his first orchard in the Lake Chelan area. Don then developed 353 acres, called the Cascade Foothills Fruit and Land Co. Don is still a partner and has developed a 60-acre orchard called Heinicke Orchards.

Don was in the Army 1954-56, Asst. Prof. Horticulture U of Wisconsin 1960-61, Canada Dept. Agriculture Research Station 1961-65, Asst. Prof. Horticulture U of Idaho 1965-67, USDS Ag. Research 1967-72 and Orchardist 1972-2010

Don is the recipient of numerous awards and honors in the Horticultural Science field and has been the invited speaker at most (if not all) of the Fruit Grower meetings in the US. He has also served in many community activities including the Central Washington Hospital Board, Central Washington Bank Board and the Central Washington Health Plan as Director. Don served as a Commissioner for the Washington State Fish & Wildlife Dept. 1998-2001. Don jumped at Missoula 1951 and at West Yellowstone 1952-53.

ROBERT J. HOUGH
(North Cascades '51)

Bob graduated from Winthrop H.S. in 1951 and rookied at NCSB that summer, where he jumped until 1955. He graduated from College of Puget Sound in 1956 and, as an ROTC student, entered the USAF as a 2nd Lieutenant. He entered pilot training in 1957, made 1st Lieutenant in 1958, Captain in 1963, Major in 1968, and Lt. Colonel in 1974. Bob flew many different aircraft, including B-47s and B-52s. In 1976 he received his master's degree from Pepperdine University and retired in 1985.

Bob flew over 7,700 hours and 123 combat missions. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Meritorious Service Medal among many other awards. Bob retired to Olalla, Washington, and worked for the State as a Safety Program Manager for 10 years.

BOB JOHNSTON
(Cave Junction '51)

Bob grew up near Heavener, OK, and graduated from Heavener H.S. in 1949. He graduated from Oklahoma State with a degree in Animal Science. Bob served in the Army 1954-57 as an Army Aviator for the 2nd Armored Division in Germany.

He worked for the FAA in Air Traffic Control and Weather Service 1958-95 retiring in 1996 to his family farm in Heavener. Bob jumped a single season at CJ in 1951. Bob currently lives in Heavener.

ROBERT F. KRUCKEBERG
(North Cascades '51))

Bob was raised and went to high school in Springfield, Illinois. He achieved the Eagle Scout rank in the Boy Scouts and felt that gave him direction in his career. He attended college in Boulder, CO, majoring in architecture, but soon switched to Colorado A&M majoring in forestry. He was an avid hiker & climber, conquering his favorite Longs Peak 13 times. Bob was in the ROTC program and graduated as a 2nd Lt. in the USAF. He jumped at NCSB during the 1951 season.

After he married Joyce a few weeks after graduation, they worked in Rocky Mountain National Park at a remote fire control tower. Then he began his service in the Air Force, training to be a helicopter pilot. He served three years and was released just after Joyce got to pin his captain's wings on him.

Bob then worked for the Forest Service in Colorado, designing campgrounds and ski runs and doing avalanche control. He moved to the Black Hills in South Dakota to combine his helicopter and smokejumping training to establish a program to get firefighters closer to the fires via helicopters. That program has celebrated its 50-year anniversary.

Bob worked for the Forest Service again in Wyoming, then earned a master's degree in Forest Management at Yale University. He worked in National Forests near Gunnison, CO, and Cody, WY. He then took a job at the fire research laboratory in Missoula, MT, where they were testing an infrared fire detection and mapping system, using low flying planes.

In about 1974, Bob & Joyce joined Wycliffe Bible Translators to serve as full-time missionaries in management positions. Bob lives in Cedar Hill, TX.

JOSEPH F. "JOE" MCDONALD
(West Yellowstone '51)

Joe went into smokejumping right out of high school at age 18. "I was a seasoned firefighter because on the reservation I had been going on fires and doing forest service maintenance since I was 14. I could use climbers, crosscut saw, dig fireline, and find my way in the woods and knew something about fire behavior."

Joe was on the first crew to go to West Yellowstone and jumped there 1951-52 before returning to Missoula 1953-55. "I was planning to join the service at the end of the summer, but all the guys in the jumpers at that time were college students. By the end of the summer, I wanted to go to college. I was offered an athletic scholarship at Western Montana College and attended two years and jumped during the summer. My two years of elementary education qualified me to teach school in grades 1-8 in Montana.

"That became my pattern. I would teach school in fall and winter and jump in the summer. Then I realized I wasn't making progress towards a bachelor's degree and wouldn't be qualified to teach and coach in high school. I stopped jumping after the '55 season and went to the University of Montana. After receiving my bachelor's in Physical Education and teaching in eastern Montana, I became a teacher and basketball coach at Hamilton H.S. During the summers, I would do the aerial patrol for the Bitterroot National Forest. My smokejumping experience really helped in this work.

"I left Hamilton H.S. after five years and worked on a master's and became a college basketball coach at Northern Montana College in Havre. After three years of coaching at the college level, I began a career in public school administration as a high school principal. I did this for seven years at the same school, Ronan H.S., Montana.

"I was very interested in tribal politics and tribal education and how to help American Indian people. The tribes lacked Indian people with degrees that could lead their tribes in social and economic development.

"In l976, I began the task of developing a tribal college for the Flathead Indian Reservation and helped lead an effort to create tribal colleges throughout Indian Country. I worked developing Salish Kootenai College, a small liberal arts college that serves the local tribe, Indians from throughout the United States, and non-Indian students from throughout the world.

"During this time, starting in 1968 I began working on my doctorate degree and finally finished it in l981 at the University of Montana. I have been retired since 2010 and stay busy serving on college-related boards and in helping to write books. So far I have co-authored eight books."

ROGER NEWTON
(Cave Junction '51)

Roger grew up in Medford, OR, and graduated from Medford High School in June of 1944. He entered the Army Air Cadet program and went to Montana State University and then to the University of Utah. He was discharged from the Air Force in 1946.

Roger then entered the University of Oregon and graduated in 1950 with a bachelor's degree. Two years later, he entered law school at Willamette University and graduated in 1955 with his law degree.

Roger practiced law in Reno, NV, from 1959—1992 before moving to Santa Barbara, CA, to be close to family. Roger jumped at Cave Junction 1951-58.

EARL RAYMOND
(Missoula'51)

Earl graduated from high school in Dracut, Massachusetts, in 1946. He joined the Marines for two years before attending the Univ. of Massachusetts where he got his bachelor's followed by his master's in Forestry from Yale in 1952. Since Forestry School required a summer job in that field, he jumped at Missoula 1951 and at West Yellowstone 1952.

Earl took a job with James W. Sewall Co. in Maine and retired as Chief Operating Officer after 40 years. In 1955 he did survey work for the layout of the DEW (early warning radar systems) north of the Arctic Circle.

"In 1999, my wife of forty years, who had been fighting cancer for years, died. A few years later, I started to travel. Over the past 20 years, I have backpacked every continent and spent thousands of hours volunteering at Florida State Parks. My Missoula Smokejumper t-shirt is still around."

TED RIEGER (Missoula '51)

Ted jumped at Missoula 1951-52 and 1955 while attending the University of Montana. He got a permanent appointment with the USFS in Dillion in 1955, married Aryls in 1957, and moved to Sheridan, Montana, where he was Assistant and then District Ranger. Aryls said Ted eventually did get his degree in Forestry from the University of Montana but it took many years part time as "it was never a priority for him." In 1964 he went to Clarkia, Idaho, as District Ranger and was later promoted to Range Staff in St. Maries. Ted retired in 1981.

RODNEY D. "ROD" SNIDER
(North Cascades '51)

After getting his degree in Forestry from Colorado State University, Rod joined the USAF and entered flight school where he received training in jets and helicopters. His Air Force time included helicopter work west of Greenland.

During his college years, Rod jumped 1951-53 at NCSB. Howard Betty (NCSB-48) gave Rod the "character award" for running a 100-yard dash. This dash wasn't run on the track but across the Twisp River Bridge on top of the outside railing.

After his time in the Air Force, Rod went to work for the Johnson Flying Service (JFS) in Missoula flying non-scheduled airline work, dropping fire retardant and doing spraying. After leaving JFS, he went to work for Boise Cascade where he flew helicopters, Lear jets, and multi-engine aircraft for 20 years. As a hobby he built two ultralight aircraft and also flew hang gliders for many years. When Rod left Boise Cascade, he continued to fly helicopters on fires for the next six years.

Rod received numerous awards for his work as a pilot on the August 4, 1961, Higgins Ridge Fire, where he saved the lives of 20 smokejumpers with a small Bell 47B-3 helicopter. He was awarded "Pilot of the Year" from the Helicopter Association of America and the

Carnegie Medal for Heroism in 1962. In 1976 Rod received the North American Forest Fire Medal.

On his first two trips out of the area where the jumpers were trapped, Rod took two jumpers on each run. When things were getting more critical by the minute, Rod put two jumpers in the cabin with him and two more on the outside cargo trays.

From a 2019 interview: "It was hard to find them. The wind was really cooking and you couldn't see the heliport. I had to come in high and drop down into it." When asked what made him risk his life, Rod said, "It had to be done. You just can't leave guys down in the position that they were in."

STANFORD "STAN" YOUNG
(West Yellowstone '51)

Stan jumped at West Yellowstone during the 1951 season. He spent one year as an Air Corps Cadet during WWII and graduated from Utah State University with bachelor's and master's degree. Stan retired as a Navy Commander in 1977 and is living in Waddell, AZ.

The Good Sam Fund—Your Donations At Work

A number of years ago **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) suggested that we were to the point, as an organization, where we could start helping our jumpers and their families in times of need. When you think of it, what could be better than helping someone who needs help? We started the Good Samaritan Fund (Good Sam Fund/GSF) a dollar at a time based on donations. Over the years, it has become a quick source of help to those in our jumper family in need. I've written three checks over the last week to help a jumper or his/her family.

We had a jumper fatality where we gave aid, we had a widow who needed help with funeral and medical expenses, and we had an injured jumper whose family needed help with hotel expenses while he was in the hospital. We are quick and efficient. A request comes in or I find out about a need via other members. The need is evaluated by our Executive Committee, the amount determined, the check written and it is in the mail. Time span—less than a day.

At this time, we are close to $250,000 given in GSF aid and scholarships to you, your children or grandchildren. What a change from back in the 1990s when we barely were able to meet operational expenses. All that has changed, thanks to your generosity.

About a year ago, I had a chance to reconnect with one of my Track sprinters from way back when I first started coaching. I added him to the quarterly mailing of *Smokejumper* magazine. He has had a very successful career in Hollywood as a stunt man and currently works as part of a major TV series. In response to our GSF efforts, he recently contacted me and set up a monthly donation of $300 to the GSF. Wow—a person with no connection to smokejumpers but a person who wants to back our effort to aid smokejumpers and their families. Does it get any better? *(Ed.)*

MSG Ben Musc

Photo's Courtesy Ben

Inez Jr. (Brother)

Rudy (Brother)

Armando (Brother)

Ben Musquez
U. S Arm

James (Nephew)

Leroy (Nephew)

Angie (Daughter)

Efrain (Nephew)

Ruben

Justin (Great Nephew)

Roman (Nephew)

Adrian Lee (Nephew)

In the Service of the United S
Commemorating Veterans

Layout Design: John

quez & Family

Musquez (MSO-56)

z (MSO-56)
y (Ret.)

(Son)

Eddy (Brother)

Lydia (Daughter)

Anthony (Nephew)

Angel Sr. (Brother)

Dio (Brother)

Angel Jr. (Nephew)

Rachael (Niece)

Johnny (Brother)

Jimmy (Nephew)

Kenneth (Grandson)

tates of America Since WWII
Day November 11, 2021

nny Kirkley (CJ-64)

ODDS AND ENDS

by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Phil Robertson** (MSO-62), **Rick Hudson** (BOI-73), **C.J. Horner** (MYC-65), **Larry Welch** (CJ-61), **Larry Edwards** (MSO-02), **Mike Cramer** (CJ-59), and **Russ West** (GAC-78) who just became our latest Life Members.

Mike Bina (MSO-68): "Yesterday my wife, Mary, bored, recovering from hip surgery, noted a magazine in the day's mail thinking it was *Smokejumper*. She read for two minutes. Disgusted and disappointed she said, 'This is NOT *Smokejumper* Magazine.' She was reading another forestry publication."

Karl Maerzluft (FBX-67): "Thanks for another great edition of the magazine (July 2021). I read the Carl Pence story and was impressed with the skill and dedication of the people that made up the Forest Service and its middle management. The article about Travis Atkins was a special treat."

Paul Fattig (Associate): "I appreciated your column in the latest (July) *Smokejumper* magazine. Great read. It also hit home with me because we're going to a memorial for my cousin on Sunday who died from Covid 19. Sad times, these."

Ozzie Bender (MSO-47): "I just received my copy of *Smokejumper*, and after the cover, the first thing I look at is "Off the List" and I saw Jack Dunne's name. I jumped with him in 1947 and 1948 and was on a fire with him in 1947.

"I remember him well and always sought him out at the Smokejumper Reunions. He always had a sense of humor, and was I surprised that he became a schoolteacher. The article never mentioned about the time his plane was on the tarmac warming up, Jack was in his position of tail gunner on a B-29, asleep, and the bail out alarm was accidentally sounded. Jack jumped out, with chute on and all and hit the ground below."

Jim Cherry (MSO-57): "I'd like to make some comments about the book *Smokejumpers and the CIA*. It was one thing to read those articles one-by-one as they appeared in *SJ Magazine* spread over the years. It was another thing altogether to read them as they were pulled together in *SJs and the CIA* as part of the NSA's history series. Looking back over all the years since the war(s) in SEA, it was chilling to read of the harrowing experiences that my generation endured. So many of that generation are no longer with us. It's a treasure to have their stories preserved as part of our smokejumper history. Though they were my contemporaries, I was ignorant of what they did, the dangers they endured, and the price they paid (and may still be paying). It all gives me a deeper appreciation for what we share as a 'band of brothers' and a profound sense of honor to be counted among those who can carry the title 'smokejumper.'"

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59): This issue was completed, and this column was the only space I had left to voice an opinion. I just returned home from Carson City, Nevada (July 18). While there at a baseball tournament on Friday (7/16), I looked to the south and notice a very large smoke cloud develop. Three times during the afternoon, a cloud column went thousands of feet into the sky indicating a major blow-up. Saturday the sky smoked over and ash was falling. We were located 34 road miles north of the fire. All during both days, the wind was blowing a steady 25 mph (est.) with flags stretched from the flagpoles. I wondered how this thing was started and when would it stop under these conditions?

Situation: We are in a tremendous **drought** situation, minimal snowpack during the winter, about as dry as it can get—I would say the **potential fire situation out here is critical**. Idid find out information on the fire—The Tamarack Fire.

It was started by lightning **July 4** and **monitored** (watched) for **13 days** and was about a

quarter of an acre. July 17 it was at 25,000 acres, and mandatory evacuations at 17 locations.

The cost of this fire, which could have been put out easily and early, will be tremendous. A key point, often ignored, is the number of resources that will be used here reducing the resource pool for other fires (18 hand crews, 62 engines, 6 helicopters, 800 personnel). It's all connected. Less resources, more fire, plain and simple.

When will we ever get accountability for ineptitude? Does anyone in their right mind not know that a wildfire left to burn under the extreme conditions we are experiencing in the west, knowing that it will develop into a major fire? Is there no hope for the future?

Congratulations to the Milwaukee Bucks who, last night (7/20), won the NBA Championship over the Phoenix Suns. Coach Mike Budenholzer lead the team that had not won an NBA Championship in over 50 years. Why is this in *Smokejumper*? Coach Budenholzer is the younger brother of smokejumpers **Jim Buden** (MSO-73) and **Joe Budenholzer** (CJ-78).

Hey Jim, any chance on getting a Bucks poster signed by Giannis for my grandson? (Ed.)

More Fires, Less Staffing Taking Toll On Wildland Firefighters

Ben Elkind (Redmond '14)

I would almost do it for free. The feeling of complete focus and calm after jumping out of the airplane is hard to find elsewhere these days. But the chaos from life and the fire below are making me rethink my career, and that's a big problem for Oregonians.

I've been a smokejumper for the US Forest Service for eight years and worked on the Mt. Hood Hotshot Fire Crew before that. I grew up in Oregon and can't stand to see wildfires ravaging our public lands and communities while the smoke threatens our public health.

The Forest Service employs the largest firefighting force in the west, yet the agency refuses to rise to the challenge of climate change and the growing demand that increased fires, short-staffing, and low pay presents for our workforce.

Vacancies throughout the west limit our firefighting ability. Fire engines sit idle and unstaffed in many parts of our state, and the number of "Type II" incident management teams – charged with managing large fires around the Northwest – has decreased from 10 to seven since 2014. The teams that remain are short-staffed and spread thin. This is the obvious outcome in a profession that I've never heard anyone recommend to their children.

As the cost of living and home prices rise in the west, the Forest Service can no longer retain its employees when starting pay is $13.45 an hour. At the Lincoln City McDonald's just west of Otis, another community nearly erased from the map by wildfires, a sign in the window advertised starting pay is $15 an hour. My wife joked that I should apply there for more job security. She's right. A career with McDonald's is currently more promising than federal wildland firefighting.

I'm an incident commander with advanced qualifications, supervising dozens of resources and fire crews on fires, yet I've never earned more than $20 an hour in my 14 years as a professional wildland firefighter. I make decisions that can cost millions of dollars with lives hanging in the balance, yet I am paid more like a teenager working a summer job than a highly experienced professional. Last summer, I trained someone from Seattle Fire who earned more in two weeks than I earned in a 6-month fire season.

The cost of paying living wages to our firefighters pales in comparison to the costs that

L-R: Cohen (3), Leo (6 months), Ben. Courtesy Ben Elkind)

devastating wildfires have on our state. The costs in Oregon from the 2020 fires alone are well more than $1 billion, and that doesn't include the mental toll it took on our citizens. My pregnant wife was home with our toddler duct taping paper towels on a fan to try and filter the smoke while I was working on the fire that would burn from Warm Springs past Detroit and towards Portland.

I've personally seen the experience level drop rapidly on fires over the past decade as people find work that is more predictable, safer, and affords them a better work/life balance. This leads to higher fire costs simply because we aren't as experienced at fighting fire as we used to be. When training costs are so high, retention is paramount to fiscal responsibility.

Prescribed burns and hazardous fuels reduction are buzz words politicians and media use, but the reality is that there aren't people willing to take on that dangerous job anymore at $13.45 an hour. The limiting factor is staffing.

Prescribed burns and hazardous fuels reduction are buzz words politicians and media use, but the reality is that there aren't people willing to take on that dangerous job anymore at $13.45 an hour.

Fire season in 2021 is now underway in the drought-stricken western U.S., yet there have been no policy changes at the firefighting level or legislatively.

Talking about wildfires, climate change, prescribed burning is great. But our citizens and firefighting workforce demand action. I ask for your help to demand a better investment of our money and to preserve what parts of Oregon we have left for future generations.

Another Case of Limited Resources—What About the 80 Smokejumpers?

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

My wife and I were in Carson City, Nevada, on July 16 watching our grandson play in a youth baseball tournament. The rising cloud of smoke some 30 miles to the south got my attention as much as the game. At least three times during the afternoon a "pyrocumulus" (fire) cloud rose thousands of feet into the air. I knew this was indicative of the fire taking off. The next day, we watched the games under a cloud of smoke which was partially blocking out the sun and dropping white ash onto the fields.

We left Sunday to return to Chico, and I followed this fire over Bill Gabbert's *Wildfire Today* website. If you want to keep up on wildfire, this site needs to be bookmarked on your device.

July 10—The USFS released a statement and a photo of the fire **six** days after it had started and was only a **quarter of an acre**. "The **tactical management decision is not to insert fire crews due to safety concerns**, however, this is not an unresponsive approach. The **fire poses no threat** to the public, infrastructure or resource values." At the time there were 23 other lightning fires. The Forest Service added "that **resources were limited** and had to be assigned to higher-priority fires…" According to the daily Smokejumper Status Report, there were 80 smokejumpers available July 11(and before) and **23 were a little more than an hour flight time away**.

July 12—114 jumpers not on fires, **25** a short flight away.

July 14—104 jumpers not on fires, **17** a short flight away. Two days before the blowup.

July 16—The fire, which was watched daily, exhibited very little fire behavior until this day. "Fueled by extreme winds and low humidity, it progressed rapidly…"

July 21—The Incident Management Team released information that the fire was started on the Humboldt-Toiyabe N.F. by lightning on July 4. It was a **single tree** burning on a rocky ridgetop. "The steep, rugged, and remote terrain presented challenges to safely suppress this wilderness fire." The decision was made to "monitor" this fire—that means watch it burn. It has grown to 40,000 acres and burned 10 structures. Resources: 27 hand crews, 99 engines, and 9 helicopters totaling 1,219 personnel. Cost: **$5 million**. Fire officials said, "The timber is as dry as it can be."

July 22—Nevada assemblyman Jim Wheeler "takes steps to pursue litigation" against the Forest Service. Representative Tom McClintock had a "very encouraging conversation with incoming USFS Chief Randy Moore. He has pledged a complete review of the 'let burn' policies that led to the Tamarack Fire and is ordering 'full suppression' of incipient fires – we must prioritize little fires before they become big ones."

July 25—66,744 acres, 1,557 personnel, extreme crowning.

July 29—Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak is buying the USFS line that there were not enough resources available to put out the Tamarack Fire early on. "Sisolak said more support and firefighters would have prevented the USFS from having to make difficult decisions about where to direct its resources." The coverup is on!

Comments Terrain: "Steep, rugged, and remote." Perfect country to use smokejumpers. I know photos do not give you a perfect picture, but the one of this fire released by the USFS shows an area that would have been classified as a normal jump spot. What I have come to see is that jump spots have changed in the last 7-8 years. What we used to jump is now too dangerous and, as they said about the Lolo Fire, a "suicide mission." Please let the smokejumpers make this decision.

If you have ever jumped the Gila N.F. (New Mexico), this looks like a normal fire jump except at a much lower altitude and minus the constant winds you get on the Gila. If you have ever

jumped the Siskiyou, Umpqua, or Shasta Trinity, these trees are very small in comparison. If you have ever jumped North Cascades, what the USFS considers "steep" here is nothing to what you have jumped. What we jumped safely for 70 years is now considered too steep, too windy, and too rugged.

I know the current jumpers are in excellent condition, have fire experience longer that I can print—please, will someone give them a chance to prevent fires like this? They are waiting for the call.

I check the smokejumper status report on almost a daily basis and log availability and location. Each day there are over 100 smokejumpers available and not on fires. This fire could have been easily handled by six jumpers. Why waste this talent? Saying that there were "limited resources" means that the fire managers in this area do not know what resources they have. Shame on them!

Comments Weather: Let's go to the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise to get their outlook July 2021 through October 2021. Key points: (1) Drought intensified over the West with **more than 90% of the West** now in drought with over half in **exceptional** drought. (2) Climate outlooks indicate **warmer than normal** conditions are likely, especially in the West. (3) Most of the mountains and foothills in California are forecast to have **above normal** significant fire potential. (4) Lightning activity **increased dramatically** across much of the West. (5) **Above normal** fire potential expected across Northern California.

The ending statement from NIFC is significant and telling. "Wildland Fire Potential Outlook is intended as a **decision support tool** for wildland fire managers, providing an assessment of current weather and fuels conditions and how these will evolve in the next four months. The objective is to **assist fire managers in making proactive decisions** that will improve protection of life, property, and natural resources, increase fire fighter safety and effectiveness, and reduce firefighting costs."

The question is: "Why are people ignoring the obvious?"

Caring for Our Forests: The Key to Less Destructive Wildfires

by Michael Rains (Associate)

Recently, I was talking to my sister Sharon and her husband Bill Norrish. They live in Placerville, California. Sharon and Bill, a former California Highway Patrolman, have always loved the western forests. When they called, we began talking about a road trip they took to the Silver Fork area.

Bill is in his 80s now and Sharon is slightly older than me. Both have incredible wisdom, and it is very rewarding to learn from them both. They enjoy taking small excursions as they keep in touch with the forested landscapes they love. This trip was just a bit different.

As they drove through the Silver Fork area, they were excited and pleased to see how good the forests looked. The forests were well-maintained, probably due to the stewardship of the Michigan-Cal Timber Company, as indicated by the signage. But Sharon and Bill were not exactly sure. On the call, they said, "This is what you have been talking about." Sharon has seen a copy of what is commonly being called the "Call to Action." The official title of the document is "A National Crisis: Lack of Forest Maintenance Resulting in Destructive Wildfires." I started crafting it about two years ago. Now, with the help of about thirty professionals, the "Call to Action" has become an instructional piece to help address the wildfire dilemma we all face.

As we talked, it became evident that there was

an underlying message. Why doesn't the Forest Service do this to their lands? That is, maintain their forests? And that brought on another conversation about our family and the United States Forest Service.

A Cal Graduate in Forestry. Bill's father was a University of California forestry graduate and joined the Forest Service in the 1930s. A tall, commanding gentleman, he unfortunately passed away far too early. Who knows? He might have been a Forest Service Chief; I have often thought.

In the late 1950s, my mother joined the Forest Service as a personnel clerk on the El Dorado N.F. in Placerville, California. She loved the Forest Service, always talking about the leaders—Doug Leisz, Scully Parker, Jack Deinema, and so many others. It was obvious she was proud to be part of the agency.

On the call with Sharon and Bill, we continued to reminisce about our association with the Forest Service, constantly linking how well the forests in the Silver Fork area looked, how well they were being cared for, and so many past discussions about the National Forests.

A Kid from East LA. I was born in East Los Angeles spending most of my early youth in California. Like most, we were poor, my parents being classic depression-era Americans. Eventually, we moved to Sacramento and then to a very rural area called Sly Park, another small town in northern California between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe. It was there where I became associated with the United State Forest Service.

My mother, looking for a job, was offered a secretarial position on the El Dorado N.F. The Forest Supervisor was Douglas R. Leisz. Mr. Leisz would be instrumental in getting me my first job in forestry as a firefighter for the California Division of Forestry (CDF). I will always be grateful to Mr. Leisz.

I lived at the CDF Barracks and received a monthly salary of $255.15 for the summer before my senior year in high school. At the time, it was huge to me. I saved everything I could. John Morrow was the Ranger and Doug Horton was my supervisor. Both were iconic leaders.

Following high school, I was selected from a permanent Civil Service roster and became a GS-2 Biological Aid. In my new position, I carried stakes for a "P-Line" crew laying out "cut and fill" points for logging roads on the El Dorado N.F. It was a full-time, permanent job. That is all I wanted. As far as I was concerned, I was on my way. I was not allowed to write the "cut and fill" numbers on the stakes. It was not until later that summer that my boss handed me a pencil. I had arrived!

Michael T. Rains

A Miracle Occurs. I had no intention of going to college. I did not think I could afford it. Besides, I had a full-time job with the USFS. Maybe someday I would be a "Survey Party Team Leader" on the El Dorado N.F. At a GS-7 level, I would be set. Just before my summer ended on the "P-Line" crew, my supervisor, Mr. James Floyd, pulled me aside. He told me that if I wanted to go to college, the Forest Service would offer me "educational leave without pay." When the next summer would come, I would be hired back and the time would count toward my career.

I was not thinking about a career. I just wanted to get to that GS-7 level as quickly as possible. The idea seemed sound, but there was one significant problem. I still did not have enough money to pay my way to college unless, maybe, I went to a Community College. The savings from my GS-2 appointment and that from the CDF assignment just might be enough. That is just what I did for two years before transferring to a small forestry school near Arcata, California— Humboldt State University. The Community College was called Sierra Junior College near Rocklin, CA. To this day, I owe most everything to that school. It allowed me to get started and like Jim Floyd said to me earlier, just before each summer I received a letter telling me where to report for work with the Forest Service. Like Forrest Gump said, "…just one less thing to worry about."

A Junior Forester. I can clearly recall the day, over 50 years ago, when I walked into the Supervisor's Office on the El Dorado N.F. in Placerville, California. I was now a freshly minted "JF",

Junior Forester, out of Humboldt State University. I was proud to be able to have the initials, while still looking forward to the end of the first year and being called a "Forester." While not a "Survey Party Team Leader," I *was* a GS-7 and now a "Forester" for the Forest Service. What could be better?

After a brief introduction, my Forest Supervisor, Irwin Bosworth, directed me to "get to work" at my new position. The ride to the District Office headquarters just a few miles from South Lake Tahoe was exciting. I had taken the ride many times before, but never as a "JF." I recall as if it were yesterday the admonishment by the District Ranger when I walked into his office. "Listen up, young fella. If you want to make it to the short-go around here, you will do whatever it takes." I said, "Yes Sir", wondering what he meant by the "short-go." Later, I would find out the phrase was a rodeo term meaning the final go-around or the finals of a competition. I got the message.

The Call to Action. In 2001, there was a "Call to Action" of sorts. It was called "Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment," the *National Fire Plan*. Now, as Director of the Northeastern Area, I was asked to lead the effort to address the harshness of wildfires for the United States Department of Agriculture. Then the Administration and Congress banded together and wanted to find a solution. The resulting *National Fire Plan*, while certainly with some flaws, served the country pretty well. Now it is time for a new, more comprehensive "Call to Action."

About two years ago, after retiring from the agency, I began writing a document entitled, "A National Crisis: Lack of Forest Maintenance Resulting in Destructive Wildfires." Actually, the document was intended to set the stage for a "Call to Action." Now, people simply refer to it as a "Call to Action." The document started out as *mine* but after the help of 32 professionals [and counting] who are incredibly skilled (over a thousand years of combined experience) in controlling wildfires to save lives and property, the current "Call to Action" is now *ours.* The foundational document calls for a National Commitment, Statement of Intent, Vision, Strategy, and 10-Year Work Plan.

The logic: Small fires equal less risk, putting out fires immediately is cost effective, keeping fires small saves watershed and lessens smoke pollutants impacting nearby communities.

In 2020, over 10 million acres were destroyed by wildfire. As of now (July), another 1,466,343 acres have already burned in 2021, slightly more than the total amount of last year's very destructive campaign at the same time. The fire season never stops. Help make a change.

In 2001, there was about 38 million acres of our national forestlands classified as high risk to fire. It is now about 90 million acres. Why? Because for three decades, we have significantly underfunded forest maintenance work that could restore the health and resiliency of our landscapes and help prevent large, intense wildfires. By shifting money *from* sustainable forest management actions *to* fire suppression, today's forests have become overgrown and act like tinderboxes.

How do we break the cycle? We solicit an aggressive commitment, *A Call to Action*, from leaders across America to legislate and properly fund forest health maintenance work that creates and maintains a mosaic of vegetative stages that are productive and more resilient to catastrophic wildfire. By restoring the health of our landscapes, we break the cycle and help reduce the horrific destruction that these wildfires level against public health, infrastructure, and natural resources.

Top 10 Actions. The current "Call to Action" calls for "Top 10 Actions" that must be deployed now and for the foreseeable future:

1. In all probability, the 2021 fire season has been very destructive and the COVID-19 pandemic will still be with us. We must understand this and act accordingly or thousands of people will needlessly become ill or die.
2. The concept of "managed fires" must be taken off the table for now, no exceptions.
3. The goal is to put out every fire immediately. Reduce response time by 80 percent.
4. Smoke is also a killer. We must keep it to a minimum.
5. More fully utilize smaller, more agile aircraft and helicopters. They come with much less people needed to effectively operate, thereby reducing the COVID-19

risk profile.

6. Use larger aircraft more in a more appropriate role.
7. Fully utilize smokejumpers and other specialized firefighters to augment Initial Attack.
8. Pre-position resources much better than ever before. The current mantra needs to be: "Strive to be close to the incident, react quickly and put all wildfires out immediately."
9. Seek added funds. Estimates are as much as +$5.5 billion annually for 5-7 years.
10. We must do all we can to keep people safe and well.

Ending Public Service. In 2016, I retired from the Forest Service after almost 50 years of public service, eventually rising to become the Deputy Chief of the State and Private Forestry mission area. This included the national Fire and Aviation Management program. Fire management was always important to me.

Circling Back. This brings me back to the telephone conversation with Sharon and Bill. Both saw what a landscape looks like when it is cared for [i.e., maintained]. It looks good and is resilient. I asked my sister who was her Congressional Representative. She said, "It's Tom McClintock." I told her I was going to see if I could get a copy of the latest "Call to Action" to him. I could hear Bill in the background saying, "Tell him a constituent is counting on him."

A Forest Service Legacy. My conversation with Sharon and Bill reconfirmed to me that our roots run deep with the United Stated Forest Service. Our lives have been shaped by the agency for almost 90 years. Of course, we wish the Forest Service continued success. Whenever I was asked about the agency, I always provided the three brief statements: "I like being employed. It is an honor to work for the Department of Agriculture. I work for the greatest organization in the world, the USDA Forest Service."

I still believe that. But it is time for the USFS to take command. America's forests are clogged up. They have become tinderboxes of large, intense wildfires. People are dying directly from fire and indirectly from smoke. It does not have to be this way. Sharon and Bill saw firsthand what sound forest maintenance can do. Now is the time for action. Now is our time.

From the 1930s until now, the Rains-Norrish family have given their all to the Forest Service and public service. Join us in implementing the new "Call to Action" to stop the carnage and help restore our forest [forests are more than just trees] landscapes. Sharon and Bill are calling Congressman McClintock. I am calling my Representative. Please, you do the same with yours.

We must join together to slow the hostility of wildfire so we do not place everyone and everything at such an extreme, unwinnable risk. It's not a fair fight. Enhanced forest maintenance can make the challenge more equitable. Please help.

If you need a copy of the latest "Call to Action," just let me know at mtrains7@verizon.net

Stocking Nugget Lakes By Air

Ash Court (North Cascades '63)

Always up for the challenge of trying to find that hidden, great fishing lake that no one knows about, I have spent hours poring over Google Earth, looking at lakes in the North Cascades that are not on any trail systems. Most aren't even named but look like they have the potential to hold fish. I've been pleasantly surprised with some of these lakes and disappointed with others!

Nugget Lakes are two that were a big disappointment! Both of these lakes are big enough and deep enough to have fish in them, but don't. Not knowing this in the summer of 2017, Keith Larsen, a frequent partner on my fishing forays, and I decided we would go to the Nugget Lakes and see what we could find.

We headed north on the Pacific Crest Trail

with high expectations. We spent the first night about 10 miles in, and the next morning we hiked about five miles to the headwaters of the Methow River. That put us in position for the last two miles, a cross country slog up to Nugget Lakes.

L-R: The crew. Ken Borg (NCSB-64) Cargo Master, John Lester (NCSB-60) Chief Pilot and plane owner, Ash Court (NCSB-63) Ground Crew Chief, Keith Larsen Ground Crew (Associate). (Courtesy Ken Borg)

Everything went exactly as planned except for one big disappointment. There were no fish in either lake. Both lakes had beautiful deep waters with an excellent stream but, no matter, there were no fish.

After getting back to Winthrop, I made some inquiries of some of the local fish enthusiasts and our local fish biologist, but no one seemed interested in trying to get fish to these lakes. At 72 it wasn't something I thought I could try and expect the fish to survive by hiking them in.

So, I let it go thinking it wasn't something that I could have a part in accomplishing—until this last spring. Maybe the COVID gave me enough time sitting around that it dawned on me. I'm embarrassed to say, I forgot my roots. How do smokejumpers get their tools and supplies? They drop them in on parachutes.

All I had to do was get the local fish biologist to agree to get us some fish plus get an O.K. from the local Forest Service District to parachute the fish into the lakes. And, more importantly, find someone who owned an airplane, plus a cargo pusher, willing to drop them.

The first two parts were relatively simple as the local fish biologist was willing to get us the fish, and the local Forest Service gave us the O.K. With the preliminaries done, now let's get the pilot and plane. By good fortune, my old neighbor, **John Lester** (NCSB-60), just happened to be a pilot who owns an L-2 airplane. The L-2 is a slow flying aircraft with high wings, which is a must when you're dropping cargo out the door on a static line. Plus, during John's working days for the Forest Service, he flew aerial observation, and many of the mornings he and his aerial observer dropped fish directly into many of the lakes in the backcountry. The only difference being that the Nugget Lakes are in such rugged country that a direct drop was not possible. It would have to be done from a much higher elevation with a parachute and the fish in a five-gallon cubitainer.

From John's previous experience, he knew that if he would add oxygen to the container, the fish would survive for a much longer time. The morning the fish were to come, John would bring his oxygen tank he uses for welding and fill the cubitainer with oxygen. When the fish were added, they would displace some of the oxygen, but a

good share of it would stay in the container greatly enhancing the chances of the fish surviving.

With the groundwork completed, I checked in with the fish biologist. He informed me that the fish would not be ready to drop until their size reached a little under two inches in length, which should happen around the middle of August. The last two weeks in August we needed to be ready to go.

John and I discussed the necessary logistics we needed to make this successful. Keith and I needed to leave the day before the drop to get as close as possible to the lakes. The lakes were approximately 16 miles in. We would need to arrive by noon, the time we hoped to be able to make the drop. Noontime would also beat the afternoon winds which can really make it dangerous flying in such mountainous terrain.

We also needed some type of communication to make sure the fish drop would still be on and let John know if we had made it to the Lakes. I used a Spot X on all my hiking trips which allows for two way communication via satellite. We needed hand-held walkie talkies so we would have direct contact with the airplane once they were overhead. We took a hand saw for extracting the 'chute from a tree. We also had over 300 feet of parachute cord for either pulling the 'chute out of the water or lowering it down from a tree.

We both took casting poles and two large spoons with treble hooks as a means of rescuing the fish if they landed in the water. Cast out, hook the 'chute, and pull it in. We took several drift streamers which were used as wind indicators.

John had flown the lakes earlier in the summer, but they were still covered with ice and snow, so determining the drop area was difficult. On the 23rd of August, along with his cargo dropper, **Ken Borg** (NCSB-64), he flew another reconnaissance of the lakes to make sure there was a decent-sized landing zone for the fish as well as room to maneuver the airplane.

Although the lakes sit in a very narrow and steep-sided cirque, John was sure he could do the job safely. It would mean dropping the fish a little higher than he liked, but he could do it.

The fish biologist let me know that 250 West Slope Cutthroat would be delivered to NCSB at 11 am Friday, the 28th. From there it was up to us to get them into the lakes. I let John know when the fish would arrive, and Keith and I prepared to leave the first thing Thursday. We knew we had to go at least 10 miles to Brushy Creek, but hoped there would be camping sites even closer to the lakes.

The Pacific Crest Trail is the busiest trail in the entire west. It wasn't long into the hike Thursday that we were assured by fellow hikers there were good camping sites where the trail crossed the Methow River, just a little over two miles from Nugget Lakes.

Fourteen miles of hiking for a couple guys in their mid-seventies was a challenge, but fortunately a good portion of those miles were downhill. We reached our camp site by 4:30 that afternoon. However, the camp site in the timber was so thick that I was unable to get satellite reception for the Spot X. Anxious to get to the lakes, Keith and I were up early the next morning and ready to head out by 6:30 am.

A system I have found to be extremely helpful in locating lakes off the trail is to mark waypoints on my GPS using Google Earth. I used this method to get a jumping-off point from the PCT and within a ½ mile of leaving camp we had hit that waypoint.

The first mile or so it went great, but the last half mile was a totally different story. We were confronted with brush that was over our head and several steep little draws that were tricky to cross. After some maneuvering, we broke out and arrived at the lakes shortly after 9 am.

The first order of business was to send a message out to John to let him know that we were at the lakes. I wasn't sure we'd be able to get satellite reception, but after a second message asking for confirmation, we received word from John that he knew we had made it.

Now it was a waiting game until noon. Keith and I checked out the two lakes and decided on a drop area and placed our drift streamers in a manner indicating wind direction. Keith and I had separated to give us different vantage points for the drop, and a few minutes before noon Keith hollered, "I can hear them." Shortly Ken contacted us by radio, and we let him know we could hear him loud and clear. They made a quick reconnaissance of the drop area, checked out our

wind direction streamers, and Ken let us know, "We're coming in."

John made his approach high and just a few feet from the canyon wall. After cresting a small ridge, he cut the engine and put the plane into a steep dive. At approximately 500 feet, Ken kicked out the cargo. The chutes opened immediately, and the cargo landed less than a hundred feet from our wind indicator.

Not only were we concerned about dropping the parachute into the lakes, but on the edge of the cirque there were sub-alpine trees that were over three feet at the butt and at least 100 ft. high. No worries as John absolutely nailed it.

We quickly retrieved the fish and headed for the larger of the two lakes and, in just a few minutes, had that lake's share planted. We then took the remaining fish to the other lake and, in short order, they were in that lake as well. It had been less that 45 minutes from the time the fish had arrived at NCSB until the 250 cutthroat were in the water.

We gathered our equipment and retrieved the chute. We beat feet back to camp, quickly packed and managed to get four miles closer to the trailhead leaving us 10 miles the next day to get back to Harts Pass.

Planting those fish in the lakes was a real emotional high. We gladly shared the experience with anyone on the trail that was willing to listen and even shared Keith's videos of the parachute ride down and the planting of the fish.

Now all we have to do is figure out how two old codgers, who will be 78 in three years, could get back in there to see if the fish survived, and if they did, how big they are.

A Gathering on Sacred Ground

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)**.**

It was on sacred ground (the former Siskiyou Smokejumper Base and current Museum) that we met to celebrate the life of **Eric "Eric the Blak" Schoenfeld** (CJ-64). We were there to celebrate Eric's life, his time spent with us, and our time spent with each other as jumpers and friends. My sweetheart, Steffanie, and I arrived Friday afternoon in a heavy rain. So did other early arrivals. As damp as it was, it couldn't dampen our spirits and the joy of once again being together. Cars, campers, and small motorhomes arrived and tents went up on the Gobi. Excitement was in the air. **Gary Buck** (CJ-66) was there in fine form to welcome us. Some gathered under various eaves and awnings, others just stood in the rain and told stories of our glory days when we were young, strong, and looked good with our shirts off. After 53 had signed up to attend, we ended up with nearly 70 by mid-Saturday, which had cleared to a bright, blue-sky day. I won't mention all the names here and the places from which they came, although I'd like to since it would be so impressive—as far away as Alaska, Virginia, and Ohio. Instead, I'll just mention a few as they appear as part of this story.

Steve Mankle (CJ-76) and a friend began playing some sweet music at 11:00 AM Saturday. A crew meeting was called at 1:30 PM. Friends stood and spoke of Eric the Blak. Some of what was said is contained in the emails later sent to be included here.

Rod Dow (MYC-68): What a great gathering we had at the Cave Junction base to celebrate the life of Eric the Blak. A bunch of CJ jumpers from back in Blak's day and a bunch more from his long career in Alaska joined forces for two nights and three days of sitting around campfires telling jump stories. All the hard work by Gary Buck and many others have the old jump base looking really good, and I'm sure Blak was pleased, both by the people who came to fete his life and the fact that we were able to gather at his old base.

Blak had a similar effect on everyone with which he came in contact. He was rough around

the edges, had a voice with big volume, and cared little about how he looked. But he had a clear, brilliant mind, was well-read on dozens of subjects of disparate topics, treated everyone the same regardless of gender, race, background, or appearance, and he was a very good fireman and an excellent spotter. Every Alaska spotter from the early '80s right up to the present have E the B to thank for their training. So, Blak, thank you for all of it. The example you set, the precise information you always presented, the conversations you and I had around innumerable campfires and in front of my woodstove, and for the chance recently to gather up with some truly wonderful people to say goodbye.

Until we meet again, Old Bro.

Tom Boatner (FBX-80): After more than a year of social distancing and isolation, it felt especially sweet to watch the parade of old smokejumpers trickle into the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base near Cave Junction. Over the course of Friday, various vans, campers, trucks, and tents staked out a piece of turf. By evening, a cargo chute covered the fire pit and knots of former Alaska and Cave Junction jumpers were scattered across the Gobi, hiding from the rain but eagerly engaged in saying hello to old friends and sharing stories. The Gobi was looking an awful lot like a jumper camp. Saturday was clear and cool, a perfect day for reminiscing and honoring our old comrade, Eric the Blak. The Gobi is still a special place in smokejumper history, and the Blak was a special smokejumper. Remembering him and honoring him with so many old friends felt just right. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Gary Buck for all his work over the years, refurbishing and protecting Cave Junction. It is an accomplishment for Gary, and the many jumpers and others who have helped him, to be proud of.

Buck Nelson (FBX-81): Forty years ago, I was a young rookie in the midst of Alaska smokejumper training at Ft. Wainright. It was lunchtime and I was soaked with sweat, standing in line at the mess hall. Ahead of me stood a fellow in battered black jeans and an even more battered black hat, from beneath which stuck wild black hair that flowed uninterrupted into a feral black beard. Even his teeth were speckled black from the can of Copenhagen in his pocket. On his hat was a pin with "300" framed by golden wings. This Old Salt had 300 jumps! I came to know The Blak well. In his raucous voice, he taught me many things about firefighting and spotting. The world is going to be a quieter and less colorful place without him. He would have enjoyed his memorial. I know Blak was honored to call these people his Bros, as am I.

Sandy Alstrom (FBX-90): Dalen and I are for sure not going to make it to Blak's memorial. With Ari's graduation from Harvard and family coming, we've got to stay and get the house in order from all the roof repairs and exterior work. I've been thinking a lot about E the B. He was unequivocally and unapologetically himself. And he granted that to others. I always felt he looked at me without pre-judgement. He didn't care if I was a woman nor a short one at that. He had a cut and dry methodical approach to life and he'd growl off his latest observation, with teeth blacken by chew. I treasure the acceptance I felt from him. He gave me the space to truly be myself. He is a dynamic salty ol' time legend. He was blessed to have Jennifer by his side all those years. Sad, he felt he couldn't go on without her. I'm glad we made the trip to visit them when we did. As I putter around the yard and garden here in Taos, I think of him and his yard's boxes and sheds of meticulously stacked wood, and I know I am better off because I knew a genius of a man who wore a tattered black hat with long salt and pepper hair protruding below. RIP Eric the Blak.

Bob Mauck (FBX-79) : "I always wondered what I'd do in this situation," The Blak shouted. If Blak's voice wasn't normally a growling foghorn, we would never have heard him over the roar and crack of an entire forest on fire. Blak paused, battered hardhat tipped back on his head, his face framed by a widow's peak and full beard, black and flecked with grey. Ash and sweat streaked his once yellow fire shirt. The Blak had our attention. Twenty minutes before, I had been wrestling inch and a half fire hose around the grassy tussocks that make up the Yukon Flats. Now, the fire had outflanked us. Swirling winds and dry fuels combined

for a wildfire so hot and so fast that it got behind us. So hot that it had eaten the hose somewhere in the smoke between us and the Mark 26 pump back at the pond. Now I stood with six other jumpers, looking at The Blak.

"Get out your matches," The Blak said. He dropped his pack to the ground. Strapped to one side were what looked like two sticks of dynamite—fusees. Blak didn't just carry matches, he carried fire sticks. He took one of the sticks in his right hand, grabbed the top of it with his left and twisted off the cover. When he struck the rough cover against the igniter, the fusee spit flame. "Light everything around you," he ordered. "We'll jump in behind it." Blak stabbed the fire in his hand into the tussock at his feet. It burst into flame. A few minutes later, eight of us sat amid the ash left behind by our backfire. Blak was on the MX-360 radio talking to air attack. They couldn't find us and no helicopter could reach us. "900 Whisky Alpha … Blak." "Go" "We'll hold tight here." "Roger that." **Tony Beltran** (IDC-69) stared at me above the blue bandana covering his face. Eyes red, soot clinging to his lashes, he looked away. It wasn't over yet, but there was hope. My third week on the jump list. My third week as a real smokejumper. I'd jumped 7 fires in the last 10 days. Good thing this one was with Blak.

Murry Taylor: I'll end this with my own Eric the Blak story. While I was boosting Redmond from Alaska in '98, I noticed this photo on the Ready Room wall near the jump list. A white Twin Otter trimmed in red and black sat on the ramp, surrounded by puddles, and softly lit by outdoor lights on a dark and rainy night. Across the runway, a lightning strike splintered the sky and slammed down about a mile south of the base. Beneath the photo were words written by the poet, playwright, and novelist Johann Goethe: "In Boldness, there is Genius, and Magic."

It was in 1991 and I was on a load spotted by Eric the Blak. The fire was just upriver from Rampart on the Yukon River. It was a four-manner and **Togie Wiehl** (FBX-91) was my jump partner. A debris fire had been left unattended and escaped from a fish camp. The wind was strong and blowing straight across the river. Given the danger of the Yukon, I figured we wouldn't be able to jump it. But, in typical brilliant form, Eric had different ideas. He set the plane up for a cross-wind pattern so that we could quarter into the wind, head upriver and get in there. The exit point would be right over Rampart, Togie's home village. On final, I was right behind him in the door and tapped him on the helmet and yelled, "You know where that is?" Togie nodded rapidly that he did. So out we went. Once opened I looked over at the rookie and thought, "Just look at that. Togie has made his rookie fire jump right over his own village." Up the river we quartered and got right into the fish camp yard. Mind you, this was Togie's first fire jump, the one where a rookie becomes a full smokejumper. After three days we demobbed the fire in a boat down to Rampart. At the landing Togie's mother and father, plus dozens of other people, were there to greet us, but Togie for sure. There was laughter, big smiles, hugs and handshakes for the young jumper. Al "Togie" Wiehl had come home. So, thanks to Eric the Blak. Thanks to his boldness and genius, we all shared a moment charged with a fair amount of magic, as well. Needless to say, the gathering on the Gobi was a huge dose of that same magic. Clearly, we were blessed to do what we did with those with whom we did it in the glorious places where we pulled it off. And now, to still be here, to still be jumpers at heart, and to still be living the dream. Amazing, eh?

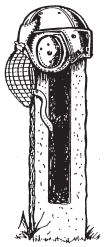
Turn Your Pins and Patches Into

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 Judy Ln—Chico CA 95926



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

David James "Dave" Graham (Redding '70)

Dave died July 3, 2021, in Eugene, Oregon. He was born September 14, 1945, in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and grew up in Susanville, California. He graduated from Lassen High School in 1963 and completed his Associate of Arts Degree at Shasta College in Redding, California.

Dave started his career with the USFS in 1964 on the Lassen N.F. working his way from Forestry Technician to Tank Truck Operator to Engine Foreman. He rookied at Redding in 1970 and was part of the Retred Program in 1973. Dave worked as Helitack Foreman 1974-77 and was Fire Control Officer 1978-79 on the Milford District of the Lassen N.F.

He moved to the Klamath N.F. 1980-89 as Battalion Chief on the Oak Knoll R.D. and was with BLM in Apple Valley 1990-92. Dave took over as Air Tanker Base Manager at Redding 1996-2006 and then held the same position at Reno-Stead Air Attack Base 2007-11.

Dave and his wife, Linda, retired in Eugene, Oregon. They have two daughters, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Jay Emerson Decker (North Cascades '63)

Jay "Topper" Decker died June 28, 2021, at his home in Tualatin, Oregon. He was born July 18, 1942, in Mason City, Iowa, and graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in Psychology. Jay jumped at NCSB 1963 and Redmond 1964-65. Jay joined the Portland Police Dept. where he worked 1966-87. During this time, he received his master's in Psychology from Portland State University. He then spent several decades in a number of entrepreneurial endeavors before retiring in 2010. On his 60th birthday he took a seven-day bike trip from the Snake River to the Pacific Ocean.

Thomas "Tom" William Milligan (Missoula '51)

Tom, 95, died June 22, 2021, in Driggs, Idaho. He was born September 26, 1925, in Stockton, California. When he registered for the draft at age 18 during WWII, he was living in Stockton.

Bern Shanks (MSO-62): "Tom was a legend to all who knew him. He transferred to Yellowstone N.P. as the fire dispatcher and spent many years as a park ranger and, later in Grand Teton National Park, as a ranger and head of the mountain rescue operation.

"A Navy veteran in the Pacific, he was aboard an ammunition ship when the war ended. I once asked him what life was like during the kamikaze threat late in the war. He answered simply, 'We all expected to die.'

"He told me about walking into Earl Cooley's (MSO-40) office late in the spring and asking about smokejumping, only to learn the application deadline was long past. Tom then began talking to Earl about fly fishing, a life-long passion. Before he left the office, Earl informed him they always had one or two jumpers didn't show up on the first day of training, so if he was there, he would be hired.

"Tom was a vivid storyteller, and his description of surviving a grizzly bear attack on him and his wife, Sharlene, while fishing in Yellowstone was simply unforgettable. But Tom could talk as enthusiastically about football, boxing, climbing, and other sports and read over a wide range of fiction and non-fiction. I will miss him."

Tom jumped at Missoula 1951-52 and at West Yellowstone 1953-56. His son, Tim, jumped at McCall 1981 and Redmond 1983-89.

Robert L. Wilcox (Redding '63)

Bob died June 19, 2021, after battling heart problems and cancer of the blood. He was born

on December 11, 1941, in Yreka, CA. He graduated from Yreka High School in 1960 and attended Humboldt State University, graduating in 1965 with a bachelor's in Forest Administration.

Bob accepted a Career Conditional Appointment, Klamath National Forest, Goosenest District and worked 5 years (1965 -1969) as reforestation/TSI specialist; Sequoia National Forest, Bakersfield District (1970), served as project liaison officer on freeway construction project up Kern Canyon and wrote Environmental Impact Statement on Hydro project renewal; Forester on the Eldorado National Forest, workied both out of Supervisor's Office (1971-1974) and on Placerville Ranger District (1975-1978) focusing primarily on Timber Sale Contract administration; Plumas National Forest, Quincy District Ranger (1978-1999), responsible for full range of resource management programs; Rogue River National Forest (R6), Prospect District Ranger for eight years.

Bob retired August 1997 and lived in Medford, OR. He jumped at Redding 1963-65 and 1967.

Orval W. "Bill" Gastineau Jr. (Missoula '63)

Bill, 78, died June 13, 2021, from Alzheimer's. He was born June 15, 1942, in Sandpoint, Idaho, where he grew up and graduated from Sandpoint H.S. Bill went to Idaho State University where he played basketball and graduated with a degree in Forestry.

He had a career with the USFS working at the Northern Fire Lab, the Lolo and Bitterroot N.F.s', regional offices in Missoula, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Bill retired in 1996 and returned to live in Missoula in 1999. Bill loved river rafting and river guiding, camping, coaching, and playing softball. He was an avid Grizz fan. Bill was a Life Member of the National Smokejumper Association and jumped at Missoula 1963-65.

Charles Jeffrey "Chuck" Kase
(La Grande '74)

Chuck, 67, died June 11, 2021. He was born August 8,1953, in Berkeley, California, and grew up in Puyallup, Washington, where he graduated from Rogers H.S. in 1971. Chuck graduated with a degree in Zoology from the University of Washington. He then went through medical school as a Naval officer at Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland 1979-84. Chuck did his internship at the Naval Hospital in Oakland 1984-85 and was Medical Officer aboard the USS Sacramento.

He was head of the Emergency Dept. at Bremerton Naval Hospital 1985-88, did his Orthopedic Surgery Residency at Oakland 1988-92, and was Head of the Orthopedic Surgery Dept. at 29 Palms Naval Hospital 1992-93. When Chuck retired he went into private practice in Wasilla, Alaska, 1994-2014. He was an avid skier, bike rider, pilot, and even built his own airplane. Chuck jumped at La Grande 1974-76 and at Fairbanks 1977-79.

Tim David Hart (Grangeville '16)

Tim, 36, died June 3, 2021, from injuries received May 24 while jumping the Eicks Fire, Hidalgo County, New Mexico. He was born December 5, 1984, grew up in Illinois and lived in Cody, Wyoming, with his wife, Michelle. Tim graduated from Zion-Benton Township H.S. in the Waukegan and Beach Park, Illinois, area where he was a member of the Youth Conservation Corps. He graduated from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

During his firefighting career, Tim was an Engine Crew member on the Coconino, Fremont-Winema, and Shoshone National Forests. He also spent time with the Ashville and Ruby Mountain Hotshot Crews. Tim rookied and jumped at Grangeville 2016-18 before transferring to West Yellowstone in 2019.

Charles G. "Jack" Harter
(Cave Junction '51)

Jack, 89, died April 1, 2021, in Lihue, Hawaii. He was born December 26, 1931, in Rapid City, S.D. Jack earned his pilot's license at an early age and bought his first plane at age 18. He jumped at CJ 1951, 1954-58 and was a squadleader for Base Manager **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46).

Jack was a 2nd Lt. US Army in Korea and was twice wounded in action July 5, 1953, in North Korea.

In 1962 Jack had a dream to start a helicopter business on the Hawaiian island of Kauai by offering tours, charters, and other services.

Fifty-eight years later, Jack Harter Helicopters, the original helicopter tour company on the island, is still in business. Despite the competition from as many as 12 other companies, Jack kept his company on top. He had flown over 35,000 lifetime hours.

In 2005 his business pioneered the first ever, doors-off helicopter tour of Kauai. "We want a way for photographers to capture the raw beauty of the island without the glare from windows."

Today Jack Harter Helicopters operates four MD 500s, 1 Airbus A-Star, has six pilots and 32 employees.

Edwin Del Mar "Del" Jaquish
(Cave Junction '49)

Del, 91, died April 23, 2021. He was born May 18, 1929, in Fresno, California, graduating from Sanger High School in 1947. In the late 1950s, he moved to Idaho and was a smokejumper at Cave Junction, Oregon, in 1949 and 1951. He graduated from the University of Idaho in Forestry in 1953 and served in the Army 1953-55.

Del's 33-year career was with the USFS, serving primarily as a Public Information Officer. After serving as the District Ranger on the Palouse District, St. Joe NF, in the early 1960s, he transferred to Missoula, Montana, as a Public Information Specialist in 1964. In 1969, he was assigned as the Public Information Officer for the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin. In 1972, he moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was assigned as the Assistant Regional Forester responsible for Information Services for the 17 national forests in the Eastern Region of the Forest Service. In 1985 Del retired and moved to Post Falls, Idaho.

Lowell Manfred "Manny" Haiges
(Missoula '58)

Manny, 87, died May 11, 2021, in Rocklin, California. He was born in Pennsylvania, spent three years in the Marines, and then went to Montana after seeing the movie "Red Skies of Montana." He became a smokejumper during the summer of 1958 and Grizzly at the University of Montana, where he played baseball. In 1960, he graduated with a bachelor's in Forestry Engineering—a five-year program and the first of its kind. After attending the Colorado State University in Fort Collins, he received his master's in Water-

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shed Management, then on to the University of British Columbia where he studied for his Ph.D. in Urban Regional Planning.

In 1970, he returned home and taught at the University of Montana and then developed the Surveying Program. He taught at Flathead Valley Community College when it first opened. During this time, he also had his own business as a land surveyor and enjoyed flying his Mooney all over the country while going to horse shows with his daughter and baseball games with his son. Manny spent the last 20-plus years at his summer home in the West Kootenai.

Peter T. "Pete" Fallini (Idaho City '64)

Pete died January 26, 2021. He was born May 20, 1945, at Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas. Pete graduated from Bohah H.S. in Boise where he was a member of the basketball and baseball teams as well as the captain of the football team. Pete spent three years at the University of Idaho before going to Vietnam where he was a Captain in the 101st Airborne being awarded the Air Medal and Bronze Star. When he returned, Pete completed his degree in Business and Finance at Boise State University.

He and his wife, Patty, moved to Santa Paula, California, where he spent his career with Agland and Farmer's Irrigation retiring in 2020. Pete served as an officer and leader in many community organizations in the Santa Paula area. He jumped at Idaho City 1964-65 and Boise 1970-72.

Phillip Adrian Rabideau
(North Cascades '49)

Phil, 93, died May 10, 2021. He jumped at NCSB in 1949 and graduated from the University of Washington in 1951 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. Phil worked for Westinghouse Electric and rose to the executive level. While working in Detroit, Michigan, he earned his MBA from Wayne State University.

Phil grew up in Grand Coulee Dam, Washington, and was active in the Boy Scouts and loved the outdoors. He was in the Navy during WWII. Phil rookied with his brother, Jim, in the 1949 class at NCSB.

Benjamin S. "Ben" Andres (Redding '62)

Ben died January 28, 2021, in Oakley, California. He was born July 23, 1935, in Toppenish, Washington, and grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area where he graduated from Balboa H.S. Ben joined the Army and was a Sergeant in the 326th Engineer Airborne during the Korean War. He then rookied in 1962 and jumped that season out of Redding.

Ben married Joan Potasz in 1962 and went to work for the California Dept. of Highways. He then was hired as tree topper for the City of San Francisco Park Dept. before transferring to the Dept. of Public Works where he became supervisor of all city street trees. Ben retired in 2002 and moved to Oakley, California.

Rhett Skillings Wise (Missoula '61)

Rhett died February 10, 2021. He was born March 10, 1940. Service in the Army and his time in Vietnam were a large part of Rhett's life.

In his words: "In October 1965 , I enlisted in the Army and graduated from the Infantry Officer course at Ft. Benning, Georgia. I served in Vietnam from 28 February 1967 to 5 April 1968. I served in the 9th Infantry Division as part of the Army/Navy Riverine Force on the waterways of the Mekong Delta. Much of the time we berthed on troop ships on the rivers and made assault landings in old WWII landing boats – regretfully many times at low tide. I was a rifle platoon leader for almost 10 months, then Executive Officer and later Acting Company Commander. My company command time came when my captain went on R&R during a time that coincided with the 1968 TET offensive, when we fought in one provincial capital city."

Rhett didn't speak a lot about his experiences in Vietnam, but he did say that on one expedition, 102 men went in, and 69 came back. Rhett was discharged 22 August 1968. Among his decorations are the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB), the Presidential Unit Citation, the Silver Star and the Bronze Star. He said that, unlike many other veterans, he never had a flashback and had no problems with PTSD. He was, however, affected by Agent Orange, and because of that seven years ago he had to start treatments for what turned out to be a persistent series of bouts with cancer.

Before the Army, Rhett was a forestry student at the University of Montana and worked summers for the U.S. Forest Service. He worked as a smokejumper and jumped at Missoula 1961-62, 1969 and Anchorage 1970-71.

He then worked for the Bureau of Land Management out of Anchorage, Alaska. Rhett spent 16 years in various capacities with the BLM in Anchorage, mostly in appraising. After Alaska, Rhett transferred to Phoenix and became a District Appraiser in 1985, where he appraised land for the BLM in Arizona desert country. In 1992 he became a District Appraiser for the Las Vegas District Office of the BLM.

Outwardly he was amazingly fit; he worked out regularly, until recently went for hikes and did vigorous work outside on his land gardening, mowing, and cutting brush, mostly for the pleasure of it. But when the virus weakened him, the cancer took over.

Living Our Best Life—Reflecting On Smokejumper Tim Hart's Passing

by Patrick McGunagle (West Yellowstone '19)

One intuits the magnitude of Tim Hart's line of duty death immediately—Smokejumper passes away after fire jump in New Mexico. It's something that shouldn't have been, a system error; there must be some mistake. This isn't how one of us should go, somehow not the same as the tragedies we wildland fire folk take so much care to avoid: crushed by snags, rolling rocks, burnover. There's a randomness here that we don't yet understand.

As Pam Hart stated so eloquently in her eulogy for her son: "For Tim, on May 24th, 2021, it was a normal day. Their base was called for a fire, and Tim and his smokejumping comrades went out to do the job they did so well. This jump was to be totally different. My son died but not in vain and not for nothing. He died doing a job he truly loved to do. As his mom, I am sad that I will not see or hear my son again. But I am so very proud of the man who was doing a job he loved. Tim David Hart, you will always be with me, in my heart and in my thoughts, as well as in the hearts and thoughts of family and friends and very brave and loved wildland firefighters and jumpers. You will never be gone because you live in all of us who loved and knew you. Thank you for your service, Tim, you are a true hero."

Michelle, Tim's incredible wife, challenged the stadium: "Enjoy silence, embrace mystery. Be the first to action, live at the tip of the spear. Do not let anyone alter or quiet your voice. This is how Tim lived." Michelle's speech confirmed to us all that love truly transcends death.

Tim has been celebrated, cheered, and sent off by his fellow smokejumpers over two weeks all of us will never forget, yet would trade for anything if we could only have him back. Fire season is here and many of us are back on the line, cracking chutes over God's country. For many smokejumpers of the younger cohort, Tim's passing was the first major death they've experienced, and that it happened by jumping took away a lot of the sanctimonious veil of this high-speed lifestyle. I'm worried for many of them this upcoming off-season when the adrenaline and excitement of jumps and fires can't dilute the necessary grief and processing we will all need.

I didn't have the privilege of being Tim's best friend or even his rookie bro. The testimonials to his life given by these people are recorded on Tim's celebration ceremony, along with his processional, at the Custer Gallatin NF Facebook page. These speeches are evidence of sacred and brotherly bond and I do not contend to hold better words to honor Tim.

However, Tim was a fellow smokejumper and a friend of mine. For some reason, the way the List worked out, I ended up jumping more fires with

him than any other jumper out of West Yellowstone during my two years there. I was on the load with him when he finally got his dream home forest jump in fall 2019 on the Shoshone outside of Cody. Last summer I had a fantastic jump in the Wind Rivers with him. Many good chats with that guy around the campfire and sipping his homemade whiskey. For some reason, when a love of mine passed away last fall (she was also in fire), it was just Tim and a very sad version of myself at the base in West for a few weeks. We had lots of barbecues and pondered this thing called life.

I won't give all my memories of Tim away. But another tragedy is that what I get to hold isn't much beyond Tim's "you go on now and get yourself right, always here for an ear if you need it." Maybe if I'd called him once in the offseason to talk about our elk hunts, new rye whiskeys, and interstellar phenomena. There are too many maybes already.

Watching over Tim's casket for the week before the funeral is the highest honor of my fire career. True to the character of the smokejumper program, Tim was never out of smokejumper sight or presence since his jump; he always had a jump partner. For line of duty deaths, the USFS provides a joint BLM/NPS/USFS Honor Guard to respect the fallen, nonstop, until internment. This fantastic group volunteers time from their normal jobs to honor fallen peers they've never met. These folks were blown away by the smokejumper resilience and dedication to staying with Tim, 24/7, for the week in El Paso and then the week in Cody. However, as fresh Honor Guard rotated through, I don't think they were quite sure what to make of us jumpers. We never left, the mood alternated from somber to general smokejumper carousing with some increasingly finer rye whiskeys (his favorites), beers, strong coffee, and increasingly exaggerated smokejumper tales. We got too caffeinated in the morning to sit still in grief. Instead of soft, somber background music, we had folk music and bluegrass playing too loudly for a funeral home, as Tim would have liked. Tim loved playing his banjo and had many stories to add to the night as well.

Standing watch for Tim in the deepest hours of the night captivated us all in different ways. Long hours thinking about what it all means, our place in the world, against/with nature, among friends, and to our loves.

Tim's wife, Michelle, is an unbelievably strong individual. She spent many hours with us and Tim and outperformed us all in practically navigating the logistics of the next several days. I personally learned a lot about life, love, and fine whiskeys from Tim, via Michelle, that week.

I'll never forget standing honor watch for Tim with other West and GAC bros for that week and the suddenness and immediacy in which, on Thursday before the ceremony, he was taken away for cremation and we were all just standing bleary-eyed in an empty room. Then the hangover feeling, or perhaps cold-water rush of knowing that it's almost about to be over, the bookend on Tim's life placed, and that Tim's last call would happen and he'd be Off the List. This sudden realization and the knowledge that eighty bros were about to show up, the Chief of the USFS, the governor of WY, all that pomp and circumstance - things became much faster very quickly.

I talked with many people last week about the National Smokejumper Association. Michelle and her family were so honored by the NSA's large donation to the GoFundMe, a tribute to Tim by people she's never met. Understanding that the legacy of Tim both as a person and as a smokejumper are now a critical part of the smokejumper story, well, I think she's excited to learn more about the NSA and this amazing group Tim is connected to. I think we all could.

Wildland fire brings a diverse mix of people together to accomplish objectives in inconvenient natural environments. Smokejumping places two to eight highly trained people on some of the most remote and strategically complex incidents. But there's much more to this group than the work. We're all on some sort of Type A spectrum, our eclectic flavors adding to this mix and multiplying our capacity to professionally dominate in our challenging niche. Personally, having seen the comradery of the bros despite our loss, and understanding that events like this, while tragic, are part of the glue that holds us all together, I am so honored to be part of it all. Once a jumper, always a jumper; there's a bond here beyond words. It feels disrespectful to take personal honor in spite of a brother's death. I think that's where the newfound

weight of this title, smokejumper, lies, a mantle on all our shoulders.

These jumpers—they're the best of the best. The bros and sis's of summer, proven, hardy, somehow larger than life. Tim's death hits especially hard for those of us that were not around for Urban, or Sheehy, or Liston, or Thrash. It's the death not only of our friend, but also the innocence of a lifestyle that seemed far less precarious. The Lost Boys, fire gods falling from the skies, a carefree fire troupe in our ambivalent woods, realized they had a home all along—in this community, bonded by something words don't and can't quite describe. One of us died but perhaps all of us died a little, too.

We love the randomness of this job, such that in two minutes you may go from a mundane task to suited up and flying to a place you would never otherwise have known. We cherish this randomness, but it seems a cold randomness now. Especially when we didn't know who it was that was hurt in New Mexico. Before there was a name, the voicemails that were more like prayers on each of our phones from distraught family members, friends, current and ex-significant others. Assuring them that we were OK, while enduring the torture of mental triage of who else it could be, where they were at in their life, the lives their injury and loss would affect. Was it my RB? Was it someone married, with kids? Realizing that no matter who it is, the fallout is equally unfair. Thinking that the fairest solution is that it should've been you. Seeking the wisdom that our story is written by our own hand, but the chapter ends without our discretion. The footnotes filled in by other people at a fancy ceremony, double stamped by those damned bagpipes that turn the hardiest eyes into fountains.

As Tim's sister Meg said, "Tim won the lottery... I don't know many people that could say they absolutely love their job and their life, but Tim certainly could. He had the best life, he had it all." I take courage from her perspective. Courage and the realization that Tim was kinda just like me, like any of us would be, under other circumstances. Courage to live life now as well as he did. I guess the simple fact of the matter is that we miss him. Now, as Tim would say, we have to "go on—get yourselves right."

Tim Hart (GAC-16) died of injuries received on a fire jump in New Mexico in May, reported as a "hard landing." Pat rookied at West Yellowstone and jumped there 2019-20 and is currently jumping at Boise with the Great Basin Smokejumpers. He is on the NSA Board of Directors. (Ed.)

Gallatin Lake Rescue Jump

Roger Cox (Missoula '69)

Smokejumping was never boring. Every day could bring a request to respond to a crisis that would challenge one's mental and physical limits. Although fire was our emphasis, it certainly was not our only assignment. The realization that serious injury or even death was possible didn't seem to detour anyone from suiting up and boarding that waiting aircraft. In addition to our high level of physical conditioning, training and experience, another quality permeated the organization—enthusiasm and self-confidence. The attitude was that we could do anything—the impossible took a little longer. It led to some interesting days.

June 27, 1977, started out as a routine day at the West Yellowstone Smokejumper Base. The fire season was mostly ahead of us. Green grass and partly cloudy days did not forecast any immediate requests. Fire packs were being built, and parachutes packed and stored for the action that we all hoped for.

The crew, under **Bill Werhane's** (MSO-66) direction, had just spent the day before refreshing our first aid skills. The training was taken seriously but that was not to say we didn't have a good

L-R: Gary Dunning (FBX-66) back to camera, Roger Cox (MSO-69) in shadows working on IV setup, and Bill Craig (MSO-66) (Courtesy Bruce Hasting)

time. The crew was mainly experienced jumpers, and we had done much of the basics before. Bill always challenged us to do more and bette, so the training was more advanced and complicated than usual. Under the guidance of the local West Yellowstone physician, we practiced such procedures as starting IVs and giving Demerol shots (not with Demerol) under more complicated situations. For instance, I took blood pressure and started IV from areas other than the arm. And of course, **Gary Dunning** (FBX-66) was always entertaining around needles. He would turn white and allow us to practice treatment for shock.

Although my diary says 11:40 for the request time, much of the crew was already enroute for lunch in West Yellowstone. My wife had just walked over from our nearby trailer and we were approaching our truck to drive into town, when Bill ran out on the apron saying we had a request. Although surprised, it was something we were always prepared for. The eight jumpers on base suited up and quickly boarded the DC-3 with the right engine already turning. **Ed Leritz** (MSO-70) would be the jumper in charge of this expedition.

As we prepared to taxi, Bill again came out with additional first aid supplies and informed us it was a rescue jump. This did not alter our preparations as jumpers are conditioned to unusual requests. We took the additional equipment and taxied out for take-off.

A rescue jump can mean many things. So far all we knew was this was not a fire call. We took off and were still in the dark as to our assignment. The flight was a short one. Within 10 minutes we were circling a meadow near Big Horn Pass in North Western Yellowstone Park. There was a small helicopter designed for only two individuals sitting in a meadow. It was our jump spot and under normal circumstances would have been an easy jump. But wind speeds were estimated at 35 miles per hour and the meadow was at 9200 feet altitude. That means a hard landing going backward at plus 20 miles per hour. But it was a rescue jump, so a dry run was not an option. That is the commitment jumpers make.

One set of streamers to check wind speed and direction drifted out towards Bozeman, and we got in the door. Our release point was way upwind of the helicopter, our chosen rally point once we all got on the ground. The jump was as expected, we had all done this before. You open and turn into the wind and watch the ground race beneath your feet. I looked over my shoulder to adjust my drift to avoid some of the obstacles on the ground, but it was still a matter of luck, not skill, to get you into a good spot. Rolls are never pretty under these circumstances. You hit your feet and roll to your shoulders when the still-inflated chute jerks your shoulders, and down the meadow you go. My chute quickly wrapped a small spruce and I came to a stop.

In minutes I am at the helicopter where **Bill Craig** (MSO-66) is already waiting. Although we were badly scattered in our landing spot, we soon are joined by everyone except Dunning. He landed on the ridge and has to work his way down. Now that we are on the ground with no injuries, we are ready to go—but where? We hear a cry from the ridgetop. Someone is calling for us to climb the ridge for whatever it is we are going to do.

The ridge was not very high with little cover, typical timberline vegetation. After only a few minutes, I was breaking over the crest to where several individuals were kneeling on the ground talking softly. Then I saw our patient. Having seen much injury and death in Vietnam, I thought this was just a body bag situation. No one could be this torn up and survive. Then he spoke.

Our patient, Dr. Barrie K. Gilbert, was a col-

lege professor from Utah State University doing a grizzly bear study. He had been caught and mauled by a grizzly. He had one graduate student, Bruce Hastings, with him. Bruce carried a park radio which enabled him to call for help. The fire staff from Yellowstone Park, **Tom Black** (MSO-62) and the helicopter pilot, Jim Thompson, had responded to the call. I was relieved to see both Tom and Jim. Tom was a former smokejumper with whom we had jumped. We knew he was a capable individual. Jim's skills as a pilot were known in the firefighting world. We had a good team.

Dr. Gilbert was seriously hurt but still very much alive and full of fight. Our recent first aid training was especially timely. Given the nature of bear mauling, there was very little in our recent first aid review that we didn't need to apply quickly and correctly.

The jump ship dropped our cargo very near our location, thanks to our pilot, Whitey Hawkmeister, among the best. **Mark Sweeters** (MSO-68) and **Rob Putzker** (MSO-74) retrieved the gear. We broke open the pack and went to work. It seemed like everyone found an area of bites and tears and started cleaning and bandaging. We didn't use Demerol but did start IVs. Bears are not clean animals and although infection is an issue, we concentrated on controlling the bleeding and treating for shock. Gary Dunning forgot his phobia about blood and needles and went to work. Dr. Gilbert was not only conscious, but quite aware of what we were doing making our work easier. The strength of his voice and comments about his injuries revealed that his condition was not deteriorating and not going into shock. We could ask questions about pain and major areas of injury. His overall attitude gave us hope. This man was going to survive.

Nearly two hours after hitting the ground, we were ready for transport. Once we had him on the stretcher, it was a matter of navigating the way down the ridge. **Bob Boyer** (RDD-67) carried the shotgun for insurance against future bear hostilities. The rest of us passed the stretcher back and forth as we picked our way down the rockslide and to the helicopter. In route Dr. Gilbert was still quite awake and asked us not to destroy the Grizzly that mauled him.

As Jim Thompson writes to Dr. Gilbert 30 years later: "I watched in amazement the professionalism of the smokejumpers. They quickly determined the best course of action for stabilizing you and transporting you to the helicopter. That trip down the hill is what you remember. Four jumpers carried you, four jumpers carried the supplies. Tom, Bruce and I brought up the rear after securing the site. The smokejumpers knew as much as I did about that helicopter and how to attach items to it. Preparing the equipment for flight went very smoothly."

The ceiling for the little Bell 47 was about 12,000 feet according to Jim. That meant weight was an issue. We were already over 9,000. The second problem was the stretcher would not fit in the helicopter. So, Dr. Gilbert was to get a ride out on the small basket that was located on the right side of the helicopter. Securing the stretcher was not too difficult and Tom would ride in the right seat where he could monitor Dr. Gilbert's condition on the flight out.

We all stepped back as Jim started up the helicopter and pulled into a low hover. It didn't work. The load was too far out on the right side, and the helicopter tipped over to that side. So, what do you do to fix an overloaded helicopter—add more weight. Only jumpers would think of that. Jim brought the helicopter to a low hover, and we formed a human chain to pass rocks to be loaded in the left side. As we loaded rocks for balance, the problem slowly corrected itself.

"And no good deed goes unpunished." Now that we have solved the balance issue, the weight issue raises its ugly head. This is where Jim Thompson earns the right to have a book dedicated to his name.

Jim pulls the helicopter into a low hover and starts down the meadow. As he breaks ground effect, he comes slamming down. I had never seen the skids of a helicopter spread out like these did when he hit the ground. Having served two tours of combat duty in Vietnam, Jim didn't seem to be phased. Some 33 years later he admits, "The adrenalin meter in my brain was showing max full for the entire day." He lifted it up and continued down the meadow. The helicopter begins to pick up speed but still was leaping from spot to spot with little signs of flying. The meadow had a low

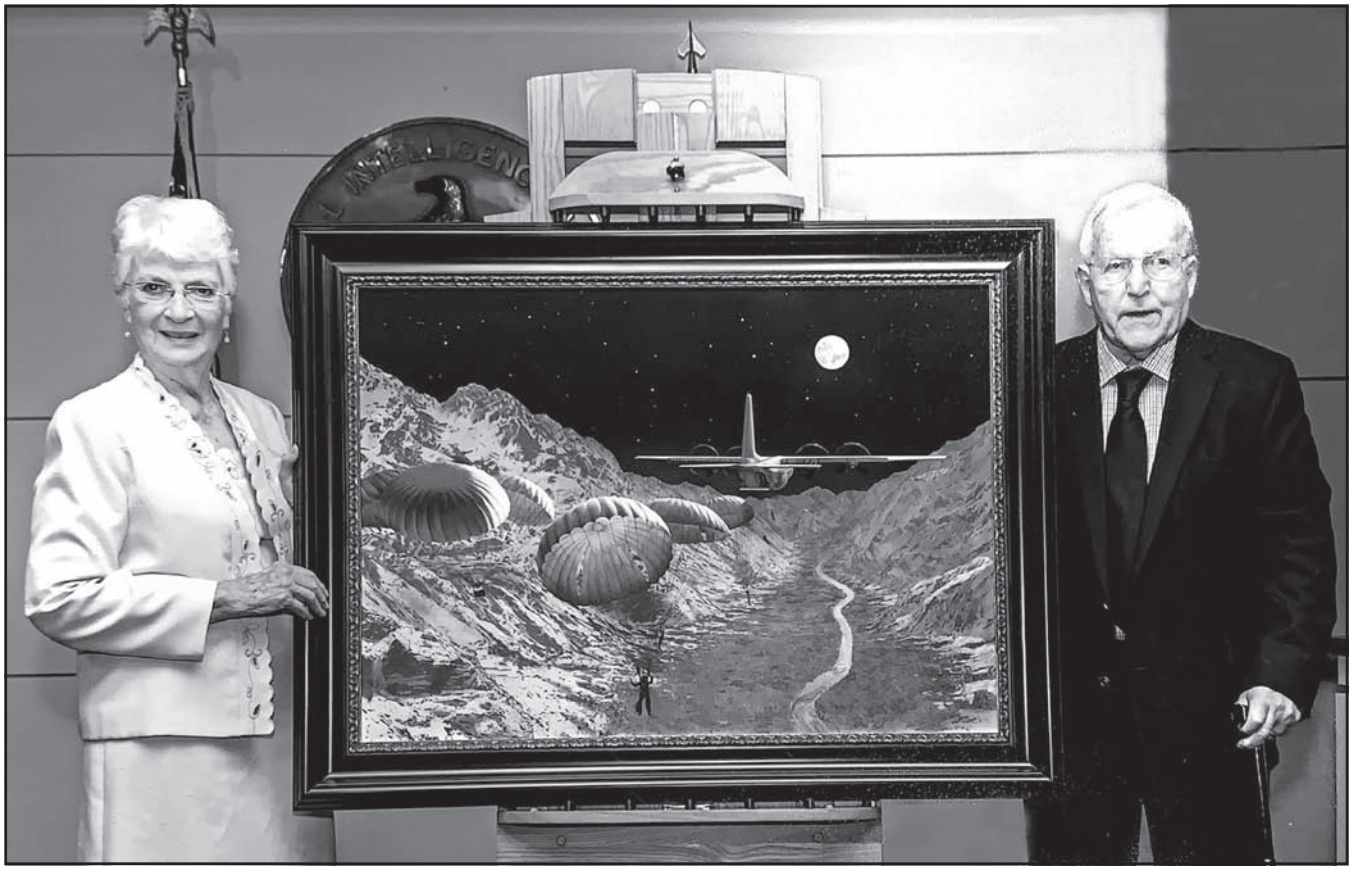
tree line in the distance. It seemed obvious that it was not going to clear that tree line. What does Jim do? He turns it around and comes leaping back toward us. As he goes by the leaps are becoming longer. Without any sign of fear, Jim turns it around again and comes by even faster. Finally reaching translational lift, he is flying. Not high but airborne.

Now about that tree line. From our position, the situation still looks grim, but Jim knows what he is doing and lifts the chopper over the tree line and out of sight. I can't imagine what this must feel like to a man on a stretcher tied above the wheel well, but it still beats laying in the dirt on a ridgetop slowly bleeding to death.

The flight ends at the Lake where the park hospital staff are waiting. Dr. Gilbert was further stabilized there and the West Yellowstone Airport is not far away. He ultimately arrives in Salt Lake City where he undergoes multiple and lengthy operations but does get put back together.

Fall of 2020

Over the years since this event, I have wondered about Dr. Gilbert. I noticed an article in an outdoor magazine about the rescue but the author only noted he was treated by paramedics. So much for reporting accuracy. Then I saw him once on a National Geographic special that featured grizzly bears and knew he had continued his career in wildlife studies. Now that I live near Logan, Utah, and Utah State University, I decided to try locating him. The university was very helpful and gave me an email address. I wrote him a note identifying my participation in that event so many years ago. I got a response immediately. The story has a happy ending and the entire event was detailed in his book just published, titled *One of Us: A Biologist's Walk Among Bears.* It is very informative and a must read for those of us that venture into bear country. It belongs on every jumper's bookshelf. And it is only fitting that the book is dedicated to Jim Thompson and his leaping helicopter.



Ray Beasley (MYC-52) and his wife, Jane, standing alongside painting "Khampa Airlift To Tibet" in the CIA Museum. Painted by Dru Blair, it was donated to the museum by Gar Thorsrud (MSO-46) and Douglas Price. The painting commemorates the airdrop operations in Tibet in which a number of smokejumpers working for the CIA took part. (Courtesy Heather Tupper)