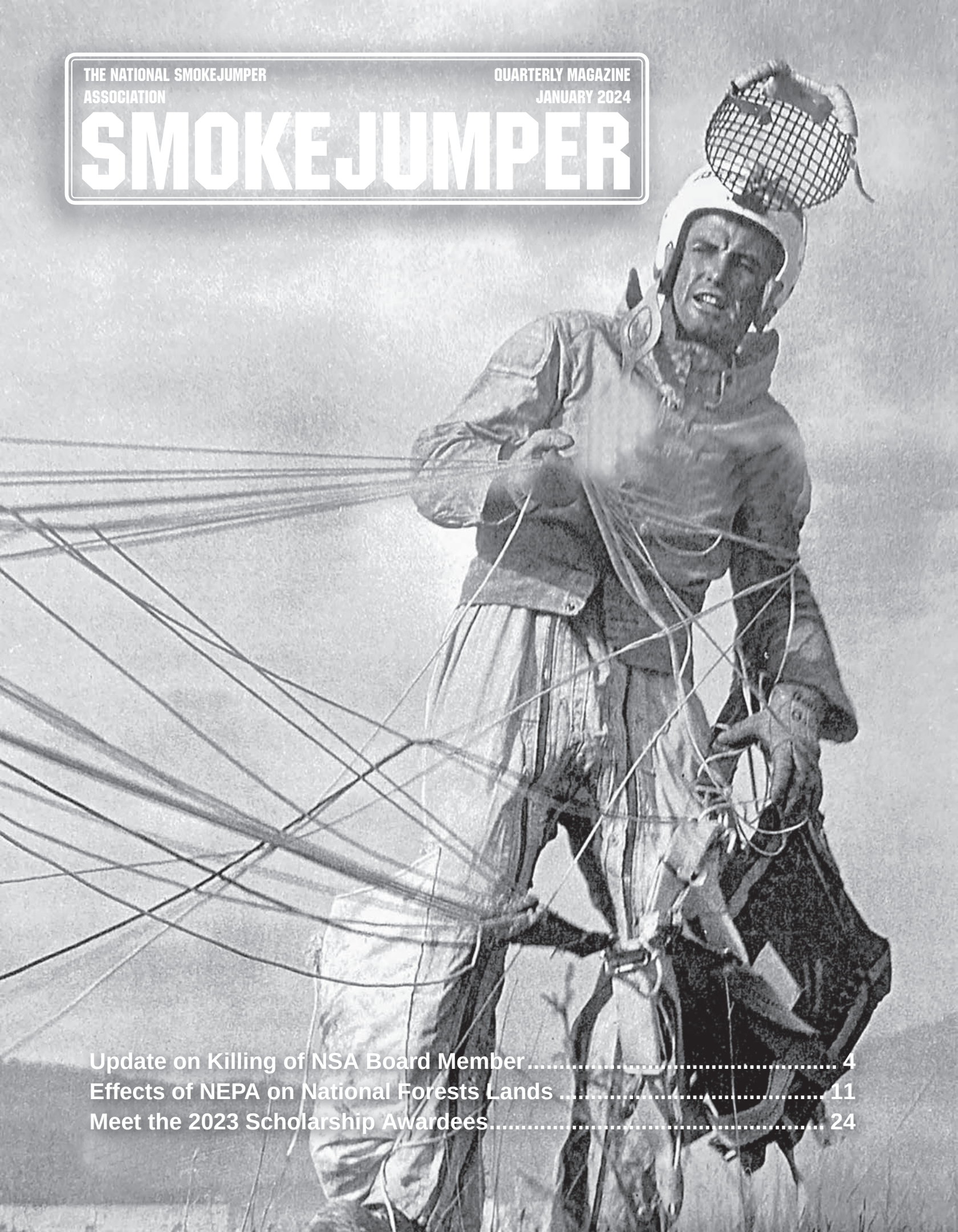


THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2024

SMOKEJUMPER



Update on Killing of NSA Board Member	4
Effects of NEPA on National Forests Lands	11
Meet the 2023 Scholarship Awardees.....	24

CONTENTS

Message from the President.....	2
NSA/Smokejumper History Update—Forgotten by His Country	
First, Put Out the Fire: Blowtorch Forestry.....	7
The Effects of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on Management of National Forest Lands.....	11
The Jump List	13
Sounding Off from the Editor.....	17
Who Is To Blame, and What Happened?.....	18
One Eye Fire – Fifty Fire Seasons Ago—Training Interrupted Rookie Class Jumps First Fire After Five Training Jumps	19
Speak Softly and Plant Big Trees: American Foreign Policy for the 21st Century.....	21
Introducing You to the 2023 NSA Scholarship Awardees	24
Introducing You to the 2023-2024 NSA Education/ Training Grant Awardees.....	25
Leo Cromwell—One of the Best	30
NSA Supports Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act	31
Odds and Ends	32
Climbing in Alaska, Argentina, and Africa	34
Notes from the Ranks	36
Lookout.....	38
Off the List.....	39
Hotshot Crew Members Killed in the Line of Duty ..	41
Seven Days with the Grizzly.....	43
Lessons from Frank.....	48



SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE No 124, January 2024
ISSN 1532-6160

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

The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA. Permission to reproduce *Smokejumper* in any manner must first be obtained in writing.

NSA Website: <http://www.smokejumpers.com>

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Associate Editor: *Ed Booth*

Editing: *K. G. Sheley*

Photo Editor: *Johnny Kirkley*

Illustrator: *Dan Veenendaal*

Layout/Printing: *Larry S. Jackson*, Heidelberg Graphics, www.HeidelbergGraphics.com

Front cover: *George Ostrom (MSO-50) (Courtesy Heidi Duncan)*



Message from the President



by Bob McKean
(Missoula '67)

FOR THE PAST few years, the federal wildland firefighters have been steadily decreasing in numbers. It seems there are fewer applicants and positions go unfilled. Moreover, since fire positions in non-federal agencies, like CalFire, have a history of paying substantially more, it is not a secret that the ranks of federal wildland firefighters have been further depleted as firefighters move to take more lucrative local positions.

To address this issue, the bi-partisan Infrastructure Law (2021) raised the pay of federal wildland firefighters. However, the pay increase was only temporary. As of this writing the increase is scheduled to end soon. Of course, this would make the situation much worse potentially leading to considerable depletion in the ranks of federal wildland firefighters. This would leave our wildlands even more susceptible to catastrophic

fire at a time when the threat continues to grow!

For these reasons the Board of the National Smokejumper Association (NSA) recently voted to support US Senate Bill (SB) 2272 the Wildland Firefighter Pay Protection Act of 2023. Elsewhere in this issue of *Smokejumper*, you will find a copy of the letter sent to leadership of the US House and Senate by the NSA in support of SB 2272 which reads, in part,

"Wildland firefighting is difficult, dangerous work! That is particularly the case since fire seasons are now longer and conditions considerably drier as climate changes. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain high-quality federal wildland firefighters; many leave the ranks for more lucrative positions in local fire municipalities. Pay for Federal wildland firefighters must be commensurate with their difficult, dangerous work. Improved pay is required for the Federal Government to attract and retain the highly skilled, professional workforce necessary in today's wildfire environment. Moreover, paying Federal wildland firefighters what they deserve is simply the right thing to do!"

Next August marks the 75th anniversary of the Mann Gulch Fire. While it has been many years since this tragedy

Continued on page 4

Still Looking for Your Biography

The response has been good for the bio request. I've got close to 1,500 done. If you have not taken the time to send me one, please sit down and do so. Information in this order:

Born: Month, day, year, city, state. **Grew Up:** City, state, graduated from H.S. including location. **Further Education:** Location, degree(s).

Career: Chronological order **Military service/Honors/Awards?**

Your Life: Have been getting good extra information—go for it!

If you can send in an email or Word document, it saves me a lot of typing.

Please do not send in pdf. Otherwise, I'll take it written longhand. (*Ed.*)

Having Your Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important

In order to save the NSA time and money, Chuck Sheley is sending renewals and the merchandise flyer via email. 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 Chuck if we need to update your email. His contact information is on this page.

Opinions by *Smokeyjumper* authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA.

NSA Members—Save This Information

Please contact the following directly if you have business or questions:

***Smokeyjumper* magazine**
Articles, obits, membership,
change of address

Chuck Sheley
530-893-0436
chucksheley@gmail.com
10 Judy Ln
Chico CA 95926

All else
NSA President
Bob McKean
971-404-5659
mckeanbob@gmail.com
5465 Aspen Meadow Ln
Mountain Green UT 84050

Smokeyjumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	GrangevilleGAC	MissoulaMSO
Boise.....NIFC	Idaho CityIDC	Redding.....RDD
Cave JunctionCJ	La Grande.....LGD	Redmond.....RAC
FairbanksFBX	McCall.....MYC	West Yellowstone WYS
		Winthrop.....NCSB

Get *Smokeyjumper* One Month Earlier

Many NSA members are switching to the digital version of *Smokeyjumper* 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."

To request email delivery, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) chuck-sheley@gmail.com. 📧

occurred, wounds from the loss of life continue to be felt by families. This is a reminder that the NSA is planning to honor the victims by having volunteers visit the 13 graves located across the US in California, Massachusetts, Montana, Ten-

nessee, North Carolina, New York, and Pennsylvania. We are still looking for a few good smokejumpers to help honor our fellow smokejumpers. If you are considering the possibility of assisting or willing to do so, please contact Mike Bina for details. beanuh1@yahoo.com 📧

NSA/Smokejumper History Update- Forgotten by His Country

As an interesting bit of our history, I'm going to reprint articles from 2003 issues of Smokejumper in honor of Ted Burgon and add some updates from additional research. (Ed.)

NSA Board Member Ted Burgon Killed in New Guinea Ambush

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

January 2003 Issue: What a way to start the day! I had just opened my email and there was one from the Portland, OR *Oregonian* asking for information on **Ted Burgon** (IDC-52) who was killed (Aug. 31, 2002) in Indonesia. After the initial shock, I was trying to guess what had happened.

Ted and his wife, Nancy, left Bend, Oregon, early in the month of August to head for Papua, New Guinea, where Ted would be taking over as principal at an English language school in Timika. Ted had taught overseas in ten different countries throughout his career. Even though he was retired, he continued to be called on to "go in and straighten out" schools that were having administrative problems.

A group from the school were returning to town after a picnic when their two vans were ambushed by a group with automatic weapons. Ted, who was riding in the front passenger's seat, was killed instantly. Nancy, who dove to the floor, was

the only one of the 14 people in the two vans who was not wounded.

A great thing about the NSA is getting to meet jumpers from all the bases. I first met Ted when he decided to run for the NSA Board of Directors. He wanted to be a board member who was actively involved in helping the NSA and volunteered to write for the magazine. I jumped at his offer as the job was becoming full-time and my writers were dropping out at a regular rate. Ted took over the "Jump List." In addition, he did a lot of the Life Member Profiles. I later found out that Ted's son lives in Chico and had married one of my ex-cross-country runners—small world!

My wife and I like to visit Sunriver, Oregon, on short vacations. Each trip I would try to meet with Ted for coffee and a good visit. When we got together in July, he was happy to be called for this assignment. I think he enjoyed the challenge of being called to clean up a school that was in an administrative mess. Ted said that he could continue to write the "Jump List" and the profiles from New Guinea and send them to me via email.

I clearly remember asking if he was concerned about his safety in an area of Muslim militants. He said he thought the area was safe. I think back to his article on Daniel Pearl in the July 2002 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. Ted had been in some tight situations before. How ironic it is for him to be killed just after writing that article.

A graduate of Idaho State University, Ted

moved to the Bend area about nine years ago after working as the business manager for the Anglo-American School sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. He was president of the Oregon Water Wonderland Unit One neighborhood association and formed a group called the “Big River Baggers” who periodically cleaned up neighborhoods in the resort town of Sunriver just south of Bend. A marine, smokejumper, and teacher—what a shame this had to happen.

In the July 2003 issue of Smokejumper we did a follow-up on the ambush and investigation.

Ted Burgon Update

NSA Director Ted Burgon was killed in an ambush in Papua, New Guinea, in August 2002 while on a teaching assignment. NSA members were encouraged to write their congress persons asking for an investigation of the potential involvement of the Indonesian Military in the incident. It looks like you might have helped.

The following is an email from Ted's son, Mark Burgon:

“On January 14-17 (2003), a victim (Patsy) who lost her husband and was shot twice herself, an attorney, my brother (Dirk), and myself went to Washington, D.C. in an attempt to jump-start the stalled investigation. We had 20+ meetings with Senators, Congressional Representatives, State Department Heads, FBI, and the Indonesian Ambassador. Patsy told the story, Dirk asked for confirmation of information (did not get any) and discussed many of the articles pointing to the Indonesian Military.

“I tried to make it more personal by putting a face to the names and help them see a person, lifestyle, and accomplishments.

“At first, I did not feel we could do much and almost did not go. Halfway through the first day, I had changed my mind. In a couple of the meetings with non-elected officials, we were given indications that we were being heard. One person in the state department commented that about three weeks before (about the time we had a letter writing campaign going), Capitol Hill started paying a little more attention. In the time we were in

town, people we had met with were asking questions of the state department and FBI and putting more pressure towards getting a Bali-style joint investigation going.

“An amendment was sent to the senate by Senators Feingold, Leahy, Wyden, Boxer, and Durbin restricting funds available for Indonesian military personnel to ‘Expanded International Military Education and Training’ unless certain conditions were met.

“One of the conditions: **Taking effective measures, including cooperating with the FBI, to bring to justice any member of the Indonesian Armed Forces or Indonesian militia group against whom there is credible evidence of involvement in the August 31, 2002, attack, which resulted in the deaths of United States citizens. Make concerted and demonstrable efforts to find and prosecute those responsible for the murders of United States citizens Edwin L. Burgon and Ricky L. Spier.** The amendment failed.

“We have made a difference, and I, for one, appreciate your involvement. We will continue to contact our representatives, so they know we are not going to let the issue drop. We received copies of letters from senators to the President and a joint one from Oregon’s senators and congressional reps to assistant Secretary of State Kelly, requesting pressure be put on the Indonesian government. The FBI has had a team in Indonesia since January and, from what we understand, has been allowed an active part in the investigation. Thanks again for your help.” Mark

Additional Research— Chuck Sheley

I want to make sure that you readers know this is my opinion. Facts are hard to find when the powers that be do not want them uncovered. What was at first attributed to “Muslim Militants” was later attributed to the Indonesian militia. The teachers were under fire for over 30 minutes with modern automatic weapons. The weapons were military type.

The FBI investigation, to my knowledge, never went anywhere. You can see by the Senate vote

that the U.S. did not want to delve too far into a country that we were sending funds to in order to fight “Muslim Militants.”

As reported in the Los Angeles Times: “Two Toyota Land Cruisers carrying American teachers and their families slowly wound their way up the steep mountain road Saturday toward the giant Freeport mine in Indonesia’s Papua province. As the vehicles approached mile 63 of the winding road 8,200 feet above sea level, a dozen gunmen emerged from the trees and opened fire, some with M-16 automatic rifles. Three teachers were shot dead, two Americans and an Indonesian. Another 11 people were wounded, including seven Americans, mine company officials said. One of the injured was a 6-year-old girl.

“Indonesian authorities blamed the ambush on the Free Papua Movement, a group of poorly armed Papuan separatists who have waged a low-level campaign for independence for the last four decades. The rebel organization denied responsibility.

“It is becoming more and more evident that the Indonesian security forces are involved in creating provocations and instigating violence,” the pro-independence Papua Presidium Council said in a statement. “The killing of foreign nationals has never been the policy of Papuans promoting their political aspirations.”

“The idea that soldiers could pose as rebels and attack civilians might seem implausible in other countries, but the Indonesian army’s track record prompted immediate speculation that it was responsible.

“In 1999, the military organized militia gangs in East Timor, then an Indonesian province, to intimidate supporters of independence. When the East Timorese voted in a referendum to break away, the militias slaughtered 1,000 people and razed much of the province.”

Bottom line, in my estimation, Ted Burgon and the others were killed by the Indonesian troops. Maybe a mistaken venture, but one with political implications. What if United States citizens were killed and the blame was laid on the Indonesian rebels? Certainly, that would have a great effect on the amount of money the U.S. would send Indonesia to fight these extremist rebels.

Fast forward to 2008 and this information from Radio New Zealand:

“Fresh evidence has linked Indonesia’s military to the 2002 murder of two American school teachers in Papua province. A newly published article by South-east Asia Research cites sources pointing towards involvement of Indonesian intelligence agents in the planning of the attack, which is still the subject of an FBI investigation. They interviewed a 27-year-old member of the regional parliament, Agus Anggaibak, who reportedly helped plan the ambush and facilitated contacts between the shooters and military agents.”

An investigation by University of California anthropologist S. Eben Kirksey and Andreas Harsono of the Pantau Foundation was also published in August 2008. *“Credible sources link Indonesian intelligence agents to the planning of this attack,” said co-author Eben Kirksey, an American anthropologist. “But Senior Bush Administration officials—including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Attorney General John Ashcroft, and FBI Director Robert Mueller—have covered up evidence of Indonesian military involvement in the murder of U.S. civilians,” continued Dr. Kirksey. “The FBI has failed to bring this case to a definitive resolution. Credible journalists have long reported that the highest levels of the Indonesian military had foreknowledge of this murder. We have identified the probable field agent who carried out the plan.”*

“The US was keen to have the case resolved so it could resume defense co-operation with the Indonesian armed forces as part of the war on terrorism,” said Tom Hyland, Media and Communicators Adviser at Independent Schools Victoria.

To my knowledge nothing has ever gone forward on the murder of Burgon and the attack on the group of teachers. They were caught in a political situation where an attack on American citizens by the Indonesian military, blamed on a rebel group, was hoped to be the stimulus for receiving military aid and supplies from the U.S. A marine, smokejumper, and teacher—what a shame Ted was forgotten by his country.

First, Put Out the Fire: Blowtorch Forestry

by Jim Peterson (Editor *Evergreen Magazine*)

I found Jim's interview of Frank Carroll, a Colorado forester and wildfire expert, to be educational and informative and something the readers of Smokejumper magazine would find interesting. Jim's book, "First Put Out the Fire," leads off the discussion. This interview is from several years ago, and during COVID, but very relative to what is going on today. I've shortened the word count to make it fit in this issue. Reprinted with permission. (Ed.)

I've yet to hear from anyone who thought my book wasn't "a good read," but Frank Carroll, a colleague of 20 years, thought I stopped the wildfire discussion 20 years too soon.

Frank was Public Affairs Director for Potlatch Corporation's Eastern Region when we met in 2000. Today, he is the Managing Partner in Professional Forest Management (PFM), a Pueblo, Colorado, firm that does trial work with clients whose private forests have been overrun by "managed fires" that began on adjacent Forest Service land.

Frank wrote: "I just finished your book and have to say I have high hopes for your book. I thought you would step above the old swamp and take on the biggest gorilla in the room, 'using unplanned fire in the right time and the right place' to 'reintroduce fire to fire-depleted ecosystems' as Chief Christiansen put it in her directive to the troops last year."

"Using unplanned fire in the right place at the right time" appears in a note Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen sent to her line officers last year. It is a thinly veiled reference to "managed fire," or applying wildfire like prescribed fire, in a directive agency fire crews are expected to follow whenever the opportunity to let a wildfire run presents itself. There are few places outside of designated Wilderness areas where this can be done safely, but the practice is used widely across the Western National Forests as a matter of policy.

Certainly, nowhere near communities, municipal watersheds, or fish or wildlife habitat critical to threatened or endangered species, and, yet, it is precisely these locations that are increasingly overrun by managed fire.

Some people rejected forestry long ago. State foresters, Interior agencies, and local governments have stayed the course where wildfires are concerned. Put them out as quickly as possible. Hence, the title of my book: First, Put Out the Fire. I write that if we don't put these fires out, we won't have anything else to talk about after the smoke clears. So, by all means, let's talk about a proper role for wildfire in a post-industrial society that depends on its national forests for far more than timber.

Appropriately, timber production has become a by-product of federal policies that favor wildlife habitat conservation. In my opinion, "managed fire" is on a collision course with every forest value our society holds dear, which brings me to what's bothering Frank Carroll.

I'll let Frank speak for himself in the question-and-answer interview below, but his main complaint is one with which I am familiar—"managed fires" have a nasty habit of becoming unmanageable wildfires that overrun adjacent and well-managed private forest lands.

Petersen: Frank, tell us about your new business venture.

Carroll: Professional Forest Management, LLC, does wildfire impact analysis for law firms and private clients in federal tort claims and legal actions. From a forest perspective, this rather simple aspirational objective—using unplanned fire in the right place at the right time—is the absolute worst development in the history of forests and forest conservation.

Petersen: How so?

Carroll: We are burning our forests to ruin, and we're doing it on purpose. We got out of the

thinning and prescribed fire business on federal land, and now we are in the Age of Fire for Fire's Sake. I call it "Fire-first" forestry. Federally-funded wildfire crews are burning big boxes around the West and are now responsible for 40 to 60 percent of the acreage burned by any given large fire.

Petersen: And this is managed fire?

Carroll: This is managed fire. National forest supervisors are expected to maximize the management role of wildfire, and they are doing it with a vengeance.

Petersen: This doesn't sound like good forestry.

Carroll: It isn't, but it is what's happening. The 2018 Pole Creek and Bald Mountain Fires in Utah and the earlier Lolo Pass Fire are great examples of the madness of managed fire. We are working on \$40 million in claims on Bald Mountain and Pole Creek alone, and there are many more that will go unchallenged because there is no internal or congressional oversight.

Petersen: What does that mean?

Carroll: It means the USFS is violating the National Environmental Policy Act. These fires are major federal actions with environmental consequences. Where are the Environmental Assessments or the Environmental Impact Statements? They don't exist. There is no Record of Decision, no public process, no paper trail, no recourse for the public. The agency can operate in complete secrecy without disclosing specific or cumulative consequences. It's all illegal. You cannot use Congressionally-appropriated fire suppression funds to do resource management except wildfire suppression. If you or I did this, we'd be in jail.

Petersen: Yet from what I'm hearing, "using unplanned fire in the right fire in the right place at the right time" is currently giving way to more timely and direct attack.

Carroll: Congressional delegations from the West forced Chief Christiansen's hand because of concerns about the impact COVID-19 will have on firefighting this year. She is suddenly in full suppression mode because of the risks the virus poses to crews that work, eat, and sleep in close proximity.

Petersen: I understand that, but how does it undermine managed fire?

Carroll: The virus prevents the Forest Service from operating in complex strategic environments that feature big, intricate burnouts covering hundreds of thousands of acres because they can't coalesce in one giant fire camp and coordinate all the moving parts. But you can be sure they'll be back to "using unplanned fire" as soon as possible.

Petersen: Why?

Carroll: First, because they can. It's a management prerogative they control completely and requires no public oversight or interference from cooperating agencies. Even when cooperators protest, as the State of Utah did in 2018, the Agency moves ahead anyway without consequences. Second, they are strongly pressed by environmental groups like FUSEE and the DiCaprio Foundation to let fires burn. And, finally, fighting forest fires has become big business for the USFS and their firefighting contractors—a hog's paradise allowing them to spend money like drunken sailors. So, no one realizes what they are doing except the special interests who want them to do it, and an ignorant Congress is giving them limitless money to burn. So, they burn.

Petersen: How do you know all this?

Carroll: It's our business nowadays. We do the intensive and comprehensive analysis of entire records from large fires. We spend years in deposition and preparing for court and trial. Our sources keep us abreast of new developments in policy and practice in real-time. In its reports to Congress, the USFS is counting wildfire acres burned as acres treated.

Petersen: We've heard that before and it has always seemed like a misappropriation of taxpayer dollars.

Carroll: It is. The USFS is using federally appropriated wildland fire management dollars to practice a new kind of wildfire-based resource management that holds that, since we can't do real natural resource management projects on an ecologically significant scale, we'll just use wildfire on everything everywhere and call it good enough. Managed fire is the only form of management no one questions. Environmentalists can't stop them and don't want to, they don't need anyone's permission, and there is no oversight.

Petersen: Real resource management being the thinning and prescribed fire regime that states,

private landowners and Indian tribes use perennially?

Carroll: Correct

Petersen: This goes back to my belief that the fault here rests with Congress and its failure to allow the USFS to undertake forest restoration projects on physical scales that are environmentally significant.

Carroll: It's worse than that. What we have here is a federal forest management agency that can spend whatever it wants in any way it wants with no public input or oversight.

Petersen: Aren't there auditors who go through the firefighting bills?

Carroll: There are, but no fiscal officer in the USFS has firefighting experience. They won't challenge or second guess fire commanders or forest supervisors because if things go to hell, they'll be blamed. This is the new Wild West and Wildfire is the name of the game.

Petersen: Keep your head down and don't mess up.

Carroll: Climate change, fuels equilibrium, growth, harvest and mortality, and reforestation are all yesterday's news. What we have today is a rogue federal agency burning its way into a new bureaucratic empire that is publicly unaccountable.

Petersen: Reminds me of Eisenhower's warning about the dangers posed by what he called the military-industrial complex.

Carroll: That's a good analogy. What we have here is an Industrial Wildfire Complex that is answerable to no one. The Forest Service today is a much different agency than the one that all of us knew for decades. The transition from forestry to fire has rendered every forest plan objective effectively moot.

Petersen: That's a big statement, especially when we consider that this transition occurred in plain view of anyone who was watching. And you worked for the Forest Service, didn't you?

Carroll: In the National Park Service and the Forest Service from 1972 through 2012. I held primary fire, forest staff, and leadership roles in the USFS in Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, South Dakota and spent time in Washington, D.C. My time since my Forest Service years has been spent in wildland fire mitigation planning and imple-

mentation, remote sensing, wildfire impact, and suppression analysis.

Petersen: Based on all your experience, how do we reverse course?

Carroll: Not easily. The Forest Service today is a black box. It is immune to public scrutiny and led by fire officers who are not well-grounded in natural resource management. They have no interest in further fights with smoke regulators or anti-management environmentalists. Why would they when they can burn far and wide, accumulate political power, maintain their Smokey vibe, and enjoy vastly increased budgets in the New Wildfire Economy.

Petersen: New Wildfire Economy. I don't even like the sound of those words.

Carroll: No one should, but it's real and it's here.

Petersen: Some of these big fires burn so hot that they cook the soil. It can take a century or more to rebuild the organic layer in which seeds germinate, so 200 to 300 years to grow a new forest where the old one stood.

Carroll: That's true and the burners don't care. They see big wildfires as a natural agent.

Petersen: Better than the thinning and prescribed fire combination I describe in my book.

Carroll: Yes, because the New Wildfire Economy makes it easy. No appeals or litigation. No nasty wild-eyed environmentalists. Just lumbermen who don't seem to understand the problem or are under too much economic pressure to have any stomach for the fight.

Petersen: So, where is the good news?

Carroll: The good news is that the Forest Service will not go to public trial on these issues for fear of upending their new wildfire hegemony. They are doing their own version of stop, drop and roll so they can stay hidden in plain sight. They will settle every claim out of court, no matter how weak, rather than go to trial and have these issues openly reviewed. This is good for people harmed by these fires.

Petersen: The big issue is the transition from an agency that manages forests to one that favors applied wildfire to every natural resource management objective?

Carroll: That is precisely the biggest issue. It is the issue that has the USFS hiding behind

things like 747s that dump fire retardant on fires. It makes great video on the evening news but does nothing to address the underlying causes of these enormous fires or the agency's decision to favor fire over forestry.

Petersen: We're told the public is very suspicious of thinning projects that are large enough to actually reduce the risk and size of these big wildfires.

Carroll: Some people don't like logging of any kind. Others see its value. In our New Wildfire Economy, it doesn't matter. Welcome to the world of blowtorch forestry.

Petersen: More than half the Forest Service's annual budget is spent on wildfires. Most people think that's what it takes to put these fires out. You're saying the big expense occurs when the decision is made to "manage" the fire, meaning let the fire run rather than put it out quickly.

Carroll: That's correct. I can show you one 1,600-acre managed fire that cost taxpayers \$12.6 million. The whole idea of firefighting has been turned on its head. The USFS is using crews to light fires on an epic scale, not put fires out. They have no idea what they're doing or what the implications of using unplanned fire are for the future.

Petersen: Maybe Congress needs to tell the USFS that for every blowtorched acre there will be an acre that is mechanically thinned in combination with prescribed fire. The way it was done for decades.

Carroll: Nice idea but it won't happen.

Petersen: Why not?

Carroll: Two different worlds. In the blowtorch world, the USFS burns to its heart's content with no oversight, no need to ask anyone for permission and no lawsuits. In the world of forest and range management, there are laws and regulations, there is oversight and there is litigation. Moreover, the Forest Service no longer has the skill sets needed to plan and execute large scale thinning projects.

Petersen: So, we're stuck with blowtorch forestry?

Carroll: The Forest Service—and Congress by association—are rolling big dice. They are betting that blowtorch forestry will reset the biological clock in our forests and that they will be able to

meaningfully manage the resulting brush fields for the greater good. That's just a fantasy.

Petersen: Brush fields have overtaken much of the 500,000-acre Biscuit Fire that burned in 2002 on southern Oregon's Siskiyou National Forest.

Carroll: You haven't seen anything yet. Blowtorch forestry is creating millions of acres of sorrel monocultures that will burn and reburn and revert to the lowest common denominator, cheat grass and wild oats, like we're seeing in California. The only way they can manage these newly created brush ecosystems is to keep burning them and the only time they can burn them is in high fire season. So, the blowtorch will be applied relentlessly until the world changes.

Petersen: There are still some dedicated professionals working for the Forest Service. I'm surprised no one has blown the whistle on this racket.

Carroll: I know, but you must realize that the USFS has no intention of returning to its roots. It has embraced wildfire because it's easier. My partner and I are doing very well in this environment, but it's so sad to watch.

Petersen: So, if I have followed the bouncing ball to its destination, what you are telling me is that the Forest Service will work harder on initial attack this year because the virus and the western congressional delegation have forced their hand.

Carroll: That's correct. And because of much better initial attack—and no managed fires—you will see smaller fires this year unless they just let them burn, which is likely because moving armies around will be harder in most cases. But as soon as the virus passes, the Forest Service will go right back to blowtorch forestry.

Petersen: Unless we can find a way to stop them from burning the nation's federal forest legacy to the ground.

Carroll: I am not optimistic. The forces that gave us a five-fold increase in fire suppression spending will not abate. The current Forest Service Chief is deeply and personally invested in the ascendance of fire management in her agency. The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture over the Forest Service is likewise a fire-first leader and the current Chief's mentor. There is a fire dragon walking the halls of the Forest Service in Washington, D.C. and it will not be easily dislodged. 🐉

The Effects of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on Management of National Forest Lands

by F. Carl Pence (USFS Ret.)

Human responsibility to care for “nature” goes way back in time. The first documented management direction is expressed in Genesis, the first Book of the Bible. Genesis 2:15 records, “The Lord God took the man (humans) and put him (them) in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” This is a clear mandate from God that humans have a responsibility to actively manage the earth. However, the conflict begins when humans have differing values for the “garden.”

A study of Legislation establishing purpose and standards of management of the National Forest System reveals a rich political history, which is recorded in a 2 ½ inch thick book published by the US Dept of Agriculture, titled “The Principal Laws Relating to Forest Service Activities.” My edition covers legislation which started in the late 1800s and covers legislation through 1992. It lists over 200 Acts describing legal responsibilities of the USDA Forest Service. The Bureau of Land Management has a similar tome of legislation describing their management responsibilities. These laws are attempts to resolve controversy. However, high levels of controversy continue, especially with the increasing magnitude of uncontrollable wildfire.

The process necessary to follow these laws and resulting lawsuits creates a situation where professional management suffers. It seems timely for Congress and states with large amounts of Federal lands to work together and jointly address the complex web of legislation with the objective of providing a clearer way for active, professional, timely management to occur.

Public Law 91-190, The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), is a focal point. It establishes a legal process to publicly consider all the laws affecting management of

federal lands. Simply stated, NEPA’s purpose commits the federal government to a policy of creating and maintaining “*conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony.*” That commitment is not simple nor is it easily achieved as human needs and “nature” cannot be separated. Humans have varying values, and controversy results.

Public Law 91-190, The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), is a focal point. It establishes a legal process to publicly consider all the laws affecting management of federal lands.

For the Forest Service, when this Act was passed, it just seemed to be a more public and detailed process for planning and documentation, which the Forest Service was already using in our implementation of the “Multiple-Use Act of 1960.” The big difference, however, was NEPA compliance required public involvement and consideration of other applicable Acts which followed it. It also allowed the public to appeal and litigate against a decision if they felt the process and decision did not comply with the NEPA or related federal laws. That has evolved into a situation where litigation makes final decisions, professional judgment is often compromised, and too often the opportunity to implement needed, timely action is lost.

Environmental legislation in the decades following the enactment of NEPA include: The Environmental Quality Act, Endangered Species

Act, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, Federal Land and Policy and Management Act, National Forest Management Act, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, Salmon and Steelhead Conservation and Enhancement Act, and others. When the USFS and BLM find it necessary to implement on-the-ground action, all these Acts must be considered in the Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statement required by NEPA. This creates a litigation dream for those who oppose the implementation of whatever is being proposed. And it often results in a state of “analysis paralysis”.

This legal environment has created a major problem involving the management of acres of mature, crowded, contiguous stands of conifers which have been affected by bark beetles, defoliating moths, and other age-related factors. Included in the problem are rangelands which have been invaded by non-native annual plants which increases the frequency and risk of wildfire. Over time, timber stands, if not actively managed, accumulate tons of dead fuel per acre and become ripe for a spark which will ignite an uncontrollable, hot, and dangerous conflagration.

Today’s managers face a decision between proactive or reactive actions. Proactive options include thinning or stand replacement through mechanical activities such as commercial timber harvest, or the use of prescribed human-ignited fire, or both. The downside of proactive management is managers must go through a NEPA process before implementation. This process is costly, time consuming, and nearly always ends in litigation from parties which object to active management designed to reduce the fuel buildup and improve forest health. Their success in litigating against active management is generally the rule. Even if they don’t succeed, the legal process requires time, and often the opportunity to salvage a merchantable product is lost and the long-term result is a catastrophic wildfire.

Opponents envision images of clear cuts, soil disturbance, and loss of their vision of a healthy forest. Generally, they are opposed to commercial use of forest, rangelands, and the industries associated with them. Many believe that an “old growth forest” is the ideal, healthy forest and believe it provides healthy watersheds, better wild-

life habitat and helps reduce “global warming.” That may be somewhat true with tropical Forests, however, most conifer forests in the US exist in a natural disturbance ecosystem, which is ruled by floods, wind, insect infestation and disease, and an eventual stand replacement wildfire. As a result, the conditions which describe an “old growth forest” are not static conditions. They will eventually be affected by natural forces and go through some kind of “rotation” without human interaction. This rotation is normally brought about by wildfire.

This natural rotation has been demonstrated in most of the stands dedicated as “old Growth” in President Clinton’s Northwest Forest Plan completed in 1998. Nearly all these “old growth reserves” have been burned by wildfire in the past 25 years. It’s interesting those opposed to thinning and commercial use of forests don’t understand if active management is not applied, the forest will eventually experience an intense wildfire because of fuel loading, and their view of a nice alive, green forest is lost for a long time.

Reactive management normally involves taking advantage of a wildfire to treat fuel buildup and fuel continuity. This can include fires from lightning or human-caused fire. Such action does not require a specific project Environmental Analysis or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It may be linked to a general objective mentioned in a Forest Level EIS. This technically gives managers the flexibility to consider existing resource plans and a risk assessment to determine which fire management strategy to use, e.g., full suppression or fire management within certain perimeters.

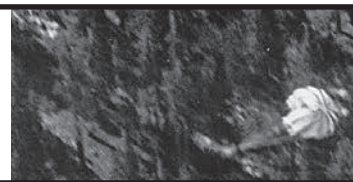
The control and use of wildfire for environmental benefit is risky, expensive, and application often results in a hot, uncontrollable conflagration. Examples of good success are limited. The old saying, “Play with fire, and you will be burned,” is too often true, even if the involved agency doesn’t want to admit it. 🧯

Carl is a graduate of the University of Idaho and started his USFS career in 1965. He started on the Salmon NF and worked numerous forests over his 40-year career. Carl was Forest Supervisor on the Malheur NF and retired in 2002.



THE JUMP LIST

The Men of 1958



This column is part of the NSA History Preservation Project. All information will be kept in the Smokejumper Archives at Eastern Washington University. The following jumpers have responded to my request for bio information. Many thanks. I have more bios but am only doing NSA members at this time.

Douglas L. “Doug” Bernhard (North Cascades ’58)

Doug was born April 8, 1939, in Missoula, Montana. The son of a professional forester, he grew up and went to school in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California. He started working on a fire crew for the Oregon State Forestry Dept. in 1956, the Plumas NF in 1957, and rookied at NCSB in 1958 where he jumped until 1963. Doug then spent 42 years with the San Jose Fire Department retiring in 1999. He is an NSA Life Member.

James R. Burleigh (MSO-58)

Jim was born September 6, 1936, in Fresno, CA, where he grew up and graduated from Central Union H.S. in 1954. He graduated from Fresno State University with a bachelors in Agronomy in 1958, earned a masters in Agronomy

from Washington State University in 1961, and received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from Washington State in 1965.

Jim worked for the USDA as a Plant Pathologist 1964-71 at Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, and Professor of Agriculture at California State University Chico, CA 1971-98. He followed that with work at the University of Minnesota in Morocco for 7 years, the University of Arkansas in Rwanda for 2 years, and Oregon State University for work in Sri Lanka for 2 years.

He retired in 2003 and moved to Santa Fe, NM.

“I was one of eight smokejumpers dropped as rescue unit the morning after Montana earthquake August 17, 1959.” Jim jumped at Missoula 1958-59 and is an NSA Life Member.

John W. “Jack” Cahill (Missoula ’58)

Jack was born August 28, 1938, in Spokane, Washington. At about age four, his parents moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he attended De La Salle H.S., graduating in 1957. Upon graduating, he went to work on a Blister Rust crew at Spar Lake outside of Troy, MT.

“The camp boss was a former Missoula smokejumper,

and his stories were interesting enough for me to apply and be accepted in the 1958 rookie class. I jumped 1958-60 out of Missoula and Silver City. In the off-season, I attended Everett JC in Everett, WA, and worked part-time at Boeing—both boring.

“Early 1961 | received a phone call for a person I knew by name only, asking me what I was doing? Would I be interested in a part-time job for 3-4 months? Naturally I asked, ‘Doing what?’ He could not tell me but that I would be working with some guys I knew. Well, since I was bored with school and Boeing, I accepted thinking that after 3-4 months I could still make the Silver City jump season.

“So much for part-time work. I finally went back to school the fall of 1973 after working for Air America as a Kicker out of Takhli, Thailand; Aviation Investors as a Kicker out of Saigon/Danang; Bird and Sons as an upcountry Air Ops Officer in Laos; and Intermountain Aviation as a pilot.

“I degreed in 1976 at the University of Washington in Business Administration/Transportation. After graduation, I went to work for a Seattle Building Materials company that worked with clients in Alaska and Hawaii, eventually managing that

department. In 1985 my wife, Kathy, and I started our own business, Pac-Rim Building Supply, Inc. We conducted the same type of business except expanded into the Far East. In 2014 we sold the business and retired to two homes, one in downtown Seattle, the other north of Wenatchee, WA, on the Columbia River.” Jack is an NSA Life Member.

Jay S. Clifton (Redding '58)

Jay was born October 4, 1938, in Oakland, CA, and grew up in Castro Valley, CA. He graduated from Hayward H.S. and attended the University of California, Berkeley. Jay served in the Marine Corps 1958-64 and graduated from the Caterpillar Tractor Co. management school in 1964.

Jay then worked in the Industrial Supply business and retired in 2016. He is consulting to this day in the Industrial Supply business, part-time as called upon and has lived in Pleasanton, CA, for the last 55 years.

“Although I only served a year with the USFS, it was one of the highlights of my life and will always cherish being a smokejumper.”

Edward “Ed” Courtney (Missoula '58)

Ed was born November 13, 1932, in Monroe, Louisiana, and grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he graduated from high school in 1951. He then graduated

from Mississippi Southern with a bachelor's in Botany/Zoology and got his master's in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Montana in 1971. Ed was in the Navy 1955-57 in Okinawa and Japan. He later earned his Ph.D. from the University of Montana in 1977.

After four seasons on the Clearwater N.F. he jumped at Missoula in 1958 and West Yellowstone 1959-61, 1963-64. Ed taught in Eureka, Montana, for two years and in Missoula for 12 years. He was a Curriculum Director and Coordinator, and an Asst. Supt. for Curriculum and Instruction. Ed was also an Elementary School Principal for a 14-year period in Missoula.

“I am proud to have been a member of a six-plus person group that worked very hard to organize and activate our National Smokejumper Association. I served a two-year hitch as the 2nd President of the NSA. (Earl was the first). During the organizational period, we all eventually wound up assuming nearly every Executive position at one time or another. Everybody who was asked worked, gave lots of advice, and kicked in the bucks when needed.”

C. Douglas “Doug” Getz (Grangeville '58)

Doug was born in Kalispell, MT, July 30, 1933, and lived in Sommers, MT, his younger years. They moved to Anamoose, ND, where he went to a country school.

When he was older, he took a train to Kalispell, stayed with his grandparents, and attended school there a few years. His family moved to Hot Springs, MT, where his Dad ran a grocery store. Doug graduated from Hot Springs H.S. in 1951 and was active in all sports.

He went to Carroll College, Helena, MT, 1951-52, played football and studied History/Education. Doug then joined the Navy 1952-56. He went to photography school and was stationed in California and Atsugi, Japan, as an Aerial Photographer.

In 1956 he returned to his studies at Carroll College, doing some ranch work in the summer. Doug rookied at Missoula in 1958, jumped at Grangeville 58-59, 1961-62, and at Missoula 1960, 63 and 64. In September he flew to Alaska, married Susan Imlach, then returned to Carroll College to begin life as a “married student.”

In the fall 1960, Doug began working year-round with the jumper program (equipment development). He received recognition and \$100 for his sewing expertise in implementing a “raglan” sleeve for the jumper jackets—a much more practical design.

During his time with the smokejumpers, he began to learn to fly and got his Private Pilot License. In the spring of '65, he went to work for the U.S. Border Patrol. Doug was on the Border Patrol Pistol team and also joined another flying club to continue his love

of flying. He was stationed at Calxico CA, until he quit in 1967.

In 1967 he went to work for the Montana Fish and Game Dept. as a game warden. Eventually he was designated "Warden Pilot," then "Pilot Warden," and was sent to Missoula for training in helicopters. He continued his love and experience with firearms and became the Firearms Training Officer and also participated in the Hunter Safety program, helping to educate the younger generation of hunters.

Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Carl was born October 24, 1938, in Los Angeles. He spent his boyhood there and summers in Butte, Montana, with grandparents and cousins. The day after he graduated from Loyola H.S. in L.A. in 1956, he drove to Kalispell, Montana, where a surveyor's job awaited him on the Flathead N.F.

Deciding to gain Montana residency and save money for college, he remained on the Flathead Forest until that December. He then transferred to the Deerlodge Forest, where he worked until the fall of 1957 when he entered the University of Montana as a forestry student.

The sciences were not his forte, so after a year, he transferred to the journalism school. He became a Missoula Smokejumper in 1958, a summer job he enjoyed until

1961 and again in 1966.

He flunked out of the university in 1961, then joined the Army. After graduating from intelligence school, he was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group and completed airborne training at Fort Benning. Promoted to Warrant Officer, he was sent to the Defense Language Institute for a year-long course in Vietnamese, followed by a 12-month assignment in Vietnam where he engaged in intelligence collection operations. Returning stateside he was assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group.

At the conclusion of his five-year Army hitch, he returned to the University of Montana where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism in 1967. He married while in college and fathered two daughters, Elizabeth and Andrea.

Following graduation, he worked in a variety of government public affairs positions, including the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Office of Emergency Preparedness (now FEMA), Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Nevada State Department of Human Resources, Bureau of Land Management, and USFS. He also wrote for newspapers, including the *Anchorage Times*, *Tundra Drums* and the *Spokesman Review*, and free-lanced for several magazines.

His duty stations included California, Idaho, Nevada, Maryland, North Carolina, Texas, Honduras, and Alaska. While in Alaska, he ran charter

and sightseeing boats in Prince William Sound.

In 1973 he joined the Air National Guard. Over the next 25 years in the Guard and Air Force Reserve, he progressed from first lieutenant to lieutenant colonel. He was a library trustee for several years and, for more than two decades, was a caregiving hospice volunteer.

In 1980 he was named the Alaska Guard's Officer of the Year. Other honors include Citizen of the Year and Distinguished Veteran of the Year in Hayden, Idaho, both in 2012.

Carl retired from the Forest Service in 1998 and lived in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with his wife, Sally. Carl jumped at Missoula 1958-61 and 1966. In 2000 he was elected president of the National Smokejumper Association.

Ken S. Hessel (McCall '58)

Ken was born January 30, 1939, in Missoula, Montana, and grew up in Arlington, Virginia; Ogden, Utah; and Englewood, Colorado, where he graduated from H.S. in 1957. He then earned his bachelor's in Business from Oregon State in 1963.

Ken worked in Paramilitary Service for the CIA for 12 years: Aerial Delivery Systems Research & Development, Marana, Arizona, June 1963 to June 1975; Airborne/Air Rescue and & Strike Team Training, Northern Thailand, 1964 and 1966; Air Operations Officer, Savannakhet, Laos

1968-73. He then worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 18 years: Wallow-Whitman N.F. Forest Wildfire Coordinator 15 years 1975 to 1990, La Grande Fire Center Manager 3 years 1991 to 1994.

Rawhide C. “Cal” Papritz (Missoula ’58)

Rawhide Papritz was born Rawhide Cal Papritz on November 10, 1938, in a small town in western Washington called Mukilteo. During his jumper years, he went first as Cal (’58 and ’59). Later in the early 60s during research papers for his master’s degree in Geography, he changed over and began going by Rawhide per a suggestion from his lead professor so people would be more likely to remember his research work. During the early 60s, he jumped one season out of Missoula and one season out of Fairbanks, going by Rawhide during those three seasons.

He began his teen years going to Mukilteo’s Rosehill Jr. High, when in the 9th grade he was elected Student Body President. He lived with his Dad, Richard, and his Mother, Mabel, and his six brothers and sisters on a seven and a quarter acre mini farm. During these formative years, he had miles of woodland, stream, valleys, and saltwater beaches to explore and develop an adventurous streak in his personality.

Later he attended high school (10 thru 12 grades)

in the moderate-sized city of Everett, Washington. During his junior year he was elected Student Body President of Everett High School. This same year he was involved with the YMCA Youth in Government program and was elected student Governor of Washington State, where he sat in the real governor’s chair and played governor in the state capitol for three days.

His college years started with spending two years at Everett Junior College earning an AA degree. The next two college years were spent at Western Washington State College in Bellingham, Washington, majoring in Geography with a minor in Biology, receiving a BA in Education. At Western he met his wife, Diane Newsham. They celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary in December 2022.

After teaching a “normal” sixth grade class in his hometown of Mukilteo, he decided to go on for a master’s degree at the University of Colorado in Geography. Following his graduate degree program in Boulder, he took a position in the Department of Geography at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, La. He, along with two other geographers, formulated a collection of courses and built the Geography Department from the ground up over the next two years.

After Louisiana State, he looked for and found an instructor position in the rapidly expanding Washington State Community College System

and was hired by Green River Community College in Auburn, Washington. Here he spent thirty-nine years teaching a variety of freshman and sophomore level geography classes. He was known for his colorful and memorable stories and for his willingness to take thirty students out on extended field courses to places such as Glacier Bay, Alaska, 400 miles on the Yukon River, three weeks exploring Mexico, two weeks in Australia and New Zealand. Toward the later part of his tenure in 2003, he received Distinguished Faculty Award.

Also, in the early ’70s while a national park ranger, he was sent along with three other Teton Park rangers to Mount Rushmore Monument to protect the heads from being covered with red paint. He had the unusual opportunity to sleep three nights on George Washington’s head. 🗿

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
Lane—Chico CA 95926*



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

AT THE END of August, I was fortunate enough to take an extended day tour of prior wildfire sites in the Shasta/Trinity N.F. The tour was led by Roger Jaegel, USFS (Ret.) from that forest. Besides spending most of his career working on the Shasta/T, Roger grew up in the area, graduating from Hayfork H.S. **Bill Derr** (Associate), USFS (Ret.) and NSA board member, was with us along with Mike and Joanne Harper from Weaverville.

I have known Joanne for several years as she is the Track & Field coach at Trinity H.S. Mike is the Superior Court Judge in the Trinity County Superior Court. I wanted the Harpers to come along as I think the town of Weaverville, CA, is in the same dangerous position that Paradise was before the Camp Fire.

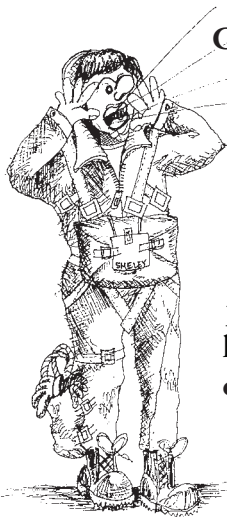
By the end of the day, we had probably driven 200 miles over good and bad roads in the forest. Roger had maps of the August Complex and McFarland Fires showing the results of the current "managed fire," or let-burn policy. By the end of the day, we had looked at just a portion of the **half million acres** of forest burned.

We saw miles and miles of black sticks that had once been forest. As noted in fires around the Chico area, private forests had been replanted and work is still being done. No evidence of that on USFS land. Old growth trees had been incinerated. What comes next?

Depending upon the age of the burned area, the growth can be measured in the height of the brush that has taken over.

I'm not a professional forester, but without seed trees, it is obvious that the brush will grow and burn again in the next seven or eight years. These fires were started by the lightning storms that move over Northern California on a regular basis.

Then I read an article on the internet from **Inside**



Climate News. "After studying 14 burned areas across 10 national forests in California, **scientists from UC Davis and the USFS** said recent fires have killed so many mature, seed-producing trees across such large areas that the **forests can't re-seed themselves.**

And because of increasingly warm temperatures, burned areas are quickly overgrown by shrubs, which can prevent trees from taking root."

I didn't need a forestry degree to see what will happen as the current "managed fire" policy continues. Common sense will do.

I was really depressed when I arrived back in Chico after a long day. The handwriting is on the wall. The National Forests of Northern California and Southern Oregon are passengers on the Titanic—their fate is sealed. In years to come, Washington, Idaho and Montana will also get their ticket on the USFS Titanic.

In about 2070 I'm hoping that maybe CalFire can be contracted to protect whatever blocks of our forests in California are left with trees. They will be small areas, probably like a museum. Future generations can go to these Disneyland areas and see what a forest looked like at one time in the past. 🌲

Who Is To Blame, and What Happened?

by F. Carl Pence (Associate)

I loved Managing Editor Chuck Sheley's "Sounding Off" in the October issue of *Smokejumper*. I shared his glee over eastern states recent experience with serious wildfire smoke. He also expressed anguish over the fallacy of today's risk-averse, fire management strategies and use of wildfire to meet resource management objectives. It is interesting that the adverse effects to human health caused by wildfire smoke and its potential contribution to "global warming" are too often unspoken consequences.

I started my career in 1962 with a temporary job at the Challis National Forest as a member of a district fire crew. I ended my permanent career in 2002 after serving in a variety of positions in nine National Forests. After ending my full-time career, I served as an "Administratively Determined" (AD) employee for six more years. Most of those assignments involved wildfire management.

During my first two career decades, wildfire strategy was to extinguish fires using the "Ten AM Policy," which was developed in response to large fires during the first half of the 1900s, and it worked well to keep fires small. In those days, every employee was expected to participate in one capacity or another in efforts to control a fire by the following 10 AM. If it wasn't controlled by then, we would staff up to extinguish it the "next" 10 AM. Despite that, we often had large wildfires, but nothing compared to today's wildfires.

The 10 AM policy worked, but it caused part of today's problem. With it, we reduced the natural mosaic wildfire historically created before our interference. As a result, the continuity and amount of fuel loading increased. We were aware of that effect, but our professional mindset justified it by thinking we would create a better mosaic through active management using timber harvest and other fuel management tools. That proved to be an unreasonable expectation because of organizational, social, and political changes in the past fifty or more years.

When I began my career, the Forest Service was decentralized.

Perhaps the most dramatic changes which weakened the agency's wildfire response are organizational. When I began my career, the Forest Service was decentralized. Ranger Districts and Forests were small. Some Rangers were GS-9s, few management units were large enough to justify a GS-12. Each district had a seasonal fire crew of about six employees, which served as a rapid response unit. Often, the Ranger and/or Assistant Ranger would deploy to a fire with that crew. Rangers were able to intimately experience their units. Fire management qualifications were generally very important for Rangers, especially if the unit included significant fire risks. Fire management qualifications were also considered important for Forest Supervisors. Management unit consolidations have significantly changed how managers experience their units. Now units are often so large that managers only "experience" their units by flying over them. Specialization has also been another major change. "That's not my job" affects the agency's response to wildfire.

Yes, I'm "Old School." In 1992, when I was Area Ranger on the Sawtooth NRA, I impressed that upon my employees when I showed up with a Pacific Marine Pump and operated it to help control a serious fire near Petit Lake. Ironically, in 2022, a "Wilderness Managed Fire" in the Sawtooth Wilderness blew up and consumed several thousand acres outside the Sawtooth Wilderness, including the area we kept from burning in 1992. 🌲

Carl is a graduate of the University of Idaho and started his USFS career in 1965. He started on the Salmon NF and worked numerous forests over his 40-year career, which "includes some military time and temp jobs on the Challis while I went to college." Carl was Forest Supervisor on the Malheur NF and retired in 2002.

One Eye Fire – Fifty Fire Seasons Ago— Training Interrupted Rookie Class Jumps First Fire After Five Training Jumps

by Leo Cromwell (Idaho City '66)

The McCall Smokejumper Base started the 1974 Rookie Training with 24 new candidates. **Doug Gochnour** (BOI-74) called it the year “Training Interrupted” happened. On June 29, 1974, seventeen rookies jumped the One Eye Fire, two days later two of the remaining rookies jumped on the Challis while three others headed south to jump the Gila, the land where only very experienced jumpers were allowed to jump. Later **Steve Jakala** (MYC-74) returned to McCall to finish training with two fire jumps already on the Gila. And **Luke Konantz** (MYC-74) was the real winner when he returned from Silver City with three fire jumps in four days. That’s correct, Luke made three fire jumps before he was an official smokejumper and had completed his training. What’s also surprising is that all 24 rookies eventually finished training in 1974.

Today, when new jumpers get qualified after 25 training jumps, it must be surprising to think that those Neds in 1974 made their first fire jumps after only five training jumps. That’s correct, only five training jumps. And when 17 rookies jumped the “Dino Fire” in Utah, that is also a record. Below are the recollections of **Mike Martischang** (BOI-74) and others who made this historic jump.

In the summer of 1974 five Boise rookies (**Jim Mavros, Doug Gochnour, Don Stenberg, Gordon Simpson, Mike Martischang**) were sent up to McCall to take their “Ned Training.” As the new Boise Jumper Foreman **Lowell Hanson** (MSO-58) explained it, it wasn’t worth Boise’s time and trouble to gear Boise facilities and instructors up for just five guys. “McCall has 19 rookies this spring, so we’d just fold in with them.” Loft Foreman **Bobby Montoya** (IDC-62) and Hanson advised us that McCall was kind of old-school, still jumping 5As, teaching the “Allen

Roll”, and practicing Luke Landings by hopping off a moving, bouncing pickup truck tailgate. We were told that upon return to Boise, we’d learn how to do the easier and safer PLF, practice them from several angles on the units, and take a couple rides under T-10s. Of course, I didn’t know what they were talking about, but o.k., sounded good. During the 3 weeks of training, the Boise rookies lived in one of those quaint FS barracks up on the hill behind the McCall Loft. We’d completed most of our practice jumps and were about to begin our 3rd and final week of training. Then this happened.

Today, when new jumpers get qualified after 25 training jumps, it must be surprising to think that those Neds in 1974 made their first fire jumps after only five training jumps. That’s correct, only five training jumps.

Rick Blanton (MYC-74) recalls the Ned party on the northwest end of Payette Lake, Friday night before the early Saturday morning fire call. He said he was awakened around 5 am when McCall Jumper Foreman **Del Catlin** (MYC-47) came into his barracks with news of the Utah jump. Mixed feelings for us after a night of partying at North Beach to celebrate the end of another hard week of training.

As Doug Gochnour observed, it was in the small hours of the 29th that **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) roused us with something terse like “get your gear together, you’re going to jump a fire in Utah.” He exited the barracks before any stupid questions could be asked. Later we were loaded onto

two DC-3s heading south to Ogden. We landed in Ogden, doors came off, gear came on, and we were off to make one of the first smokejumper leaps in the state of Utah.

Jim Anderson (MYC-74) later called us the world's first "Dino-Jumpers" (you know, Utah, dinosaur fossils, etc.) Jim had visions of having embroidered patches made with a T. Rex clutching a shovel and a Pulaski descending under a candy-striped canopy toward a flaming snag. Cool concept. Never happened after we heard about the Squaw Basin Fire in the High Uintas of Northern Utah that was jumped four days earlier by jumpers from many bases.

Martischang and others said the jump "spot" was a giant multi-acre sage brush "mesa top" that nobody could miss. The fire and all the smoke and flames were in canyons, ravines, and gullies. Winds were negligible as it was still before noon. Everyone landed safely; however, one image that remains vividly in Mike's memory is watching fellow Boise jumper **Jim Mavros** landing nearby and immediately upon finishing his landing, rising to his hands and knees, throwing open his face mask and puking his guts out. "You O.K. Mav?" Cough, spit, "Yeah."

Training Foreman **Thad Duel** (MYC-56) yelled to everyone to get all the gear into piles and tool up. I distinctly remember one of the new guys asked if we should scratch line around the gear piles, as we'd been instructed only days earlier, you know, "just in case." Thad paused, said "Nah... tool up, let's go."

Rick Blanton (MYC-74) remembers Thad was already on the ground by the time he jumped and was scurrying around to observe each Ned's Landing. It felt much like a practice jump in that Thad offered a critique, albeit a much shorter version. Another one of Rick's most memorable fire memories was of **Don Ranstrom's** (MSO-66) storytelling ability and his infectious laugh.

Gouchnour says the jumpers divided into two squads to attack the fire. The canyons, ravines and gullies weren't terribly deep, but they had steep sides. The bunch he was with came upon a steep, narrow chute 15-20 feet wide that ran perpendicular to the main canyon below with all sorts and sizes of burning crap randomly whizzing down at high velocity. "Us new guys held up on the edge

of the chute debating about climbing above and crossing over, you know, being cautious, when **Jerry "Lightning" Dixon** (MYC-71), who was operating drag shovel, joined us and asked what the holdup was? We pointed at the chute and all the crap shooting down it. Jerry sized it up, watched a few boulders, flaming logs, and root wads shoot past and then, with a grand wave of an arm shouted, "Follow me," and moseyed across. The rest of us scampered across, all of us making it unscathed and continued digging chain. Every time I see the movie "Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story" and the scene where Patches Houlihan is training average Joe's players the finer points of the "5-Ds" (dodge, duck, dip, dive, dodge) by having them run across multiple lanes of speeding traffic, I'm reminded of that chute of burning stuff in Utah. Hummm... It appeared true. Smokejumpers are kinda crazy.

"Big D", **Dennis Golik** (MYC-74), said our jump spot was on top of a plateau and we left our gear in piles before baling off down into canyons to dig line. A day or two later, it was **Jim Diedrich** (RDD-70), who went up top to fetch things from his jump gear. Jim radioed Thad that our gear got burnt. Thad earlier had made a point of telling Utah Dispatch that we smokejumpers were "self-contained and self-supplied" for several days after jumping a fire. Dennis said his biggest surprise on the fire was us Neds seeing "Stern" Thad totally relax, laugh, and joke with the older McCall guys.

No one can recollect how long they were on the fire... not long, 3 or 4 days. There wasn't a "fire camp." The McCall/Boise Dino-Jumpers were expeditiously demobed (albeit, a lighter load) and back at McCall in time to complete their 3rd week of training. Upon return to Boise, as promised, the five rooks learned how to do PLFs and handle T-10s. When Montoya was told about the burned-up gear, he laconically responded with something like "that's one way to retire 5As." 🧠

Footnote: Mike Martischang began his Forest Service career in 1971 on the Pike Hotshot Crew. He jumped out of Boise in 1974 before starting his lengthy career in Forest Management. His time in service with the USFS and NPS span over 47 years. Mike finished his career in 2018 as the Regional GIS Coordinator of Region 9.

Speak Softly and Plant Big Trees: American Foreign Policy for the 21st Century

by Conor Hogan (North Cascades '21)

I'm standing by the kicker on the cat guard, and the only jewelry we have left are a few Hansons and a strangler, plus some econo."

For many readers, the previous sentence will be incomprehensible. But for the nearly 140 American smokejumpers who boosted the North Peace base in British Columbia last summer, the jargon translates like this: "I'm standing by the series pump on the dozer line, and the only accessories we have left are a few inch-and-a-half nozzles and a hose clamp, plus some toy hose." That jargon became part of our working vernacular for two weeks, along with phrases like "chin-wag" (conversation), "we're laughing" (it's all good), and, of course, the supremely versatile "eh" (right, you know, come again, etc.).

A resource order to Canada is the most legendary dispatch an American jumper can receive, coming down three times in the last 20 years. The bureaucratic jujitsu required to deliver smokejumpers across the 49th parallel is exhausting, so for the powers that be to even consider such an undertaking, circumstances must be extraordinary. For those of us who make a living trying to limit the damage caused by modern wildfires, however, extraordinary circumstances are fast becoming routine.

In early June, as smoke from Ontario dimmed east coast skies, New York City reported an Air Quality Index of 342, making Central Park's air the unhealthiest in the world. On July 31st, Copernicus, the European Union's atmospheric monitoring service, reported that "accumulated carbon emissions from wildfires across Canada total 290 megatonnes," putting the fires on track to double the emissions produced by the entire Canadian economy. By August 10th, more than 30 million acres had burned in Canada with another two months of fire season left. While skimming

figures like these has become a mundane ritual of modern existence, it's worth giving these numbers another moment of consideration. Especially because 2023 (which also included the Lahaina Fire, the deadliest American wildfire in a century) is likely to be positively mild, compared to the future fire seasons of 2033 and 2043.

Discussing the future of our forests has led many journalists to adopt a tone of hopelessness. The August 4th, 2023, episode of *The Daily*, a *New York Times* podcast, is titled "Fighting Canada's Unending Wildfires," and features an interview with climate columnist David Wallace-Wells. The host asks Wallace-Wells about potential solutions regarding fire management. Wallace-Wells replies: "Unfortunately, I don't think there are great options out there...It used to be tempting...to think that if the world really got together, we could get a handle on this problem...But I think the lesson of the new age of wildfire is that we have much less control over a lot of these forces than we like to tell ourselves."

Wallace-Wells' grim resignation typifies a novel strain of self-doubt infecting American discourse. Since its founding, the United States has cultivated a mythology that the people of this country can achieve the seemingly impossible. Whether it was a handful of colonies wrestling independence from the world's largest empire or building a railroad across thousands of miles of wilderness or sending men to the moon, each triumph strengthened the sense of uniqueness first observed by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1831. Although deeply flawed in myriad ways, the ideology of American exceptionalism has also been a powerful force for good in the world, particularly when compared to other regimes that have sought global supremacy.

However, if one idea is gaining traction across the political spectrum, it is that the United

States no longer has business masquerading as the world's leader. Increasingly, we understand ourselves as either exploited and embattled or imperialist and corrupt. Either way, the growing wisdom on both sides of the political aisle is that we should disengage from the global community and confront the problems at home. This pervading neo-isolationism has manifested in a series of self-inflicted disasters: the ongoing catastrophe of our immigration policy, the haphazard attempt to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords, the mismanaged retreat from Afghanistan. Somehow, even as the threats facing the human race grow exponentially, citizens of the most powerful, dynamic, diverse country ever known have begun to think, *No, nothing is required of us*; or, worse, *No, nothing can be done*.

The energy at the North Peace Smokejumper Base between June 18th and August 1st was chaotic. The base, built to house 50 jumpers, sometimes had twice as many bodies wandering around, everyone tensed for the gong's earsplitting clang. I showed up with the second wave of Americans, and while exchanging high fives with the boosters who'd arrived two weeks prior, I noticed the bruise-colored circles ringing their eyes, the bulge of three Zyns stacked beneath their lips, the number of stories that ended with, "... and then, we lost it." There was jump gear strewn over every inch of the ready room, people hustling to refurb pump kits as components arrived from the field, and 13 jumper-staffed fires listed on the Ops board. The prevailing sense was of an organization stretched beyond its operational capacity, functioning only because everyone involved was putting forth maximum effort.

This feeling of being outgunned deepened on the fireline. Jump ships regularly flew past multiple fires chugging across the tundra before reaching the incident to which they'd been dispatched. It became routine to look around under one's parachute and see three separate columns punching up into the troposphere. My first fire was 40,000 acres, staffed by a DC-3 load, a unit crew (the Canadian equivalent of an IHC), and a four-person IA module. The temptation to surrender was omnipresent: what could we do to corral so much combustion? Wasn't this, objectively, pointless?

Yet no one succumbed to the bleak cynicism poisoning modern discourse. Instead, on fire after fire, smokejumpers, Canadian and American alike, did what we always do: we invented strange rituals to bond with each other, we adapted to the circumstances and agreed on objectives, and then we battled hard to achieve said objectives, even in the face of long odds. In many ways, the Canada boost offered a microcosmic framework for what robust American diplomacy might look like going forward.

Climate emergencies will increasingly come to define 21st-century international politics. Floods, hurricanes, and droughts will spawn refugee crises, destroy infrastructure, and challenge borders across the world. Wildfires in particular will metastasize in intensity and costliness, and many regions that haven't had to worry about fire will be caught unprepared. John Vaillant writes in his new book *Fire Weather*, "This is not planet Earth as we found it. This is a new place—a fire planet we have made with an atmosphere more conducive to combustion than at any time in the past 3 million years... It hardly needs to be said that more CO₂ leads to more heat retention, which leads to more fires, which leads to more [CO₂]... We are, right now, witnessing the early stages of a self-perpetuating and self-amplifying feedback loop." It is time to recognize the grave circumstances we now face and take aggressive action. It is time to rethink which institutions we prioritize, where we allocate resources, and how we exercise influence.

America's reliance on our military as the centerpiece of our foreign policy has been one of this nation's greatest mistakes, a strategic error that leaders have doubled down on over the past two decades. In *War on Peace: The End of Diplomacy and the Decline of American Influence*, Ronan Farrow chronicles the systematic gutting of the State Department since 9/11 as American generals replaced diplomats around the globe. Farrow argues: "The point is not that the old institutions of traditional diplomacy can solve today's crises. The point is that we are witnessing the destruction of those institutions with little thought to engineering modern replacements." Farrow outlines how the United States' militarized adventurism has led to an anti-American radicalization in the Middle East, an increasing distrust among our allies in

Europe, and a turn toward China throughout the world. While we order drone strikes and bank-roll proxy wars, the Chinese Communist Party has meticulously cultivated influence by funding infrastructure projects across Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America.

In a world convulsing with climate catastrophes, the United States' land management agencies should assume a preeminent role in our nation's strategy of soft power. American firefighters should be available to assist on wildfires in Australia and Central America and Canada much more frequently. American foresters should be consulting with their counterparts in Brazil and Indonesia and Angola about how to optimize for carbon sequestration and stand health. The Forest Service's International Program and Disaster Assistance Support Program should be vastly expanded so that when calamities occur in Nepal or Colombia or Algeria, there are American civilians present who can help set up a command structure, help manage logistics, and help mitigate the suffering. Not only because it is the right thing to do, but because in the realpolitik of great-power competition, maintaining a non-militarized, assistance-based presence around the world is vital to our national interests and security.

Especially when that assistance arrives with an attitude of humility and flexibility. There are countless stories of ensuing failures when American aid workers built projects without consulting the local people first: cobblestone roads in Afghanistan no one uses because they hurt camels' feet, food donations bankrupting small-scale farmers in India, wildlife reserves displacing African villagers from their native lands. The history of conservation is especially riddled with good intentions gone awry, as hubristic environmentalists with scant contextual knowledge have repeatedly tried to impose simplistic "solutions" on complex problems in faraway lands.

The Canada boost stands in stark relief to these blunders: upon arrival, American smokejumpers received a thorough in-briefing on the nuances of Canadian firefighting. Around the base, Canadians conducted tutorials on how they pack cargo chutes, use radios, and organize pump kits, and Americans followed along. On nearly every fire, a Canadian acted as Jumper In Charge, organizing

logistics and determining tactics, while Americans cut line and wrangled hose.

We were there to support our Canadian counterparts, not teach them how we fight fire. We were there because every mission was simultaneously difficult and outrageously fun. We were there because they asked us to come. There are few experiences as edifying as working alongside people from a different cultural context, in a foreign environment, to accomplish something self-evidently important. Imagine how much more confident, resilient, and creative our society would be if every American had that kind of opportunity.

As another election cycle ramps up, and makeup-caked candidates blast doom-mongering toxicity over our airwaves, we should remember—fortitude doesn't trickle from our leaders down. It wells from the people up. Even though many of our current politicians are clearly ill-prepared for the challenges of this era, most American citizens are much tougher than recent years would suggest. But our obsession with victimhood and blame-assignment has gone on long enough. We need to wake from this fever-dream of petty tribalism and start thinking seriously about how to confront the genuine, but solvable, problems facing our country and the world.

Prioritizing America's starving land management agencies is a patently obvious first step. This past July was the hottest month in recorded history. We are on the cusp of allowing our world's forests to transition from net carbon sinks to net carbon emitters, largely due to wildfire. The suffering guaranteed by allowing such a transformation to take place is akin to moderate-scale nuclear warfare, yet the Department of Defense's budget is 140 times bigger than that of the Forest Service.

Isn't it finally time to reevaluate which of our institutions are likeliest to contribute to a desirable future, and reconsider how we define national strength? Wouldn't America be better off if our best and brightest were incentivized to become silviculturists, rangers, and fire management officers? Might the Forest Service and BLM have an easier time attracting the young and talented if well-remunerated, entry-level opportunities to work abroad abounded?

That month and a half in Fort St. John was a good start. Who wants to go boost Mongolia? 🐼

Introducing You to the 2023 NSA Scholarship Awardees

THE NSA SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE (**Jim Cherry, Larry Lufkin, Charlotte Larson, Timo Rova**) is pleased to introduce the seven awardees of the 2023 NSA Scholarships. This program is fulfilling part of the NSA's mission "... *by responding to special needs of smokejumpers and their families.*" These scholarships are made possible through the generous donations of our members to whom we shout out our profound thanks. Hear the awardees appreciation and aspirations in their own words...

Kaylin Sheley (Granddaughter of **Chuck Sheley** CJ-59) "I want to thank you for your generosity that will help me progress in my educational and career goals. I have just completed my first year of graduate school at Eastern Washington University. I have already obtained my BA in Communication Sciences and Disorders with a minor in Spanish. Through earning my master's degree and passing the Praxis I will be certified to work as a Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP). Currently, I am focusing on the medical track where I can work as an SLP in acute care or a skilled nursing facility. I am excited to continue to learn best treatment interventions and develop my clinical skills throughout the final year of my graduate education."

Nathan Allen (RDD-15) "Thank you very much for your generosity and support in helping me to further my education in fire ecology and fire science. After 20 plus years in fire management, I have decided to extend my education in courses that are directly related to fire ecology. I am very grateful for this opportunity to continue my academic education."

Leif Rova (GAC-19) "I appreciate your choice to award me an academic scholarship this year. It will help immensely with tuition and supplies, especially in the current economy and with my shortened fire seasons while attending nursing school. I will be working hard and assure you that you have made the right decision. Getting this degree will open the door to more options, which is what I need based on my parenting situation."

Benjamin Ertz (Grandson of **Leo Cromwell**

IDC-66) "This NSA scholarship has taken a lot of financial stress off my shoulders and has allowed me to put all my focus into my studies so far this semester. I'm extremely grateful to the NSA and my late grandfather, Leo Cromwell, for paving the way to allow me this opportunity. I know grandpa would be proud to see me work hard at the same university he went to, and I am so proud of his contribution to our world as a smokejumper. Thank you to the NSA for helping in my academic career, and I intend to use this contribution to help me give back to our country, just as smokejumpers have for decades."

Zoey Fujii (Granddaughter of **Lee Gossett** RDD-57) "I would like to formally thank you for selecting me as one of this year's NSA scholarship winners. I am very passionate about what I study at The University of Oregon and cannot wait to see what the next few years of school entail. Receiving financial support and recognition from an organization that my grandfather has been a part of for many years has been a very rewarding moment that I take seriously and greatly appreciate. Opportunities such as this NSA scholarship not only support me through funding my college education but have also supported my older brother (Andrew Fujii) who received it while he was in college. Although we both have completely different career paths (firefighting/business), (product design/art), we are both very passionate in what we do. I greatly appreciate being rewarded with this scholarship to help me finance my education."

Emma Cooper (Granddaughter of **Fred Cooper** NCSB-62) "It is a great honor to be a recipient of the NSA Scholarship. I am grateful for your support while I pursue my undergraduate degree at the University of California, Santa Barbara. These funds will help me cover some of my tuition and fees. Thank you again for your generous and thoughtful gift."

Shey Perlot (Granddaughter of **Fred Ebel** MSO-57) "I'm honored to be one of the recipients of the NSA Scholarship Award. Thanks to your generosity in funding, I can continue my

education at Whitworth University. I am currently in my sophomore year of my Bioinformatics degree. My love for learning has allowed me to earn a GPA of 3.852. In addition, I have enjoyed being part of the Martial Arts Club, the Women's Rock Climbing Club, and the Women's Soccer Club. After my graduation in June 2026, I plan to pursue a career as a genetic researcher with a focus in neurological disorders along with continuing my education in Graduate school."

Introducing You to the 2023-2024 NSA Education/ Training Grant Awardees

THE NSA SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE has also been able to award Education/Training Grants to two smokejumpers who are working toward completion of their pilot training and certifications with a goal of working as pilots for the USFS and BLM.

Chelsea Cough (MSO-16) "The NSA Scholarship has allowed me to pursue my flight training while continuing my career with the Forest Service. I left the field in 2020 to start a family, while my husband continued to jump. I missed so many aspects of smokejumping and fire, but mostly the camaraderie and adventure. That same year I began my flight training adventure and completed my Private Pilot License. I have continued to aim for a license or endorsement per year. I have worked for the USFS since 2011, so I hope to continue my career as a USFS pilot in some capacity. The scholarships I have received throughout the last few years have been the building blocks for my training and have helped to keep me on track. Another valuable aspect of the scholarship program has been connecting with NSA board members. It is encouraging to be supported in the second act of my career."

Audrey Banfill (RAC-06) "I am in the early stages of flight training aimed ultimately at becoming a lead plane pilot. The grants I was awarded by the NSA have been tremendously helpful in accelerating the pace of my training with the funds helping to cover the cost of instrument and commercial ratings. Thank you so much for your support and all that you do." 🦋

EWU Digital Commons



[Home](#) [About](#) [FAQ](#) [My Account](#) [Contact](#)

[Home](#) > [College Department or Program](#) > [Archives](#) > [SMOKEJUMPERS](#)

SMOKEJUMPER DIGITAL ARCHIVES

<https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumpers>

Visit this NSA and EWU website to view these collections:

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



2023 NSA Scholarship & Educational/Training Grant Awardees



Photos Courtesy Recipients



Leif Rova



Audrey Banfill



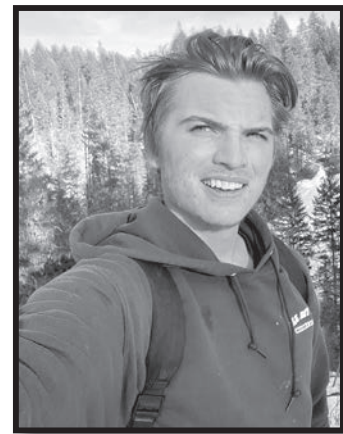
Chelsea Cough



Kaylin Sheley



Zoey Fujii



Ben Ertz



Emma Cooper



Nate Allen



Shay Periot

Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

Kalmiopsis Rescue Jump

by **Bill Bickers** (North Cascades '72)

On July 11, 1983, while on a pot-growing surveillance mission, a Piper Tomahawk crashed in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area of southwestern Oregon. On board were an Oregon State Trooper and a Curry County Deputy.

The crash site was near the Illinois River and its infamous Green Wall rapids, the difficult section of the most challenging river to float in Oregon. There is no ground access there. The Kalmiopsis is also infamous in the smokejumper world for its lack of jump spots. It should be noted with some respect that this was Cave Junction country back in the day.

A Tomahawk is a small airplane generally meant for training purposes rather than flying in terrain. The plane had hit big firs in a draw. This was obvious to see with broken tops well over 100 feet up with maps and other debris scattered below.

Initially, a Coast Guard helicopter was dispatched to the crash site. At that time, the aircraft's winch was only 100 ft, which wasn't nearly enough to reach the crash. The Redmond Smokejumpers were then called on to help. Because of my EMT certification, I was the squadleader in charge.

When our Beech 99 arrived over the crash site with eight jumpers on board, the wrecked airplane's white wings were visible. We could not detect movement around the site. There were no indications of a fire. Spotter **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) dropped all eight single stick and instructed us to go for the tall brush. That turned out to be 30–50-foot Madrone and similar trees. I was first out the door and hung up in the brush. I descended in stages to the ground, using the forbidden limb grabbing technique, then deliberately dropping to the next set of limbs. I let go and fell about five feet to the ground. They said that from the plane it looked like my chute was going down a drain in a sink. I was OK and headed off to the crash site.

Karl Petty (RAC-71) jumped second and got there quickly. Karl was one of the more audacious members of the Redmond crew and went for a small opening between massive firs.

Once all the jumpers were safely on the ground,

Mark dropped the cargo. Picture a Beechcraft 99 sliding down a steep drainage with Mark hanging on throwing cargo. We bitch about "Corblaze, the Jump Hawg" but need to give him credit for all the other things he did. I was happy to be on the ground and not in the Beech making those cargo runs.

Curt Juhl (RAC-75) spotted where a prop had cut through a couple limbs. These cuts left a different cut than a Fanno or chain saw. It was a clean straight cut with a little fuzz. Curt had flown a Piper Tomahawk before in pilot training. Think of that coincidence. One of the smokejumpers just happened to have time in the aircraft type that crashed. He explained that the airplane did not have a lot of power for flying in this type of terrain. Curt, spotting the prop cut limbs, indicated that the engine had been running at a high rate of speed. I didn't think of it, but now realize that Curt looked for those cut limbs when he first got to the crash. Combine those limb cuts with the smell of fuel, and it said a lot about what had not failed on the aircraft. One couldn't say for sure, but there didn't appear to be any bullet holes in the plane.

On the starboard Tomahawk wing, there appeared to be a scrawled message. State Police Officer "Big Don" Smith had written a six-letter message with his blood, finger painting on the white plane wing next to him. It had dried and he rewrote over the top with more "ink." The message was J -O- E F -L -Y. Both were pilots. The man in the pilot seat was Joe Omlin III, who had a broken neck and appeared to have died instantly. Officer Smith had survived for a short while, having a compound fracture to his right femur. He had tried to make a tourniquet from his seat belt. In this place there was no hope. The rescue mission had become a recovery mission.

The Coast Guard helicopter dropped a separate rescue crew off by the river. In scrambling up the drainage, one rescuer fell and broke a leg and injured his other knee. He would need to be stretchered out. Then it was a rescue mission again. One rescuer made it up to the crash and saw me, sitting



L-R: Karl Petty, Tony Navarro, Rod Orr, Mike Quinones, Matt McCoy, Bill Bickers, Curt Juhl, Dirk Blackdeer, and then Oregon State Police Deputy Superintendent Emil Brandaw. (Courtesy B. Bickers)

next to the bodies of his friends, writing in my idea notebook. He didn't have any rescue gear, just his gun belt.

Karl Petty cautioned me that we had a huge workload ahead of us packing out the two bodies and didn't have the manpower to spare packing out the injured rescuer. I took that advice. I instructed **Rod Orr** (RAC-83) to give them two ropes and a "bunch of food." I wanted to hand the body removal and investigation off to the rescue group. The injury ended that possibility. I found out later that pilot Joe Omlin III was the rescue group's leader.

Tony Navarro (RAC-83), in his rookie season, remembers the jump well. "Having Mark as a spotter was always an experience. Since that jump was my first, I remember it vividly. I got a little concerned when he started to look for bullet holes in the aircraft. On final, I remember Mark pointing out the creek and the waterfalls where the crash site was, and noting the tops of the trees that were taken out by the crashed plane. When he told us that there were "thirty-foot brush and 200-ft tall trees," I knew that he was not exaggerating as I had logged out of Gasquet, California, south of there. We four rookies were told to land in that brush where Bickers had landed, but of course, his chute disappeared quickly

into that 30-ft brush.

"Mark then told me not to land close to the crash site. I ended up capping a small tree and rappelling down to where I saw the red dye start to come out through my fingers on the letdown tape, then stopped quickly. It looked like I had a few more feet to go, so I slowly lowered myself to the ground. Since I had to climb to retrieve my chute, I was volunteered to retrieve cargo with **Dirk Blackdeer** (RAC-83).

"That incident brings back some ugly memories. Keeping the bodies out of the water as much as possible, while balancing the stretchers on the rocks during breaks in the creek, meant we had to hold on to them. Being so tired we didn't realize that we would sometimes fall asleep on them in the water."

The Police Officers had a Canon AE-1, a quality 35mm camera with wide-angle and telephoto lenses plus an additional roll of film in the plane. Since **Mike Quinones** (NCSB-83) owned one of those cameras, I told him to go around and take two photos of everything and write down what he was trying to capture. I never saw the photos but heard that they were good. They formed the basis for the incident report. Those photos were probably why I was especially lauded for this recovery operation.

USFS managers relayed that we needed to leave our jump gear and get the bodies out quickly, however, we needed the gear to sleep in. I was asked to open a body bag to get one of the Officer's wallets because it had a lot of money. Leaving the packs and opening the body bags were the two things I didn't do.

Initially, one body was placed in a paper sleeping bag and the other in my bivouac bag. A USFS helicopter then free-fell a cargo box with quality body bags. We placed the bodies in the body bags and added wintergreen scent to the crushed California Laurel leaves in the bags. Tony Navarro and I both have a dislike of wintergreen odor to this day.

I tightened my boots a few times for better ankle support, as they had stretched to the point where they never fit again. Being in water constantly can be hard on leather. My \$250 cash award went for a new pair of Whites.

Matt McCoy (RAC-82) did a backflip header in the creek. He was on the front of the state officer's stretcher. We guessed our Trooper weighed 230+. The difficulty of four men packing one heavy body in a creek cannot be overstated. We would take a break and go for a next spot 20 feet ahead. We had to be in the creek because the hillsides were even harder to negotiate. This was one of the biggest jumps and the toughest assignment of my career. I am very proud of my co-workers for having completed this task. Think of this being your first operational jump. They were no longer rooks.

At one point, I got a body stuck on the top of a waterfall, few ferns but plenty of moss. After freeing the body, and with daylight ending, I slept on a rock pile near the body at the bottom of the waterfall pool. I moved a couple rocks and laid down on my jumpsuit and wrapped up in my chute.

I got a letter from the Oregon Civil Aeronautics Board that read in part: "The team leader, Mr. Bill Bickers, is to be especially lauded for leading this investigation." Now, knowing the full story, one can see how I benefitted from the best co-workers possible. There are two reasons you jumped: the places you went and the people you worked with. This letter struck me as the classic where the supervisor gets credit for being lucky enough to have a great crew. We also each got letters from Oregon Governor Vic Atiyeh and the Oregon State Police.

From Governor Atiyeh: "The recent plane crash

in Curry County and the willingness of yourself and members of your team to parachute into a hazardous area has been brought to my attention. I personally wish to commend you for your heroic performance, not only in your actions, but also in your thoughtfulness in sharing your food and equipment with others at the crash scene."

Eventually we reached an older Sikorsky that was mid-tire deep in the river. We handed the "stretchers" off to a Coast Guardsman. As the helicopter lifted off, the pilot gave us the same respectful wave salute that was given by the noble knight to Indiana Jones at the great seal. I returned it gratefully and was glad to be done.

Epilogue

The plane debris is still there. I believe we retrieved everything of value. Joe Omlin III was 36, had served in the Air Force and was a Nam vet. Don Smith had also served in the Air Force and was 37. He had been an Oregon State Police Officer for 11 years.

The conclusion we reached was that in trying to fly up and out of the canyon, they didn't have the needed power. In turning to avoid a stall, they hit the big firs. Our thoughts, along with the photos, became part of the official report. The Oregon Civil Aeronautics Board was never able to venture into the Kalmiopsis. The Coast Guard now has longer cable in their new MH-65 Dolphin helicopters on the Oregon coast.

Fifteen years later on the 1998 Silver Fire, I saw burnt black plastic piping for a water line and some rolled up chicken wire fencing hidden in the brush about 100 feet off the trail. Just another pot growing operation stash. It was on the other side of the Illinois River, three air miles from the crash. Looking at Google Earth today, it appears that most of the old growth near the crash site survived the Biscuit Fire in 2002.

Later, a state trooper stopped me for speeding in Central Point, Oregon. He hadn't started writing in his ticket book when he noticed my 50th anniversary Stater belt buckle that we had been given in the pictured awards ceremony. The officer asked me where I got it. He stopped me as I started to explain about the plane crash. He nodded in appreciation and told me, "I am aware. Please slow down."

Karl Petty jumped out of Redmond 1971-86

and passed away from pancreatic cancer in 2006. Tony Navarro jumped 31 seasons and still gets “out in the weeds” as a safety officer. Tony later jumped another small plane crash with three fatalities on the Malheur NF. Mark Corbet also jumped 31 seasons and passed away from a brain tumor in 2021. Mike Quinones jumped 1983-92 and works as the Wildland Fire and Safety Coordinator in Summit Park, Utah. Rod Orr (RAC-83) jumped six seasons and became a 747 pilot. Rod passed away from a brain tumor in 2009. Matt McCoy jumped three years and was the #2 Administrator at Central Oregon Community College.

Bill Bickers (author of this article) jumped 20 seasons and retired as a Fuel’s tech from the Deschutes N.F. in 2008.

Curt Juhl jumped 10 seasons and retired from the timber staff on the Deschutes. Curt and I didn’t talk about this for years even though we often worked together.

Dirk Blackdeer jumped two seasons before going into the Army. He is retired, living near Lawrence, Kansas. Dirk was a writer in the service and made

many corrections in this article.

After the Kim Family tragedy in November of 2006 where James Kim died off the Bear Creek Road, there has been a change in the rescue coordination efforts throughout Southern Oregon. Eight local counties – Josephine, Jackson, Douglas, Curry, Coos and Klamath, plus Siskiyou and Del Norte in California, now work together and share resources.

The Cave Junction base has been closed since 1981. Had it still been there they would have handled this task.

Dirk Blackdeer recalls, “We rookies had just completed our final training jump when we were told to rush back to the loft and get ready. I think Navarro, Quinones, Orr, and I were selected to go because we were the top finishers of the overland pack-out test and there was the possibility of having to carry the injured men out of the area.

“I remember the terrain was so steep that when I sat in the door of the Beech 99, the treetops were just below the aircraft and then the terrain fell away as we approached the drop zone down in the canyon.” 🦋

Leo Cromwell—One of the Best

by Mark Brondum (McCall ’86)

Leo Cromwell was one of the best people I have ever known in so many ways. He was one of the best with his incredible work ethic and focus. I have no doubt that he was an outstanding teacher and coach, but I can certainly attest that he was one of the best Idaho Smokejumpers and spotters over the long haul. He loved both careers. To the end he made unselfish contributions to continue the smokejumper brotherhood and archival preservation. His wonderful wife Laura witnessed the countless hours Leo

put into programming and updating the Tanker World daily and annual accountability reports. Leo was a fixture and a legend in wildland firefighting.

Leo was one of the best father figures I have ever seen. We’re all human and I’m sure he had his share of mistakes, but overall, I saw him as a great father. Even though Leo was busy with so many things, I know deep down he always kept his extensive family first. Over the years, I also witnessed how it was just natural for Leo to care for and

teach Neds, rookie smokejumpers, about being part of the firefighter brotherhood and doing the job.

Over my firefighting career I was on a handful of fires with Leo, even lucky to be on a two-manner with him. First, I’ll say, what a mop-up machine. Ultimately, I’ll say, Leo was one of the best firefighters I have ever been around. That country boy really knew his stuff about fires.

Leo was one of the truest of friends, without fail, always there to help if he could. He helped me out more than I

can count. Leo was one of the most caring and sympathetic people. He had an open heart for the underdogs and forgotten and would offer his support. He absolutely loved it when someone who had been looked over in the past would come back years later and be as good if not better than the ones that had passed ill-judgement or repressed someone. Leo admired perseverance.

On a side note, I can tell you that Leo was a very consci-

entious construction apprentice, especially with electrical work. I tried to help him when he built his house out by Price Valley. His desire to learn was energetic and sincere. As with any person trying to build their own house, he often said, "What the heck did I get myself into." He caught on well and became quite handy. I, in turn, learned a lot from Leo. Leo was so many positive things to so many different people. He was quite an inspiration to us all.

I will not be able to say enough about how much Leo's friendship meant to me. I will sorely miss visiting Leo and Laura, and having breakfast with Leo at the IHOP when I would pass through Boise. It was a joy to know him and have made so many memories. I really looked up to Leo over the decades and I learned a lot from him, especially about trying to be a good person and live a good life. Leo did it in spades. One of the best! 🙏

NSA SUPPORTS WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER PAYCHECK PROTECTION ACT

NSA President Bob McKean (MSO-67) recently wrote to the leaders in Congress.

Dear Mr. Speaker, and the Majority and Minority Leaders of Congress:

The National Smokejumper Association (NSA) strongly supports SB 2272 the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act of 2023 and its counterpart in the House, HR 5169. We are deeply concerned that wildland firefighter pay may be reduced in the near future. That would result in decimation in the ranks of wildland firefighters and leave our country at even greater risk of devastation from wildfire.

Wildland firefighting is difficult, dangerous work. That is particularly the case since fire seasons are now longer and conditions considerably drier as climate changes. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain high-quality federal wildland firefighters; many leave the ranks for more lucrative positions in local fire municipalities. Pay for Federal wildland firefighters must be commensurate with their difficult, dangerous work. Improved pay is required for the Federal Government to attract and retain the highly skilled,

professional workforce necessary in today's wildfire environment. Moreover, paying Federal wild land firefighters what they deserve is simply the right thing to do.

As you are likely aware, smokejumpers are federal, first responders. Both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have smokejumper programs. The primary mission of smokejumpers is to parachute to fires and put them out before they become large. Quite often smokejumper fires are in remote, rugged areas. There are nine smokejumper bases serving the Rocky Mountains, the Great Basin, the Pacific Coast states, Alaska, and beyond.

The NSA is a private, non-profit (501 [C](3)) organization dedicated to preserving the history and lore of smokejumping, maintaining, and restoring our nation's forest and rangeland resources, and responding to special needs of smokejumpers and their families. The NSA is comprised of 1500 members, most of whom are retired smokejumpers; most moved on to a wide variety of other professions after smokejumping. Beyond our 1500 members we are connected to the wildland firefighting community through our various programs and especially our widely read, quarterly magazine, *Smokejumper*. 🙏



ODDS AND ENDS



Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

Congratulations and thanks to **Charlie Wetzel** (WYS-92), **Steve Henry** (MSO-65), **Terry Reece** (FBX-64) and **K.G. Sheley** (Assoc.) who just became our latest Life Members.

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "I always enjoy reading the columns by **Jeff Davis** (MSO-57), but the one in the July issue of *Smokejumper*—Well, Jeff hit it out of the park. I was reading his article about **Randy Hurst** (MSO-54) at the local coffee shop the other morning and roared in laughter. Brought the article home and read it to my wife, Marilyn, and we all laughed again. I mean 'Everyone sliding around like pigs in shit!' should be in the halls of the Mark Twain Western Library of Literature. But Jeff ain't finished yet. He follows up with the great archeological dig and 'Sandbag' at the Aerial Fire Depot. A classic smokejumper story to be treasured by all who jump the Big Sky to the Forests and Fire Below."

Feedback from the field from NSA Member: "Our son transferred (from USFS) to the BLM as an Engine Captain. Initial Attack and **night shift** are what they do. Mission focus is to keep fires small to prevent the spread of invasive species and protect range forage for wildlife and livestock."

Thanks to **Bill** and Helen **Meadows** (ANC-66) for their efforts in raising funds for the Good Samaritan Fund at their July Cow Pasture Campout II. Thanks to the following for their donations: Bob Smee, Fred Cooper, Chuck Fricke, Kathy Elzig, Bill Thomas, Rich Krenkel, Tom Carlsen, Art Morrison, Dick Hughes, Bill Frazee, Bill Bickers, Bill Moody, Mike Oehlerich, Dan Tomich, Ivy Lanthier, Keith Wolferman, Rob Danno, Rand Herzberg, Stephanie Webb, Java Bradley, and Jackie Sovereign.

Scientists from the University of Michigan have identified a link between wildfire Particulate



Matter 2.5 emissions and the onset of dementia among 27,857 adult Americans, with data drawn from the national Health and Retirement Study. Pollution estimates were based on the locations of the participants who were older than 50 and did not have dementia at the outset. About 15 percent of the study participants developed dementia, but the rate of cognitive decline was significantly greater in the areas of high PM2.5 concentration between 1998 and 2016.

This joins a growing body of evidence forming a significant link between the microscopic toxins and dementia. The research was published in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*. (*Wildfire Today* website)

Davis Perkins (NCSB-72), Master member of the Oil Painters of America (OPA) and nationally known artist, had one of his works featured at the OPA exhibition in Phillipsburg, Montana, in August. *Toward the Coast Range* was inspired by coastal vistas near his home in California's Marin County.

Guy McMahan (Assoc.) from Brookings, OR, on the Smith River Complex Fire: "The FS set up an 80,000-acre box to 'contain' the fire. Multiple fires set in and around the perimeter. They have dedicated a separate team to 'protect' the Brookings side of the fire—15 to 20+ miles to Brookings. There is a greenbelt that runs to Brookings, the Chetco and the Winchuck Rivers. They are burning ridge tops down to the Smith River and Hwy 199. It's a mess on our side. On the Calif side, multiple fires have broken out but CalFire is on it."

Chuck Sheley: Many thanks to an anonymous donor, with first name of Bill, for the Life Membership for my wife, **K.G.**, for her work on *Smokejumper* magazine as my copy editor. She thanks him for his thoughtfulness.

Roy Belli (CJ-51, Marine Corps Col/Smoke-

jumper): “Thanks for Pawlowski’s article in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*. As an ancient jumper, who served under **Cliff Marshall** (CJ-46), I learned more about his history in WW II than I ever knew. He was a good leader.”

Mike Bina (MSO-68): “Chuck, the formatting of the article on Mann Gulch was excellent. I really like the editing of the 13-jumper collage. Nice job, as usual.”

Chuck Sheley: I got a good response to the article by **Ron Fritsch** (MSO-68). “Mr. Larry Looney Was My 7th Grade Teacher.” Ron’s article was different but important. Most of us in our generation went into the world after our smoke-jumping days. Having Ron honoring the importance of Larry Looney in his life was inspiring. If you can read between the lines, it pointed out how important teachers are to students. What is the most important and most forgotten part of our country—our young people! Education can change a culture and a life!

Sept. 20, 2023, Wyoming Truth: “The U.S. Forest Service can’t be sued for the way it managed a 2018 blaze that destroyed dozens of homes near Bondurant, an appellate court has ruled. Two couples whose property burned, the service district of the subdivision ravaged by the fire, and a pair of hunters who suffered serious burns escaping the fast-moving flames filed suit against the Forest Service in 2021, alleging the agency mishandled the Roosevelt Fire.

“The Roosevelt Fire was initially reported on Sept. 15, 2018, by a father and son from Rock Springs who were hunting in the Bridger-Teton. According to their suit, the two thought the Forest Service would extinguish the blaze. The following day backcountry rangers told them to leave the area. The men initially believed they had a few hours to make it back to the trailhead, but while on their way, a ranger warned the fire was closing in.

“The fire has a high probability of remaining manageable with a smaller organization due to few values at risk, fire managers wrote in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System. That prediction proved **overly optimistic**. Over the coming days, the fire ripped across thousands of acres toward the Hoback Ranches subdivision, forcing the evacuation of 230 homes. The Forest Service brought

in hundreds of firefighters to combat the blaze, but **it ultimately consumed 130 structures — including 55 homes — across 61,500 acres.**

“In their 2021 lawsuit and the one filed last week, the hunters, landowners and their attorneys, **Quentin Rhoades** (MSO-89) and Bradley Booke of Jackson, contend the Forest Service didn’t have any discretion. They argue the agency was required to suppress the Roosevelt Fire as a matter of policy. The plaintiffs had sought to gather more information about whether forest managers improperly considered resource benefits, but the appellate court said it would be irrelevant because the **Forest Service’s decisions are immune from suit.**” (Sad that we as citizens are accountable for our actions that harm our fellow citizens. Will our government agencies have a lifetime “get out of jail free card”? Ed.)

Sept. 22, 2023, CBS News Sacramento: The Tahoe NF has **relaunched its rappelling program**. “One thing that’s critical to our wild-fire response is aerial-delivered firefighters,” said aviation officer Roger Caballero. “As far as aerial delivered firefighters, the two primary ways for the USFS are rappellers and smokejumpers. **Unlike smokejumpers, rappellers do not need as much clearance. They are able to drop into heavily wooded areas, directly into where a response is needed.**”

Bill Mader (BOI-75): “Chuck, first, congratulations again on your Conservation Legacy Award per the picture in the October issue of *Smokejumper*. Well deserved. You have made a difference. The October issue had some particularly good articles. I especially enjoyed the “Response to Conor Hogan’s ‘Defending the Tribe.’” The articles that look through a broad lens and speak to philosophy and change always touch me the most.”

Bill Bull (MYC-64): “I enjoyed the article in the October 2023 issue about **Larry Looney** (MYC-54). I was in my second year at McCall when I met Larry. As I recall, he came back to jump that season as it was his last chance before he reached the mandatory age when you could no longer jump. On July 31 we dropped a DC-3 load of jumpers on the Allison Creek Fire on the Nez Perce NF. It was a late afternoon jump, and winds were real squirrely. The jump spot was a portion

of a clear cut that was surrounded by tall, mature Yellow Pine trees. We were jumping 3-man sticks with Wayne Webb and Bruce Yergenson spotting. I went out the door with Larry and Jim Tracy. I made it into the spot and the other two fellows both treed up.”

Nadine Bailey (Jefferson Resource Co.) commenting on the on-going wildfire situation in No. Calif: “The last few weeks have been heartbreaking. I understand the need to reintroduce fire back into the ecosystem and the microclimate that exists on the Klamath NF. You might be able to get away with having fires set up and down the Klamath and Smith Rivers, but what if everything doesn’t go right? What if the wind picks up, what if two set fires merge together with people and animals in the middle? Kind of like the spotted owl that flew up to the fallers looking for a home that no longer exists.

“In the 1980s there was a study done about the fragility of the soil in that area that made timber removal a risk which could cause wide spread slippage along the river basin. What happened to that worry? Locals report that the Salmon River in Siskiyou County has been running brown with sediment at times all summer. This area is one of the least logged watersheds in the basin. Remember this is all part of the Northwest Forest Plan that was supposed to save the forest from the

loggers. Who will save it now? Where is the public that demanded the forest be saved from the evil loggers?

I wish I could take you all on a week-long tour. We could call it the last roundup of the green forest, because if we continue with this trend, all the green trees will be gone.”

Univ. Cal. Irvine News: In a study published in *Environmental Research Letters*, *Earth System Science* scientists at the University of California, Irvine report that one of the chief fuels of wildfires in California’s Sierra Nevada is the decades-old remains of large trees. The knowledge that large-diameter fuels drive fires and fire emissions can be useful for knowing which fuels to target with fuel treatments. But the solution isn’t as straightforward as removing trees from forest floors, because, among other things, they provide habitat for wildlife. That, and “once you get them out, where do you send them? There are only so many mills in California that can handle all the wood.

Gary Watts (MYC-64): “I just joined UFO, which stands for United Flying Octogenarians. The requirements for membership are to fly an airplane as pilot in command after your 80th birthday. I recently accomplished this in my Beechcraft B77 skippered out of Ramona, California.” 🙄

Climbing in Alaska, Argentina, and Africa

by **Russ West** (Grangeville ’78)

I enjoyed **Walt Vennum’s** (FBX-62) article on climbing Denali in the July issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. He can add me to the list of smokejumpers who have summited that beautiful peak. On June 14, 2013, 100 years after the first ascent, my self-guided team, the Blue Mountain Boys, reached the summit. It was a beautiful day unlike when Walt summited through the fog in 1969. We were able to see hundreds of miles out onto the Alaskan tundra. That was the same season some of the descendants

of the original 1913 team, including a great grandson of Walt Harper, climbed the mountain to celebrate that first ascent.

I had four other teammates, who were not smokejumpers, but were solid guys whom I could rely on. At 60 I was the oldest member of the team by 15 years. There was a lot that I learned in my five years of smokejumping that helped me climb Denali.

To prepare for the climb, we practiced self-

arrest and crevasse rescue on our mountains in Northeast Oregon and on big hay bales in our barn. We trained hard, climbing 2000 vertical feet with 35-pound packs every week before the climb. As in smokejumping we learned that if you train hard, learn the technical skills, and trust your equipment, you can do much more than you ever thought you could.

So, it was with climbing Denali. We were able to carry 100 pounds each from the base camp on the Kahiltna Glacier to our

second camp at 11,000 feet. We carried half on our back and the other half on a plastic Walmart snow sled that we pulled behind us. The advantage was that we didn't have to make two trips. The disadvantage was that if we broke through a snow bridge our teammates would catch our fall, but we would probably get hit on the head by our plastic sleds. Fortunately, no one on our team broke through a snow bridge into a crevasse.

Although we had the advantage of fixed ropes on the head wall and across the "autobahn" on summit day, we encountered 50 mile an hour gusts above the head wall and had to hunker down with each gust to avoid being blown off the ridge. We maintained good karma by helping other climbers who had medical issues or who needed water. As in smokejumping, everyone had each other's back. When it came time to set up camp on the glacier, we all pitched in and worked as a team to get the job done. We built elaborate walls out of snow blocks to protect our tents from the incessant wind. We took pride in our camps and were the envy of many other teams at base camp. It was an adventure I shall never forget.

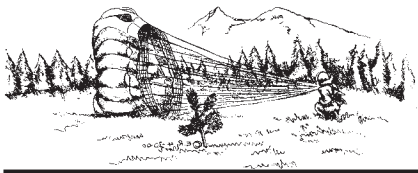
Three years later our team travelled to Mendoza, Argentina, where I was 200 vertical meters short on



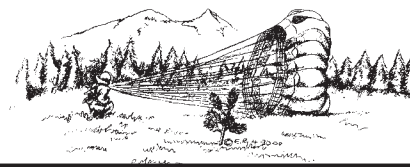
L-R: Louis Fleming (MSO-06), Russ West (GAC-78), Nick West. (Courtesy R. West)

my first attempt to climb Aconcagua (22,838') in 2016. I was very disappointed but was able to harness another smokejumper trait, persistence, to plan a successful second attempt. I went back the next year with my son Nick and another smokejumper, my nephew, **Louis Fleming** (MSO-06). Both had high energy and a positive attitude that makes a challenging adventure fun. We were able to summit Aconcagua in December of 2017. Louis was a great addition to the team. He was our navigator with his GPS skills and never complained about the 60-pound packs that he and my son carried. My son fought fire for three summers on district crews in La Grande and was also a strong team member.

After that, three of us climbed Kilimanjaro (19,341') in Africa in 2019. We were hoping to climb another one of the seven summits, Mount Elbrus, which is in the Russian Caucasus mountains and is the high point of Europe. Sadly, until there is peace in Ukraine that climb will not happen. As Maurice Herzog said after making the first ascent of Annapurna, statistically the most dangerous peak in the Himalaya, "There are other Annapurna's in the lives of men." My hat is off to Walt Vennum for climbing Denali in 1969 under those challenging conditions. 🧗



Notes from the Ranks



Pat McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

MY NOMEX FINALLY smells like smoke, but it's the last week of September. What an abysmally slow fire season! The most fire activity I've seen this year might've occurred today on a large prescribed (Rx) burn near McCall. This may be about the best kind of firefighting. The pace is mellow and confident and iterative with changing conditions. The weird, puffy-chested hierarchy of a wildland fire management team leadership is gone, radio chatter is minimal, and there is an air of helping the forest out in some less triage-oriented manner. Plus, elk are bugling in the distance and the larch and aspen are turning golden. Crispy mornings keep you wiggling your toes in your cold leather logger boots to keep warm during briefing. Your water bottles stay cold all day long in your pack. Last week we had a magnificent display of Northern Lights.

This Rx is meaningful. There

are approximately three times as many trees as there should be on this forest, thanks to a century of antiquated Smokey Bear full suppression fire strategy and decades of no logging or prescribed burning. Some Redmond and McCall bros are apparently scampering around out here but as with all good smokejumpers, there's no sign of them. Firing lines mysteriously become connected deep in the burn units and many empty drip torches show up at the end of the day, so I kinda know where they may be. Hell yeah.

Rx fire is so fun. I believe I'm paying back some sort of karmic debt incurred from mindless weeks sawing on the hotshot crew, cutting down bulletproof larch or ponderosa or absolutely granddaddy firs up on ridges. Impossibly elite trees in no way are threatened by the wildfire, but all felled by my chainsaw "Ruth" in the spirit of cutting a clean line to please some division or branch (trainee!) that doesn't even live or ski or hunt this state. There are no straight lines in nature, but I created many a straight line in the woods in the name of fire suppression. Anyhow, sensitive topic, sorry. I spend hours saving individual ponderosas from their apparent self-destructive desire to catface themselves into oblivion. If there's ever an action figure of me to be made, I hope it's not something regal but

rather me, on hands and knees, trying to get my arm as far up into a smoldering ponderosa catface, reaching to rub mud into the last threatening embers. Like Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam" except we're reaching up toward Big Ernie's glowing embered finger, "The Creation of A-Dam (Good Deal)."

Today, with my shoulder jammed into the nether regions of a pondo older than Idaho, I hear Jump-43 radioing in a lightning fire size up over the forest radio repeater. A flood of emotions and goosebumps hit me. First thought: Go get 'em, boys, beat that helicopter! Second thought: I'm just here on the ground. Ground pounder. Confined to drivable terrain and the amount of daylight left for me to hike anywhere. Oofda.

After jumping for the BLM, I took a job as a Prevention Technician on the Salmon Challis NF. This forest is renowned in fire lore for big fire, steep terrain, and extreme fire behavior. Anyone interested in fire should watch the Cramer Fire Case Study video on YouTube by WFSTR/NWCG; it's a half hour and well worth your time. Smokejumpers are rarely ordered to the Salmon Challis, primarily because it's a required helicopter flight to get them out, so why not just helicopter folks in the first place? Hence the seven to ten rappel plat-

forms that surround the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness for just about the entire summer.

The Salmon Challis historical fire load is about 110,000 acres per year on a 4.3M acre forest of which 2.3M acres is wilderness. We have decades of fuels reduction catch up work to do even despite several hundred-thousand-acre wildfires over the last twenty years. The communities around the forest despise the smoke. As with most of the West, smoke either from Rx or wildfire is the cake we had for close to a century, but now it's our turn to eat it, too. Every day should be a burn day. Here in McCall, my brief interactions with locals are much more fire positive, mostly open to the grand quid pro quo that is several weeks of smoke saturation for the town in the fall that might be several weeks more summer without fire restrictions in the future.

Jump-43 goes into jump ops and in a few moments informs dispatchers that three jumpers are safely on the ground with cargo and that the ship will return to McCall. I have a huge smile on my face.

It's disturbing how easy it is to miss and daydream about smokejumping. I made it until June 10th or so without looking at the smokejumper status report. Then I started a regimen of checking it every day, even refreshing the page several times a day. I think I'd have kept this up even if it'd been a busy fire season. Touching All Bases is a December article, but a brief precursor: RAC had

an all-time year, there was a brief glimmer of a season up at the tail end of the summer in AK after a nonexistent regular season, about three rounds of boosts to Canada and epic deals, a slowerish season in the Basin and an average year for Redding and McCall and NCSB. West and all of Region-2 had an abysmally slow year, and I think Miles City only opened for about two weeks this spring for R1 jumpers.

But I didn't jump a fire this year. What was it about that whole smokejumping thing? Jumpers I strive to emulate say, "It's just another way to get to the fire." I agree, kinda. The second the jump plane noses up and lifts off on a fire call, right when the shadow of the tire disconnects from the runway, I'd think of the first line of John Gillespie Magee Jr's poem "High Flight." *Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth, and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.* Now I drive to fires in a Ford F350 and don't feel as delirious or lucky flying the "untrespassed sanctity" of space above a wildfire (this column of atmosphere being last inhabited by the indolent, discriminating, and incorrigible lightning storm that spawned the good deal in the forest below). Hmmm. When that smoke can be smelled in the jump plane before a jump, there's not much to beat that adrenaline.

Anyhow, I'm outside the ranks of modern smokejumpers, what with this new Prevention job and all. So *Notes from the Ranks* may not be the best title for this column anymore. Perhaps "Musings from the Line"

or something. I say "I" and "me" way more in these articles than any mention of other bros, and that's not right.

A thought I have stemming from conversations with current jumpers is: How would we differentiate Modern Smokejumping and Classic Smokejumping? Should we? There's an obvious difference in the fire environment and work career ladders of today than the 10AM policy days. When and how did this happen? Perhaps the transition from rounds to squares? Maybe when the DC-3 left? The 1986 invasion of the Lower 48 by the BLM smokejumpers? Perhaps when jumping became a career and not a summer job? What about when task books and the NWCG were implemented? The tragedy of Storm King? Somewhere between approx. 1984 and 2021 (last class of rounds at NCSB). I don't believe the Classic and Modern jumper workforces are any different in terms of professionalism and commitment to hard work and a job well done. I do believe that the fire environment and work climate is much different.

This is why exclamatory titles, like "A Call to Action," land very poorly among the exceptionally active fire practitioners that drive our agencies in the fire environment of today. Much of that sort of discussion is disconnected from strictly smokejumping and the reality of the modern smokejumping work environment. That discussion is more in line with public policy or overarching agency protocol on resource valuation and risk management. I sense mission

creep, that nascent bane of all can-do type-A personalities.

The Marines have a “two ups and a down” mantra for giving critical feedback. Two positives before every negative. Sometimes it’s tough to find the ups when all we may hear are downs from the media or from the public about wildfire effects in the age of climate

change, wildfire response and bureaucracy, smoke management, etc. For me, the ups are a given: the people, the work environment and the innate opportunities of the title and job “smokejumper.” I think I will try and do better at bringing the overwhelming “up” feeling of a day spent with smokejumpers of any era to

these musings from the line.

These Rx fires are sweet. Lots of time to think, walk around with a drip torch, talk to the ponderosas and larch as I ring them. Oh, you like that? Does that tickle? What do the ponderosas ponder? At what does the larch loom and leer? Onward to fall, hearth and home, and good cheer! 🧑🏻🔥

Lookout

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks ’69)

I RECENTLY SPENT A DAY at **Murry Taylor’s** (RDD-65) fire lookout on the Cal Fire Siskiyou Unit. At age 82, this is Murry’s 20th year on Duzel Rock.

CalFire uses retired firefighters as lookouts on an as-needed basis, predicted lightning or resource drawdown. The pay is good and in talking with the lookouts, a high degree of dedication is evidenced by little turnover.

It was a busy day. The first day of the August bust started the fire complexes in Northern California. We observed about fifteen fires over the course of the day. About half were on Klamath NF and half on CalFire area. I even spotted one. I didn’t sit down for seven hours. As one remembers from being on lightning patrol—both with ground crews and in the air with jumpers—multiple fires pop up, and it is not always clear if you have a new smoke.

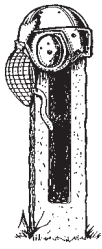
CalFire puts the call out within a minute of the report. Very basic. One engine crew and depending on location, dozer, and air support. After that, if the folks on the ground ask for it, they get more stuff. Very much like a city or county fire department. I was impressed that engine crews walked in on fires and did long hose lays. In other words, they went after the fire. Most fires got caught. Conservation Camp Crews walked in to relieve the initial attack crews so they could get back in service. Everybody was working.

Several fires got away, and to be fair to the

USFS, they had a lot of fires, and some were pretty remote. I think it’s a given they are going to lose some. Jumpers were used. There was a Rappel ship in the air. Most of the fires were handled by a few firefighters arriving quickly. A jumper load, helitack, engine crew. It doesn’t really matter how they got there. A quick attack worked in the past and is still effective today.

In the following week, complexes started showing up on the daily report with losses to rural communities and forest resources. Smoke affected even those remote from the fires. My daughter called from San Francisco to report they were smoked in again. The news media was alive with coverage of (Canadian) wildfire smoke hammering the east coast.

Spending a day on a lookout reminded me that when one gets away from all the theoretical discussion and entrenched positions, it is evident that simple action can reduce loss. That is a reduction of loss to people, communities, and resources. Less smoke in the atmosphere. Pretty much everyone agrees that forest management, including prescribed fire, is essential. But when it’s the dry season, it only makes sense to limit the loss by stopping fires when they are small and saving the firefighting resources for those fires that do get away. Quick detection and initial attack is an effective tool. Smokey is still right, put the fire out. 🧑🏻🔥



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

Robert G. Lowden (Cave Junction '67)

Bob died September 23, 2023, at his home in Selma, Oregon. He was born in Grants Pass, OR, October 22, 1948. Bob grew up in Wilderville, OR, and graduated from Grants Pass H.S. in 1966 and started fighting wildfire. He jumped at Cave Junction in 1967 and 1970-72. Bob was drafted and served in the artillery near CuChi, South Vietnam. After his return from the Army, he continued jumping at C.J. After jumping, he worked in logging and county forestry beginning his twenty plus year employment with Georgia Pacific Veneer in Rogue River, Oregon.

Vernon M. Stevenson (Redding '62)

Vern, 82, died September 14, 2023. He was born December 1, 1940, at the family ranch in Palo Cedro, CA. Vern attended grammar school in Palo Cedro and graduated from Enterprise H.S. in 1958. He started his career with the USFS in 1958 at the Minersville Guard Station on the Trinity National Forest. He jumped at Redding 1962, 66-70.

Vern served in the U.S. Army 1963-64, assigned to the 82nd Airborne in Germany. When he returned from the Army, he resumed his career with the USFS at the Redding base with subsequent appointments on the San Bernardino, Klamath, and Stanislaus National Forests where he retired in 1998 as forest road maintenance supervisor. Vern was a lover of vintage muscle cars and restored many over the years, including projects with each of his sons.

Robert F. "Bob" Kruckeberg (North Cascades '51))

Bob died July 2, 2023. He 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.

Emily Louise Allen (Associate)

Emily, 97, wife of **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46), died July 7, 2023, in The Dalles, Oregon. She was born April 28, 1926, in Ballard, Washington. She was immensely proud of her Norwegian heritage as well as being a Washington Husky. Emily was a

graduate of the University of Washington and had a fulfilling career as both a homemaker and an elementary and secondary school substitute teacher for over 40 years.

All of us who jumped at Cave Junction during the time when Jim Allen was Base Manager remembered and loved Emily. The base was small. We were family. (Ed.)

Coy Grant Jemmett (McCall '63)

Coy died July 19, 2023. He grew up on a farm in Caldwell, Idaho, and graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in Biology. Coy jumped at McCall 1963, 1966-1970 and totaled 40 fire jumps in those six seasons. Fighting fires grew into researching osprey in Fish Lake, Utah, to the coordination of efforts with the administration office in Virginia. He concluded his 35-year career with the Forest Service in Grangeville, Idaho as the Forest Supervisor.

Dr. Louis Wirth "Lou" Stevens (North Cascades '51)

Lou, 90, died November 22, 2022, in Summit, New York. He was born January 26, 1932, in the state of Washington. He married Alice Kelly in 1968 in New York. Lou jumped at NCSB 1951-53 while attending the University of Washington. After years working as a pharmacist, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving as a reconnaissance pilot.

Upon completing his time in the Navy, he attended Howard University College of Medicine, and spent the rest of his career as a physician in New York, retiring in 2012.

Jack L. Lince (NCSB-50)

Jack, 89, died September 24, 2020. He was born July 24, 1931. Jack lived in Winthrop, Washington, and jumped at NCSB during the 1950 season.

John William "Jack" Deinema (McCall '50)

Jack died April 15, 2020, in Tigard, Oregon. He was born March 6, 1923 in Nashua, Iowa. Jack graduated from Iowa State College in 1949 with a degree in Forestry. He also attended the University of North Carolina and Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. Jack was a Sergeant in the Marine Corps (1942-46) during WWII serving in the Pacific Theater. He enlisted right after Pearl Harbor and took part in operations on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian. With the loss of so many officers in the Saipan and Tinian campaigns, Jack received a field commission.

After college graduation he served as a Junior Forester on the Payette and Challis National Forests. He became a Ranger on the Challis in 1952 and transferred to the Teton N.F. in 1953. He then moved on to Assistant Forest Supervisor on the Challis N.F. in 1955.

NSA Contributions Good Samaritan, Scholarship, History Preservation and/or General Operating Fund

<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Memory of/or Honor of</u>	<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Memory of/or Honor of</u>
Frank Just (MYC-54)	Good Sam Fund	Mike Daly (IDC-57)	Austin Young (MYC-54)
Gary Jensen (Associate)	History Preservation	Bob Burns (Assoc. Life Mbr).....	John Rolf (GAC-57)
Pat Lowe (MSO-00).....	NSA	Guy Hurlbutt (IDC-62) Leo Cromwell/Austin Young	
Jim Lancaster (MYC-62)	Leo Cromwell (IDC-66)	Larry Edwards (MSO-02)	Good Sam Fund
Bob Whaley (MSO-56)	NSA		

Contributions since the previous publication of donors October 2023

Total funds disbursed to Smokejumpers and families—\$345,920.

Mail your contributions to:

Brent Russ, 516 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO NSA. Put donation info on MEMO line.

In 1967 Jack was promoted to Regional Forester (R-5) in California. President Nixon appointed him as U.S. Presidential representative to the governing board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in 1970.

Jack was an influential FS Manager in the

1970s including being Director of the Job Corp Program in DC and Regional Forester in R-5. He is another example of the people who began as smokejumpers and went on to become influential leaders in the USFS. Jack jumped at McCall during the 1950 season. 🌲

Hotshot Crew Members Killed in the Line of Duty

Many smokejumpers came from the ranks of the Hotshot crews of the USFS and BLM. A number of jumpers went on to become Hotshot Crew Superintendents. I thought it would be appropriate to honor the Hotshots killed in the line of duty. These people should not be forgotten. Thanks to **Larry Edwards** (MSO-02) for compiling this important information. (Ed.)

1948—Del Rosa Hotshot Crew. Duane Poore, 17, died while fighting the Barrett Dam Fire, Cleveland N.F., July 9, 1948. Duane was a seasonal employee who had been on the job for three days.

1959—El Cariso Hotshot Crew. Nelson Harlan, 25, Steven Johnson, 18, and Boyd Edwards, 18, succumbed to burn injuries when overrun by fire on the Decker Fire, Cleveland NF, August 8, 1959. USFS District Ranger Ben Slater, San Juan Station Foreman Andrew Brooks, and CDF firefighter John Guthrie also died of burn injuries suffered that day.

1961—Dalton Hotshot Crew. Mike Rushworth, 18, died December 8, 1961, due to critical injuries suffered from an entrapment Oct. 30 while fighting the Sierra Madre Fire, Angeles NF. Mike was a first-year member of the crew.

1966—El Cariso Hotshot Crew. Kenneth Barnhill, 19, Raymond Chee, 23, Frederick Danner, 18, John Figlo, 18, Joel Hill, 19, Daniel Moore, 21, James Moreland, 22, Carl Shilcutt, 26, John D Verdugo, 19, William Waller, 21, Michael White, 20, and Stephen White, 18, died after being overrun by fire on the Loop Fire, Pacima Canyon, Angeles NF, November 1, 1966. The crew was involved in downhill hand line construction when fire below them suddenly ran uphill. Most of the 19 crewmembers suffered severe burn injuries. Ten members of the crew

died that day, Frederick Danner and Carl Shilcutt succumbed days later. The Downhill Indirect Line Construction Checklist was developed, in part, because of this incident.

1967—Del Rosa Hotshot Crew. Richard Stone died July 14, 1967, when the crew transport overturned and toppled down a 100' embankment, while responding to the Rabbit Fire, Angeles NF. As a student attending Valley College, he had celebrated his 19th birthday the previous day.

1970—Redding Hotshot Crew. Ronald Scott, 29, and William Wales, 23, died September 23, 1970, in a helicopter crash on the Fork Fire, Angeles NF. Ronald was an 82nd Airborne Army veteran. William had celebrated his 23rd birthday three weeks prior. **Steven Grammer** (RDD-70), a Redding Smokejumper detailed to the Hotshots, George Lopez, Helitack Foreman Angeles NF, and pilot Edward Henderson also died in the crash.

1976—Mormon Lake Hotshot Crew. Anthony Czak, 25, Stephen Furey, 22, and Scott Nelson, 23, died July 17, 1976, when entrapped on the Battlement Creek Fire, Grand Junction District, BLM, Colorado. Anthony was the crew boss and four-year veteran of the crew. Stephan, a squad boss, served four years with the crew. Scott was a first-year crew member. As a result of this incident, fire shelters became mandatory safety equipment to be carried by all Federal wildland firefighters.

1994—Prineville Hotshot Crew. Kathi Beck, 24, "Tami" Bickett, 25, Scott Blecha, 27, Levi Brinkley, 22, Douglas Dunbar, 22, Terri Ann Hagen, 28, Bonnie Holtby, 21, Robert Johnson, 26, and Jon Kelso, 27, died July 6, 1994, while fighting the South Canyon Fire on Storm King Moun-

tain, Grand Junction District, BLM, Colorado. Smokejumpers **Don MacKey** (MSO-87), **Jim Thrash** (MYC-81), **Roger Roth** (MYC-92), and Helitack firefighters Robert Browning Jr. and Richard Tyler also died that day.

1996—Globe Hotshot Crew. Michelle Smith, 22, died during training with the Hotshot crew in Globe, Arizona, July 9, 1996. Michelle was a 5th season firefighter and in her first season with the Hotshot crew. She was a junior majoring in Forestry at the University of Idaho.

2000—Flame ‘n’ Go Hotshot Crew. Michael Bisho, 27, and Rodgie Braithwaite, 26, were struck by lightning and died while working the North Stansbury Fire, Salt Lake Field Office, BLM, Utah, August 23, 2000.

2004—Arrowhead Hotshot Crew. Dan Holmes died October 2, 2004, when struck by a falling burning tree while working on the West Grant Prescribed Fire, Kings Canyon NP, California. Dan, 26, had been a member of the Hotshot crew since 2003.

2004—Midewin Hotshot Crew. Alan Toepke, 30, died as a result of being struck by a truck in West Memphis, TN, April 24, 2002. The crew was returning to their home base from a fire assignment and had stopped for the night to rest. A second crew member was seriously injured.

2008—Chief Mountain Hotshot Crew. Michael MacDonald, 26, died in a helicopter accident while being transported to a Flagstaff, AZ, hospital June 29, 2008. He was assigned to the Walla Valley Fire, Grand Canyon NP, Arizona.

2011—Bonneville Hotshot Crew. Caleb Hamm, 23, died July 7, 2011, while working the CR 337 Fire, Palo Pinto County, Texas. Caleb was in his 6th season as a wildland firefighter. He was working on a degree in fire ecology at Weber State University.

2011—Fort Apache Hotshot Crew. Deon “Dino” Classay died July 23, 2011, while working on the Diamond Fire on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, Arizona. “Dino”, 42, served on the crew for 22 years.

2013—Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew. Yarnell Fire, June 30, 2013, when fire overtook them while working the Yarnell Hill Fire, Arizona.

Andrew Ashcraft, 29, Robert Caldwell, 23, Travis Carter, 31, Dustin Deford, 24, Christopher MacKenzie, 30, Eric Marsh, 43, Grant McKee, 21, Sean Misner, 26, Scott Norris, 28, Wade Parker, 22, John Percin, 24, Anthony Rose, 23, Jesse Steed, 36, Joe Thurston, 32, Travis Turbyfill, 27, William Warneke, 25, Clayton Whitted, 28, Kevin Woyjeck, 21, Garret Zuppiger, 27.

2016—Plumas Hotshot Crew. Krstopher “Krs” Evans, a paraplegic the result of a fireline accident on an arson fire, Daniel Boone NF, Kentucky, died June 29, 2016, in a house fire in Philomath, OR. Krs, a US Air Force veteran, World Champion level snowboarder, and 2nd year Hotshot, had been wheelchair bound since 2001.

2016—Lolo Hotshot Crew. Justin Beebe, 26, died August 13, 2016, when hit by a falling tree while working on the Strawberry Fire in Great Basin National Park, Utah. A native of Vermont, Justin, was a first-year member of the Hotshot crew.

2017—Vista Grande Hotshot Crew. Brent Witham, 29, died August 2, 2017, when struck by a falling snag while working on the Lolo Peak Fire, Lolo NF, Montana. Brent started his fire service in 2011 and had been member of the Hotshot crew since 2015.

2018—Arrowhead Hotshot Crew. Brian Hughes, 33, died July 27, 2018, when hit by a falling tree while working on the Ferguson Fire, Sierra NF. Brian was a 15-year veteran of the wildland fire service.

2020—Big Bear Hotshot Crew. Charlie Morton, 39, died September 17, 2020, during suppression activities on the El Dorado Fire, San Bernardino NF, California. Charlie began working on the San Bernardino NF in 2007 and was a squadleader with the Hotshot crew.

2022—Craig Hotshot Crew. Collin Hagan, 27, died August 10, 2022, when hit by a falling tree while working on the Big Swamp Fire, Willamette NF, Oakridge, Oregon. A native of upper Michigan, Collin had earned an associate degree in forest technology from Gogebic Community College and a bachelor’s degree in forest management from Michigan Technological University. Previously a firefighter in Michigan, this was his first season on the Hotshot crew. 🕯

Seven Days with the Grizzly

by Bob Smee (Missoula '68)

“Alaska is burning!” The call came from the BLM Smokejumpers in Fairbanks. Missoula jumpers were needed to reinforce the crews in Alaska. It was mid-June of 1968, and I had just finished three weeks of extremely intensive training that made me a USFS Smokejumper. During training I completed seven practice parachute jumps and now awaited my first real fire jump. On the northward trip, I was a bit apprehensive to think the first was likely to be in the wilderness of Alaska, which seemed worlds away from my familiar Inland Northwest.

As I remember, there were 16 of us including two squadleaders who flew from Missoula to Seattle in a Johnson Flying Service DC-6. There we were put on an Alaska Airlines flight which stopped in Sitka and Anchorage before landing in Fairbanks. I had never been on an aircraft before working for the Forest Service. In jumper training, every flight had been with the rear door off the plane and a parachute on my back. When the stewardess closed and locked the cabin door of the huge airliner, my palms began to sweat as I applied a death grip to the armrests.

Upon arriving in Fairbanks, we were trucked from the terminal to the BLM base, which was adjacent to the airport runway. Being late in the day, one of the Fairbanks jumpers took us to town for dinner at a restaurant and bar. We entered a light brown, rustic log building, just as I might have imagined seeing in Fairbanks. Upon concluding our meal, we went over to the bar side of the establishment and took in some of the nightlife. I had just reached age 21 five months previously and had been in a few taverns before because I was from Spokane, Washington. Just across the border from there was Idaho where the legal age for alcohol was 19. In Fairbanks, I remember paying \$3 for a glass of beer, when in Spokane it was 75 cents.

The bar half of the building had no windows, so when we left about midnight, I had a significant shock. Upon exiting we stepped directly out-

side into full sunlight and warm air just like when we entered hours before. This was a rather jolting first experience of the “Land of the Midnight Sun.” We returned to base and bedded down for the night in the bunkhouse, which was just across a gravel courtyard from the parachute loft.

The next morning, we assembled in the loft for a briefing on the fire situation in the interior of the state. They taught techniques and tips for the unique firefighting operations conducted on the tundra. There had been so many fires that summer that they ran out of names to identify them. So, they started numbering them. Only a couple of BLM jumpers were on base, as most were out on fires. That of course being the reason why we were there. We were told that we would be given a practice jump the next morning.

At what would have been sunup back home, I suited up and boarded the “Doug” – standard jump ship Douglas DC-3. After a short flight, we prepared to jump. I don’t remember the jump spot being marked. Standing in the door and looking down, I saw lots of trees rather spaced apart. I thought, “Oh shit, a probable tree landing.” On landing, I couldn’t do a proper Parachute Landing Fall (PLF), but rather fell over on my side. Looking up, these trees that I feared were about 10 ft. tall—you know the story. Alaska surprise #2.

That afternoon there was a fire call, and I was tapped to go with a couple other Missoula jumpers on a crew of BLM jumpers that had returned to base. It was an 8-man load plus a squadleader. We jumped the fire above the Arctic Circle in the foothills of the Brooks Range. The fire was in the tundra on a bare south slope of moderate incline in a small drainage. We worked fast and hard for a couple of hours, then we had the fire contained. With a couple of hours of mop up and patrolling, we could take a break.

As the sun began to dip behind the Pole, we sat awaiting a fresh food drop and studied the terrain across the draw and the small stream

below. This was the beginning of a seven-day unforgettable adventure.

While sitting on the hillside and facing the other side of the ravine, someone called our attention to a pack of seven Arctic wolves. They were most beautiful as they pranced across the slope and then up and over the ridge. Two were pure white. One was completely jet black, and the other four were the typical grey. What a sight!

Later, after making a few rounds of the fire, we settled back as before at the “hunker spot.” After a period, someone called, “Look, a bear!” It was running across the slope, rolling, getting up, and running back in the opposite direction, then making a quick 180-degree turn, it would run back again. It was very comical, and most were laughing, when the squadleader said, “That is a sow playing with her cubs.” What most of us thought was grass, upon a closer look was a patch of Arctic Willows that were as high as the bear’s belly and tall enough to conceal the smaller critters that she was chasing.

As the situation sank in, the atmosphere took a serious turn. Mama Bear with cubs in the area is serious. They perhaps have never encountered people, and we were looking forward to the Alaska tradition of steak for dinner. Fairbanks was radioed and asked for a high-powered rifle to be dropped on our supply load expected in the next few hours. We also asked for two cases of milk (code for beer). In about an hour, a plane buzzed us, circled, and kicked out a bundle of cargo. The chute failed to open, and the cargo “augured” into the tundra. Someone’s beautiful, personal rifle was destroyed. The stock was broken at the grip, the barrel was bent, and a nice scope was broken off. Of the cases of milk, we salvaged five cans. Then there was the meat, which became the biggest issue without the rifle. We had to dispose of it in such a way that the bears could not smell it. Grizzly bears have a better sense of smell than dogs and can detect food from miles away.

We cut and removed a square of the 1½ foot thick moss, then dug as deep as possible into the frozen permafrost. Depositing the steaks into the hole, while shedding a few tears in our milk, the dirt and sod was replaced. We hoped the huge omnivore would stay far enough away not to catch the scent.

With the crew now being without protection, the squadleader declared we would post a person as an early warning lookout in case the bear moved toward our side of the ravine. This duty would rotate between us each hour for 24 hours each day. A place of safety was discovered atop a rock outcropping near the upper end of the fire.

This Alaskan Grizzly would leave her cubs each day to chase us up the column-like pillar of rock. The outcropping was a gray/brown, flat-topped monolith of basalt that protruded some 12 feet above the green tundra. It stood as a statue atop a slight ridge in the gently sloping terrain. Most fortunately, the narrow butte only permitted us two-legged to negotiate its vertical sides.

With each approach of the bear, nine of us young men would huddle together on the rock’s summit in the space of an average elevator. With barely enough room to stand, we would be trapped there at a different and unexpected time each day for more than a half hour. Meanwhile, the huge grizzly would pace around and around our perch. She would grunt and snort as she walked while panting and frothing at the mouth from the heat of the continually shining summer sun. The huge canine teeth were very apparent.

The bear’s dense coat of fur faded from dark brown around the legs to brown on its sides, chest, and rump with highlights of silver brown. The long hairs on the back and shoulders were rather blond and had white tips with a tinge of grey near its characteristic hump at the shoulders—hence the name grizzled bear (Grizzly).

Periodically, the mammoth grizzly would stand erect on its rear legs and reach over 12 feet to the top of the rock. There it would continue to scratch its claws, reminiscent of a house cat kneading its claws on the arm of a couch. I was first to experience such an incident. The claws raked across the top of the ledge, reaching four inches from the toes of my boots. With this, the terror rose in my body like mercury in a thermometer.

Vividly imprinted in my memory are those claws. The five appendages were nearly twice the length of my fingers. Fading from black to brown-gray near the tips they protruded from a paw that was half again as wide as my spread hand, from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. In the panic of the moment, they appeared to

me as foot long talons that could strike sudden death. My anxiety diminished as I realized the unique drama of the experience and the beauty of this creature. This ritual continued for about half an hour once or twice each day for seven days. It seemed Mrs. Grizzly was reminding us that she was master of this remote domain.

On the morning of the second day, an unexpected DC-3 dropped a large bundle of cargo, circled dropping another, and did the same for a third time. The first two bundles contained about a pallet worth of C-Ration cases each. The third drop was a pump, gas, rolls of hose, and containers of water. All nothing we ordered. Do you remember when I said there were so many fires, they numbered them? Numbers reached over 100.

US Army, Field Ration, Type C technically were replaced by Meal, Combat, Individual in 1958, but they continued to be referred to as C-Rations. When I began as a smokejumper in 1968, they were still being used by the Forest Service until around 1972, after which we ate freeze-dried food. A case of C-Rats contained 12 meals, the contents of which varied greatly over time.

Some that I remember are boned chicken, ham & eggs, turkey and noodles, ham & lima beans, beef hash. There were always high-carb crackers with a spread, cheese, peanut butter, or jam. There was canned fruit and desserts of pound cake or fruit cake. When three meals a day are consumed, C-Rations provides about 3,700 calories.

The Accessory Packet contained numerous items, the most important of which was the P-38 can opener. Many of us continually carried a P-38. I attached mine with a piece of shroud line to my Buck Knife case. There were many manufacturers of this simple device over many years. Some of the guys actually collected them.

After the cargo drop, we had so many cases of Cs that we stacked them some 7 feet high, pulled a cargo chute over the column making a tepee, and used the heavy cases in lieu of stakes around the circumference. This provided shelter from the scorching sun and swarms of huge mosquitoes and flies, allowing us to get some sleep. We stacked cases to make the equivalent of a picnic table for eating.

When hungry, the jumpers would search to find an individual meal that they favored for the

main course, one they liked best for its dessert, and then threw the remaining cans into a pile. The pile got bigger and bigger, which we called the "boneyard." About the fourth day, people grew tired of the usual fare and started pawing through the boneyard for variety.

On the fourth day, it was decided that it was time to go home, so Fairbanks was radioed to announce that we would be ready for pick-up the next day. We then set about getting things ready. I volunteered to go down to the creek and retrieve the pump and hose. The pump had been set up and hose run to assure a complete mop-up. As I got to the stream and began working, I heard a faint call coming from up the hill. Not being able to understand what was being said, I moved up the hill away and the caller moved toward me. Still unable to understand and thinking the message regarded the equipment retrieval, the scene was repeated. This time I heard the shout, "The bear is coming." I never ran up a hill so fast. Luckily, the bear was far enough behind me that I made it to the top of the rock before the daily drama began.

As day five ended, we still had not seen an aircraft. The next morning another call was made, only to be told that they were searching for us, and our fire couldn't be found. They were short on aircraft and another attempt would be made the next day.

Day Six. About midday we heard a helo far off in the distance and waited as it faded in and out of our hearing, not seeming to get any closer. Making radio contact, the pilot declared that he was low on fuel and was returning to base and would return in the morning. Becoming aware that when a flight returned and we had radio contact, there was still the problem of guiding the pilot to our location. In central Alaska there are few recognizable landmarks that could be seen by both us and the pilot. That means the only way to give directions is by compass points.

At this juncture, a somewhat heated argument ensued as to from which direction the aircraft could be heard. Nine jumpers had nine different opinions on the subject, which represented most points on the compass. I knew the answer but, being a rookie from Montana on my first fire jump among salty Alaska guys, I kept quiet. Being also

rather shy, it took awhile for me to have enough of the bickering. I got their attention and asked, "Do you remember that the sun dips behind the Pole each day in that direction." Most agreed that was north. "So that means that the helicopter is coming from almost due east." Problem solved!

We had been on the tundra for six days and lost for four. I became conscious of things I found interesting. There was no sound, no birds, no small creatures, just a big dangerous one. No shade was to be had, except partially when under the parachute teepee. The desolation was perhaps like being lost at sea. The unrelenting heat, mosquitos and flies, coupled with the isolation and boredom, produced physical and psychological stress that manifested itself in an irritable and short-tempered crew. The expectation of a trip home being unrealized several times also was an impact.

Day Seven. We heard a helicopter and made contact. Guiding him to us wasn't as easy as expected. We kept telling him to come farther west but it was to no avail, and we were aware that all the time he was burning fuel. Then I remembered that we had been given signal mirrors for just such a purpose. Getting it out of my Personal Gear Bag, I continually flashed the horizon. He came right to us.

The copter was loaded for my first ever helicopter ride which was to Bettles. Having been trained in the danger of overloading an aircraft and to figure density altitude, I was sure we were

overloaded. The former Vietnam pilot took off and flew just above the ground at what was probably maximum speed. I was quite anxious.

From small, remote Bettles, we flew by plane to the somewhat larger Athabascan village of Tanana. Today, roughly 200 people live in Tanana, deep in the heart of Alaska's Interior. There was a couple hours layover enroute to Fairbanks, so I walked a short distance to the river's edge where the Native women were catching and drying salmon. The fish were being caught by a fish wheel.

The wheel turns with the flow of the river and catches the spawning salmon who are swimming upstream. As the wheel turns, it drops the fish into a holding tank where the women retrieved them. They then carried the fish to the cutting tables in galvanized laundry tubs. There the fish would be cleaned and cut into long strips roughly 2 inches square. From there the strips would be laid over numerous drying racks to dry in the sun.

With fascination, I watched the process for some time when I noticed that upon the many drying racks the pink strips were almost black with flies. I approached one of the women to ask rather sheepishly, "Do you eat this?" She giggled and in a soft cooing voice replied, "Oh no, this is for the dogs." In those days, each winter, three times the amount of food required for a person was needed to be preserved for the dogs. The use of sled dogs as a means of transportation has been steadily replaced by snowmobiles in Alaska. 🐾

Greg Lambert (RAC-71) Responds to Article in Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Magazine

I had trouble reading the first page of the article "The Rising Cost of Wildfires" in the July-August 23 issue. Daisy Coyne makes it sound like a claimed 1.9-degree temperature rise over 128 years has caused the significant uptick in acres burned and longer fire seasons in the last 30 or so years. Many ascribe historical fire suppression as an additional culprit.

What was the mean temperature in 1910 when nearly three million acres of western Montana and Northern Idaho burned in 48 hours? For how long had there been a concerted effort to suppress fires? Following is from an article written about that fire.

"It was one of the largest forest fires in American history. Maybe even one of the largest forest fires ever anywhere in the world. No one knows

for sure, but even now, it is hard to put into words what it did. For two terrifying days and nights, August 20/21, 1910, the fire raged across three million acres of virgin timberland in northern Idaho and western Montana. Many thought the world would end, and for 86 fire victims, it did. Most of what was destroyed fell to hurricane force winds that turned the fire into a blowtorch. Reconstructing what happened leads to an almost impossible conclusion: Most of the devastation occurred in a six-hour period.” **Tim Egan**

Around 10 years later, another large fire burned close to there. Ten or so years later, another one did. That was the 1930s and when the Tillamook Forest in Oregon also burned to the ground.

The millions of acres of national forest burned each year represents a lot of cumulative overstory destruction. The lost overstory shaded snow packs so they generally melted off slowly. Now those millions of acres are bare to the sun's rays and early snow melt is the result. Take a walk into a forest close to one of the burns where the overstory has been removed. You will feel cool in the unburned forest. Step out into the burned area and you will feel a significant temperature rise.

The USFS ended automatic dispatch in 1975. Prior to that, whenever a smoke was called in, everyone in the area would race to get there as the first to arrive would get the fire, hazard pay, and overtime. I was a smokejumper, and we had a policy to be taxiing down the runway within 10 minutes of the siren. In 1975, no one was dispatched until someone way up the food chain said to. Some fires were and have been left to burn.

I grew up in Central Oregon. We never had huge fire like we have now. There was an exception in 1970. That year I was on a fire crew and sent to the Entiat River valley in Washington to help contain a large fire. It was large because there had been a significant lightning event that spawned too many fires to man quickly. My brother was jumping that year and was on a 12-man DC-3 load sent from the Redmond Air Center to Winthrop to help. On the flight up, he told me there was a smoke on every ridge. There just weren't enough ground crews and jumpers to man them all. The result was the Burns Creek and Tyee Fires in the Entiat drainage were not manned until they were large. Our crew was in the middle when they burned together. Fire camp

thought we were dead. God had other plans.

Currently, the government does not use proven tactics to put fires out. Instead of calling it fire control, it is called “managed fire.” As if a fire has the ability to think. Digging fireline at night has been stopped. During the night, winds are generally softer, temperatures are lower, and humidity increases which makes a much safer and productive time to contain a fire. That policy needs to change. Automatic dispatch would keep most small fires small and needs to be reinstated.

Two years ago, much of the Santiam River drainage was destroyed by a fire that had been left to itself. That same summer almost half of the McKenzie River drainage also burned resulting in significant fouling of the McKenzie during the next spring rains and quick snow melt. Immediately upriver from the burn, the river flowed crystal clear. Starting at the burn, it was very muddy. I have kayaked that river for nearly 25 years, in high and low flows. Never had I seen the river fouled like that.

The 70s and 80s were also the time when the forests were left to manage themselves as timber harvest was largely curtailed and wilderness designation prohibited any forest management in those areas. Resulting heavy fuels buildup and an overstock of trees have made these forests very susceptible to hot fires. Most of those wilderness areas are now burned.

Close to Prineville, Oregon, where I live, the Mill Creek Wilderness has still not recovered from burning over thirty years ago. This is where, before the burn, I hunted elk for several years and never went out and failed to see elk. Now you can hunt for days and not see any. Later, the Bridge Creek Wilderness burned after a few small fires were left to burn for nearly a week.

I recently had a discussion with a couple of bright and pleasant high school students. I asked them if they could tell me what photosynthesis is. They had no idea. Our schools apparently do not teach basic biology including how plant life “breathes” in CO₂ and expels oxygen. No wonder they believe it when told that CO₂ is a pollutant instead of being absolutely necessary for life on earth.

I am in no way trying to disparage anyone who is on the ground fighting fires. They only go out when dispatched and can only do what they are told. The terrible shape our forests are in makes their job much more dangerous. They are to be appreciated. 🙏

Lessons from Frank

by Roger Cox (Missoula '69)

I jumped for 14 seasons. Looking through my diaries and counting “pounder fires,” I figure I must have been on around 300 fires. Most were small and some were very small. But each was a different situation and each one contributed to what we identify as experience. Experience comes from lessons learned on what to do and what not to do. The not to do seems to rank higher in my memory.

My fourth year jumping began in Silver City on the Region 3 crew. The Gila N.F. was an exciting assignment. Lots of fires in very challenging terrain and weather. I was part of a very experienced crew of 25 jumpers led by **Frank Sanders** (MSO-63) as foreman.

Frank was usually so involved in administrative details that he rarely was on the jump list. But 1972 was a very busy year and he did occasionally suit up. One day I finally found myself teamed up with Frank on the jump list.

It wasn't long before we were circling a fire on the eastern part of the Gila. The fire was located at the end of a ridge in some rocky and relatively bare ground. The chosen jump spot was located about 800 yards from the fire on the ridge top. As usual for mid-afternoons, a steady breeze was blowing across the ridge.

At this point in time, the jump organization was undergoing a transition from the old FS 5-A parachutes to the T-10. Frank was wearing the 5-A, and I had the hotshot T-10. I jumped 2nd man and was soon flying around Frank as he held steady into the wind. At altitude I could make headway into the wind due to the greater forward speed of the T-10. Frank could not drive into the wind under the 5-A and was slowly backing onto the ridge top.

While I was having a great time circling Frank, one of those lessons I referred to was about to occur. Frank slips over the top of a small stand of timber and lands softly behind the wind screen the trees provided. I, on the other hand, land 50 yards or so away in an area open to the wind. I failed to note the increased speed of the wind as it channeled across the top of the ridge. I landed going backwards and had to grab a line to dump my chute as I was being dragged across the

ridge top. I was lucky not to have injuries.

Frank didn't say anything, but by the smile on his face, he knew he had just taught me a lesson. We quickly retrieved our cargo and, with Pulaski in hand, hiked down the ridge toward the smoke column.

To our surprise, we encountered a helitack crew sitting in the shade of some trees about halfway to the fire. The crew boss greeted us and stated that, from the looks of the smoke column, there was no way they could control the fire. He had called for reinforcements and was waiting for their arrival. Frank asked about the fire. The crew boss said they had not approached the fire for safety reasons. Frank, being somewhat diplomatic, said we would check it out and off we went leaving the crew to lounge in the shade.

The smoke column indicated a hot fire. It was very black and rose at a very high rate, typical of high temperatures. But when we arrived at the scene, we found a single, small stump mostly above ground and largely exposed on bare rock. There was no ground cover. The concentration of pitch was making the fire very hot. The snag once standing did not have any fire in it.

A couple of canteens of water cooled the stump so we could attack it with our Pulaskis. We scattered the chunks of charcoal on the bare rocks, and in about 15 minutes, this fire was done. We spent a few more minutes checking for hot spots and called it good.

Frank then called dispatch, reported the fire as out, and requested a helicopter to pick us up. Dispatch said we would be picked up within the hour. So, we headed back to our gear to prepare for our departure. On the way back, we passed the helitack crew still waiting for reinforcements. Without elaboration, Frank simply stated they could safely approach the fire now. Again, Frank passed on the opportunity to embarrass the helitack crew for hiding out.

Frank and I had just packed up our chutes when the helicopter arrived. We were soon heading to Grant County Airport to prepare for another jump. I couldn't help but wonder what dispatch thought of the request for reinforcements on a fire we had just declared out. 🙄