

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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SMOKEJUMPER



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Front cover

Roger Savage (MSO-57), 86, receives his master's degree during the University of Montana's Spring 2024 Commencement ceremony at the Adams Center on Saturday, May 11, 2024. Photo courtesy Antonio Ibarra Olivares of the Missoulian.

ONE MONTH EARLIER

Many NSA members are switching to the digital version of *Smokejumper* delivered by email instead of the printed edition. It is sent as a PDF identical to the hard copy issue. Advantages include early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings.

NSA Director Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) says: "I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct \$ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing."

To request email delivery, please contact Editor Chuck Sheley chucksheley@gmail.com.

YOUR CORRECT EMAIL ADDRESS 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.

IF YOU MOVE OR ARE "TEMPORARILY AWAY"

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Please notify us of any change in your mailing address. If you are going to be temporarily away, we could send you a PDF of that issue saving us all mailing expenses. Please send any address changes to chucksheley@gmail.com.

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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



Message from the President



"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."

Alan Lakein

SMOKEJUMPING AND ITS association of members, the NSA, both enjoy impressive well-documented pasts. Their historical "who, what, when, where, and why" are solidly preserved for future generations.

While their past history is certain and distinct, their ever-evolving present is less clear. Their futures, absent precise predictions and crystal balls, are unknown with a mix of well-earned optimism and a bit of offsetting unease. Even though we can hear, see, and feel the "goings on," sometimes it is hard to put our finger on exactly "what is" and even "what to make of it."

The future invites questions about the smokejumper program. Will we see a further decline in smokejumper deployments in the future as the trend has been over the last ten years? Will initial attack—immediately hitting fires after their discovery—continue to be deemphasized? And with the reported closing of the Silver City smokejumper base, what does this mean for the other bases?

Questions also surround the NSA in the future. Is the NSA's current mission relevant and aligned for the future? Will our members continue to generously donate? Will our budgetary assets and investments which have increased over the past 20 years continue to grow? Will the NSA be able to increase funding for smokejumper and family scholarships and training grants and, when the need arises, adequately support our members through the Good Samaritan Fund?

Other questions arise. Will our membership of 1,400 decrease, remain stable, or hopefully increase? How can we retain our current members and attract new ones, particularly current jumpers and those who have retired in the past 25 years? How can we make the NSA more relevant to them?

What role can the NSA play in influencing USFS and BLM policy to ensure smokejumping's future and protecting our natural resources? Will there be a need for the NSA in 2034—ten years from now—and if so, what will



by Mike Bina
(Missoula '68)

it look like? What do you envision?

These questions are difficult to answer. Who knows what external threats or societal changes may present themselves. Smokejumping and the NSA's future, even with the best available metrics and "guess-timates," for the most part is uncertain.

The NSA Board of Directors will begin a strategic planning process to ensure that our association remains on solid ground, as it is today, going forward in an ever-increasing uncertain world that is less predictable. Smokejumpers know how

to plan, and we will guard against the tongue-in-cheek statement, "One of the reasons things didn't go according to the plan, is that there never was a plan."

The process will assess our association's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It will anticipate and navigate against whatever air turbulence and/or bumps we might encounter in the path ahead. Kind of like on a fire. When the circumstances dictate, strategies change. Flexibility. As Dwight Eisenhower said, "Neither a wise person nor a brave one lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him or her."

We plan to survey our current members (and sample some of our potential non-members we would like to recruit) to get valuable input. You are invited to contact me at beanuh1@yahoo.com with your input how the NSA can improve and grow stronger in the future.

We are grateful to the NSA and particularly smokejumping for the experience. It has had a positive impact on our lives bringing out the best in us we never knew we had. We all want to "pay back" to keep smokejumping and its association strong.

I am honored to follow Bob McKean, Jim Cherry, John Twiss, Doug Houston, Ron Stoleson, Larry Lufkin, Carl Gidlund, Laird Robinson, Ed Courtney, and Earl Cooley as president of the NSA Board of Directors.

As a smokejumper, I don't need to tell you, "The NSA Board will roll up their sleeves and do their best." In our smokejumper culture, you know we will always give it all we have, and more. Enjoy the magazine. And as Pope John Paul II says, "The future starts today, not tomorrow." 🙏

Former Smokejumper Earns Master's with Historical Jump Database

by Joshua Murdock (*Missoulian*, May 14, 2024; reprinted with permission)

THE YELLOWING PAGES fill binders packed into cardboard boxes at the Missoula Smokejumper Base. They contain almost a century of profound but niche history: every jump made by every smokejumper there since the program started in 1940.

Some of the earliest records, mainly in the '40s, are handwritten. Fine, flowing script preserves the names, ages, and weights of the jumpers and the dates, aircraft, forests, and wildfires they jumped on—plus practice and refresher jumps around town. Some pages record the final jumps of those who didn't return. Thompson, Silas, 21 years old, 175 pounds: "Fatally burned on Helena Fire 8/5/49." The Mann Gulch disaster was Thompson's first fire jump of the year. It claimed 13 lives, most of them smokejumpers from Missoula.

The fading records, and their corresponding volumes at the West Yellowstone and Grangeville, Idaho, bases, would have been consigned to profound obscurity if not for Missoula's **Roger Savage** (MSO-57).

Now 86, Savage spent decades meticulously building a digital database of every smokejumper and every jump in U.S. Forest Service Region 1. With the National Smokejumper Association, he built and maintains a national database estimated to contain 99% of the barely 6,000 smokejumpers in U.S. history. He has datasets ordered chronologically by fire, others alphabetically by last name. They're online and searchable.

Savage's efforts yielded him a degree from the University of Montana. This was no honorary degree, but an earned Master of Science in Forestry from the W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation.

Although Savage's database is modern and his degree only days old, his original master's coursework is as old as some of the historic records he's preserved.

Find All the Names

Born in Kalispell and raised in Choteau and then Hamilton after third grade, Savage went to UM for undergrad, graduating in 1960. He served in the

Army National Guard, where he learned to fly fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. Then he returned to UM to pursue a master's degree. All the while he was smokejumping, 1957 to 1966, save for the couple years when he was learning how to fly planes instead of leaping out of them.

In his rookie year in 1957 he completed his mandatory seven practice jumps between July 3–12. (Rookies must now complete 25 practice jumps.) Days later he was jumping on fires: Fish Lake on the Nez Perce, July 19; Sweathouse Creek on the Bitterroot, July 26; and so on. Six fires in all his rookie year, July 19 to Sept. 27.

Then it was back to college, as was customary for many smokejumpers of the day. After the Guard, he completed all of the coursework for a master's. But he never got to the final project.

"I completed my coursework, and one day airlines came through Missoula recruiting pilots," he said, noting that a pilot friend at Johnson Flying Service who'd flown him on jumps gave him a heads-up. "I went down and talked to them, and the rest is history, I went off and worked for them."

He spent the next 31 years, from '66 to '97, flying around the country and, later, the globe for United Airlines. He finished his career as a relief pilot on Boeing 747s making the 12–14-hour trek from New York City to Tokyo. And then, at 60, he hit forced retirement per federal regulations for commercial pilots.

By then he'd already started on the smokejumper database. As a member of the National Smokejumper Association, he helped organize reunions starting in the '80s. Back then he was an early adopter of personal computers.

"Nobody had put in a full list of all the jumpers before," he remembered. "Since I was a computer guy, I was assigned that job to find all the names I could." Once he left United in '97, "It became pretty much a full-time retirement job that I really enjoy doing."

In the decades since, he's built a master spreadsheet of jumps with 65,689 rows of data — “all the fire history of Region 1,” he called it — including the date, jumper names, spotter name, aircraft, forest, fire and location of every jump since 1940. In the “remarks” field he records the sometimes-tedious process he undertook to flesh out early jump details left unclear by sometimes incomplete record taking. He pored over historical newspaper accounts and contacted the few living jumpers from the era to get details.

He also built the database of nearly every jumper to have worked in the U.S. And the work goes on. “Especially when I got into retirement age in years, I made it more of a full-time project for me,” he said. “I’m still looking at the names, making sure we haven’t missed somebody. Every year there’s 50 more jumpers that will come on board, that will train this year.”

Right on Target

The database, and Savage’s dedication to it, garnered appreciation and admiration long before it came onto the university’s radar. At the Missoula Smokejumper base on Thursday, Assistant Operations Manager **Tyson Atkinson** (MSO-11) pulled out binders of jump records from the ‘40s and ‘50s. He said people come to the base at least monthly to search the records, oftentimes to better understand the jump history of a deceased father.

“I think it’s something that’s long overdue,” he said of Savage’s master’s degree, “and I’m glad he stepped up and was able to take a project of that magnitude on. It’s a lot of work. That data’s very important to a lot of people in and out of the smokejumper world.”

Examining Savage’s rookie year in the records, Atkinson was surprised by the pace at which Savage went through training and started jumping on fires: “That’s quick, that’s unheard of.” In all, Savage recorded more than 150 jumps, more than 50 of which were on fires.

Chuck Sheley (CJ-59), vice president of the National Smokejumper Association and editor of *Smokejumper* magazine, called Savage’s database “the foundation of our organization.” I think our database is probably 99.9% accurate in keeping the names and the bases of smokejumpers we’ve had in smokejumper history,” he said. “I’m in the database continually, maybe four or five times a day. It’s the bread and butter of our association.”

In the magazine, Sheley writes obituaries for members when they die, often relying on Savage’s

database. And the information Savage collected, he said, “has proven to be right on target.”

A No-Brainer

But that was mostly unknown at the University of Montana, where records simply showed a grad student named Roger Savage stopped attending in 1966 and didn’t finish his degree.

And then, on Feb. 8, the journalist Breanna McCabe, a PBS producer who made the smokejumper documentary “Higgins Ridge,” emailed Elizabeth Harrison, the communications director for the College of Forestry and Conservation. She explained Savage’s work, which she discovered and relied upon while making the documentary, and she wondered: Could his data be preserved at the Mansfield Library at UM, and could it count as the project he needed to earn his master’s degree?

Paul Lukacs, associate dean of research and graduate studies at the College of Forestry and Conservation, received a similar letter a month later, this one from **Robert McKean** (MSO-67), president of the National Smokejumper Association. He implored Lukacs to see if Savage was eligible for a master’s degree for his two databases: The database of all smokejumpers in the U.S., and the comprehensive and detailed list of every individual jump in Region 1. Initially there was talk of an honorary master’s from the college, but that doesn’t exist, Lukacs said. “But he had all the work done to get an earned master’s.”

“I saw all that and I sort of thought it was kind of a no-brainer,” he said, recounting his work to confirm that Savage’s coursework and project met all academic standards for a master’s. “It wasn’t something I had to spend a lot of time pondering.”

And the project, he said, although not original research, was more than worthy: “It’s an important accomplishment and an important piece for the profession. One, sort of the historical context of all the contributions that these people have done, risking their lives and helping other people through firefighting. And the other part ... understanding fire behavior in a whole long string of history is important context, too. It’s hard to get that many fires cataloged in one place.”

It all happened fast, Lukacs and Harrison said. So fast, in fact, that Harrison had to contact the cap and gown company after their deadline to secure regalia for Savage. Lukacs called Savage just two weeks before graduation to share the news.

“That was the biggest surprise of my life,” Savage said two days before graduation. “Here it is, 64 years after I graduated from college.”

Best of Both Worlds

On Saturday he was joined at graduation by his wife, Bonnie, a daughter and two granddaughters. Last year they attended his granddaughters’ college graduation in Victoria, British Columbia. “One of them is working on her master’s,” he said, “and I told her, I might beat ya.”

Savage said, “It’s nice to have any degree” and noted that he’s been a strong proponent of higher education his entire life. He still takes classes at UM’s Lifelong Learning Institute, and his current endeavor is exploring and experimenting with artificial intelligence.

He also still actively hikes the area’s mountains. For 75 years he hiked each Monday with **Roy Williams** (GAC-60), a friend from Boy Scouts in Hamilton. “We had a scoutmaster that wasn’t really big into merit badges, but he was big into hiking, and that’s what got me into it,” he said. “I’ve been hiking ever since in the mountains of western Montana and northern Idaho.”

And it was a hike in the southern Bitterroot decades ago that also helped spawn his database. After the hike, he realized he’d passed through a place he’d jumped

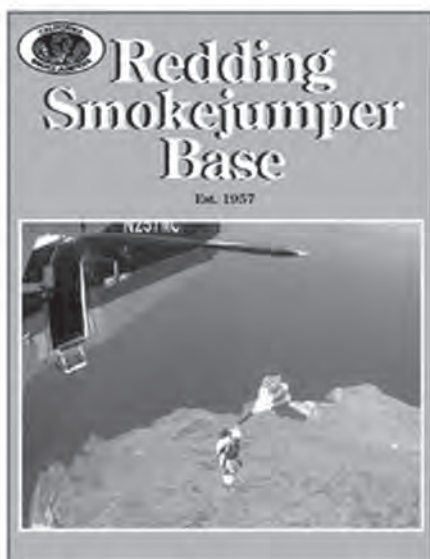
into long before “and I didn’t even know it,” he said, recalling that it would’ve been more meaningful had he been aware in the moment.

So, he went to the Missoula base and pulled his records. Things progressed from there, he said, “because somebody had to do it.” Since then, he said, he’s responded to hundreds of requests for historical jump information. Savage’s taste for hard work, and doing it with a smile, was evident even in jumping days.

“You’re just in beautiful country a lot of the times. Some of the pack-outs were really interesting,” he recalled. “I jumped on the Salmon River one time, we had to hike uphill. One time we hiked up to the Magruder Corridor Road near Salmon Mountain Lookout and it was a 20-mile hike out. But for somebody who likes to hike anyway and you’re getting paid for it, it’s the best of both worlds.” 🌲

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Joshua Murdock covers the outdoors and natural resources for the Missoulian. He previously served as editor-in-chief of The Boulder Monitor in Jefferson County, Montana, and has worked as a newspaper reporter and photographer in rural towns in Idaho and Utah. To read more of his reporting, go online to missoulian.com.



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History of the Redding Smokejumper Base

NEW

A history of the Redding base from its establishment in 1957 through 2023. Highlighted with periods under Base Managers; two organized Jump Lists recording all who served; stories from Jumpers; period photos; and, Crew Pictures.

Ode to My Friend Rod McIver (MSO-64)

by Art Morrison (Missoula '68)

I don't recall when I first met Rod, but probably on a fire or at the MSO base in '68. I knew his first family and kids, Evander and Martha, at the house with his wife. I loved spending time with them and still have vivid memories of hanging out in their backyard in Missoula on his regular cookouts/parties. In his youth he had this habit of placing empty beer cans on his post-Vietnam steel plate forehead and crushing them.

It was quite a surprise the first time I saw it and have never seen it done since.

He and **Lowell Hanson** (MSO-58) started a canoe business. I got to be his bowman in races when no one else was available and, on occasion, when he just wanted me to go for a run with him. We also used the canoe to go duck-hunting on several local rivers and never once capsized, and even got a few ducks.

On the ski slopes, he used hickory skis with clamp down bindings. After a few tumbles, since he wore all wool attire, he looked like a snowman. A whole lot of fun to be with along with his hearty laugh. Meanwhile, I was using my Fisher President skis with Solomon 505 bindings, thanks to **Dave Grendahl** (MSO-66) and **Ron Pierce** (MSO-66).

In elk camp we had a deal where one would come in early and prepare the evening meal. Rod introduced **Jack Kirkendall** (MSO-74) and



Rod McIver
(Courtesy Art Morrison)

my dad to collard greens and okra. Slimy, sticky, and quite disgusting. Like cod liver oil and escargot must be. However, his homemade current wine was quite tasty, but the dandelion was very unappealing to the palate. I don't think he ever made grape wine or, if he did, did not serve it.

In later years after my jumping career, Albuquerque, and five years hard time in DC, his second family would come visit at my cabin in Polson Bay on Flathead Lake. We had sleepovers

with his wife and kids. Kids and adults spread out all over the cabin floor. It was great fun. His kids and my three daughters had lots of fun swimming in the lake, playing with my old canoe, fishing, and even running an old putt-putt motorboat.

Rod was and always will be one of a kind. A graduate of Sewanee, The University of the South, and a gentleman in all respects. His love of life is an inspiration to me, and I'm sure to many others who had the opportunity to spend time and love him. As Teddy Roosevelt said to Pinchot, "I'm a better man for having known you." And so it goes.

I had the chance to visit with him by phone after the gathering for him last month. He seemed at peace and prepared to move on for his last flight and jump. 🌲



Transitions—We Had a Good Run

*The big one comes at the end of all
we think we know.*

Into the darkness or light we go.

The great adventure awaits.

The spirit goes with or against the flow.

*Extreme humor, wry smile,
lilting cackle will win out.*

Sometimes driving into stiff winds.

*Not much to do. Best keep a good grip
on the toggles.*

Point those Whites a little left, right.

Air rushing the vents.

Out of air and ideas at the same time.

Howard J. Andrews (MSO-77)
for **Rod McIver** (MSO-64)

Millsy's Last Jump

by Paul Fattig (Associate), *Grants Pass Daily Courier*; reprinted with permission

The small plane rose quickly up from the airstrip at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum, heading south. Pilot Jason “Wolf” Emonds skillfully banked the aircraft to pass just west of the base headquarters.

It was there, shortly after 2 p.m. on April 27, that renowned Siskiyou Smokejumper **Gary Lee Mills** (CJ-66) made his final jump in the form of his ashes floating down to the base where he was a longtime jumper. A large group of friends and relatives were there to honor him, several of whom spoke movingly of him during the memorial service.

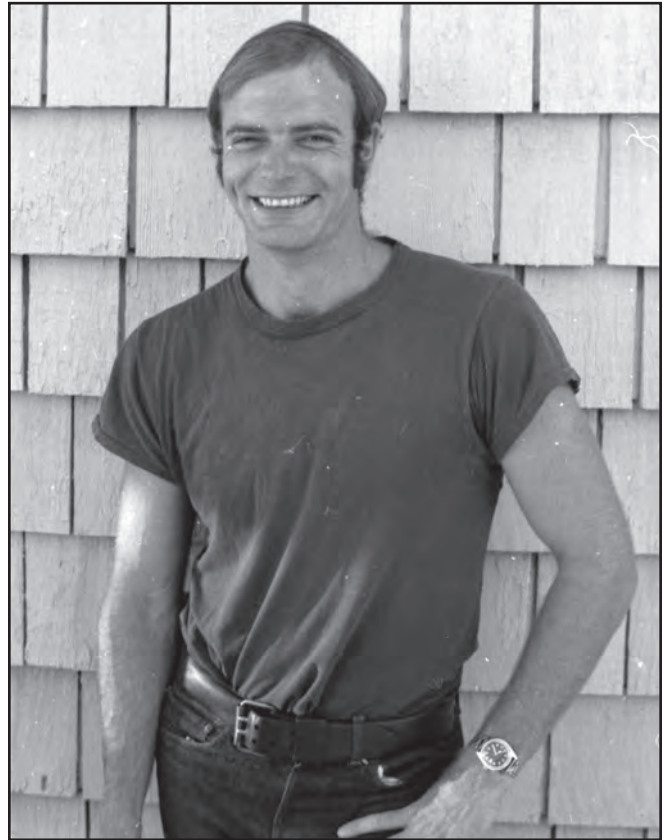
Former Siskiyou Smokejumper **Tom “Troop” Emonds** (CJ-66), the father of the pilot and a longtime friend of Mills, dispersed the ashes.

“Well, buddy, it was a great honor to know and work with you and it is a great honor to be here with you on your last jump,” said Troop as he released the ashes, according to his son. With that heartfelt farewell, Tom Emonds reflected the deep feelings fellow smokejumpers shared for their departed brother.

Fondly known as “Millsy” by his smokejumper comrades, Gary Mills passed away on Dec. 3, 2023. Born on May 10, 1948, he was raised in Kerby under the shadow of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. One of the three original smokejumper bases in the United States, all of which opened in 1943, the historic base closed in the fall of 1981.

Although the bulk of the roughly 430 smokejumpers serving at the base over the years hailed from throughout our nation, many young men from our region became Siskiyou Smokejumpers over the years. In addition to Mills, those from the Illinois Valley included Mick Swift, Gary Thornhill, Dave Atkin, Ron Versteeg, Wes Nicholson, Mike Mann, Pat McNally, Ray Osipovich, Rick Oliver, George Custer, brothers Ken and Hugh Rosenberg, and brothers Rod and Steve Baumann. Rogue Valley residents taking to the air alongside them included Grants Pass residents Chuck Mansfield and Tommy Smith, Lee Gossett of Central Point, Rick Dees of Rogue River, Roger Newton of Ashland, brothers Mike, Jim and Fred Cramer of Sunny Valley, and brothers Robert and Willie Lowden of Wilderville.

We kids reared in the Illinois Valley looked up to the smokejumpers, both figuratively and



Gary Mills
(Courtesy NSA files)

literally. They were our real-life heroes. And Gary Mills was a leader among our champions, serving as base manager in its final year.

Former Siskiyou smokejumper **Gary Buck** (CJ-66), who also rookied with Mills, will never forget him.

“Millsy was an outstanding base manager,” he observed after the memorial. “Respect for Millsy as a leader and a friend to all of us was just amazing. Many of us owe Gary Mills a lot. He will be greatly missed.”

Mills, along with Buck, Tom Emonds, and many other jumpers, worked hard to create the remarkable Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum, which opened in 2004 and is now an Oregon treasure. Indeed, it is the only former smokejumper base nationwide that has been turned into a museum, drawing visitors from throughout the country.

When you can, drop by the base museum at 30902 Redwood Highway, just south of Cave Junction. Open from mid-March through mid-November, it drew an

impressive 8,000 visitors last year. Former Siskiyou Smokejumpers will serve as your expert guides. There is no charge, but donations are appreciated. Call 541-441-4804 for more information.

Like many of the jumpers, Millsy was featured in my 2022 book, *The Mouse that Soared: Tales of the Siskiyou Smokejumpers*. The title is double entendre in that the book focuses on both an outstanding jumper named **Allen “Mouse” Owen** (CJ-70), who stood 4 feet 10 inches, and the small base which stood large in the history of smokejumping.

In an email to me when I was writing the book, **Chuck Mansfield** (CJ-59) explained why he was a fan of Siskiyou jumpers whose outstanding members included folks like **Bob Nolan** (CJ-47), **Mick Swift** (CJ-56) and others. “Here is the thing I appreciate about the former Siskiyou base smokejumpers: To a man, they are a bright, likeable lot,” he wrote. “. . . I’m guessing the profession tends to draw folks who like a challenge, be it physical or intellectual.”

In fact, Mansfield, a 1956 Graduate of Grants Pass H.S., earned a doctorate degree in physics en route to becoming a NASA scientist. In addition, 1953 Siskiyou smokejumper rookie Stuart Roosa became a NASA astronaut, serving as the command module pilot for the

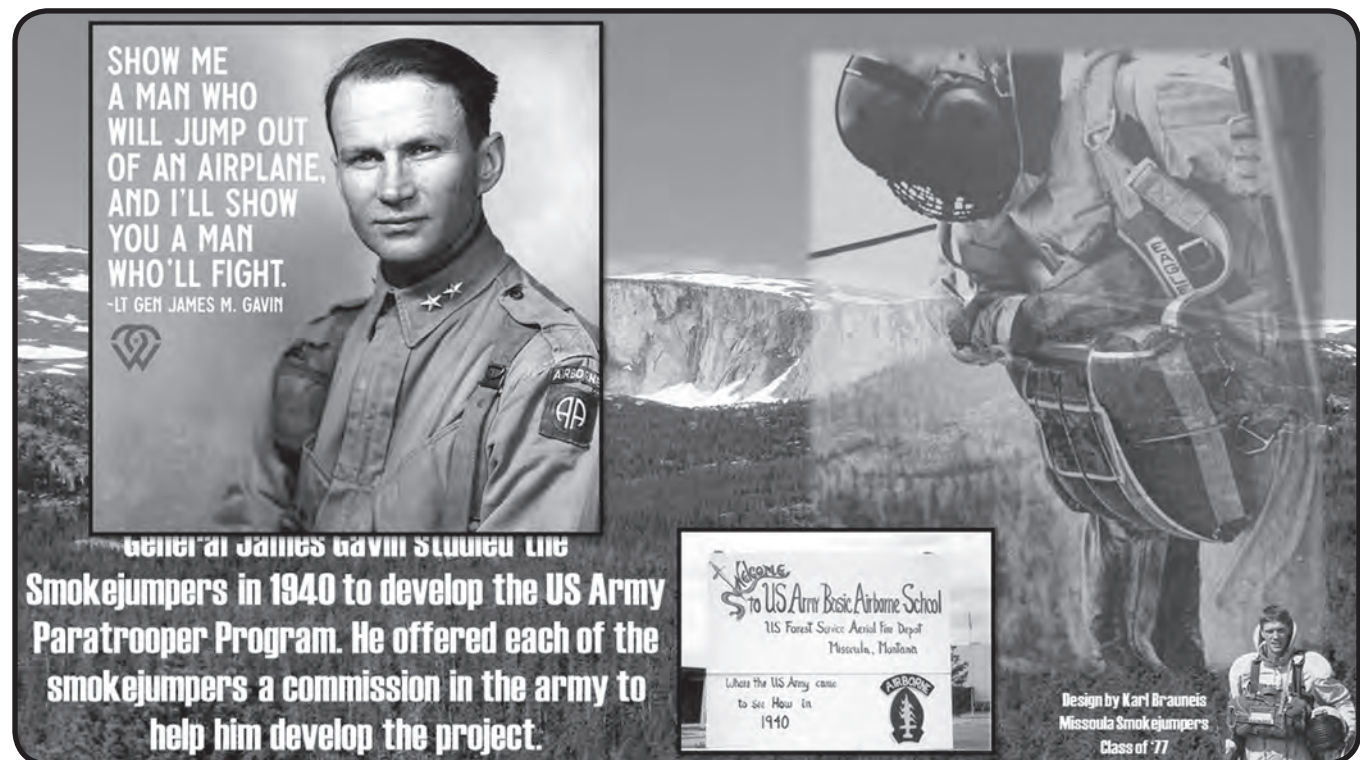
Apollo 14 mission, the third mission to land astronauts on the Moon.

In the chapter titled, “The Kerby Kid,” Mills recalled when he and other seniors were in the Illinois Valley H.S. library and discussed their plans after graduating. “I said I might go Army airborne,” recalled Mills, the son of a decorated World War II veteran. “And Kathleen Allen said, ‘If you want to jump out of airplanes, why don’t you become a smokejumper?’”

His classmate knew of what she spoke. Her father was **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46), the legendary manager of the Siskiyou base. Despite never having been in an airplane before he jumped, Mills did well, making some 230 jumps while serving at the base from 1966 through 1981.

“Looking back at smokejumping, if I knew then what I know now, I would have enjoyed it even more,” Mills said in an interview for the book. “And being at the Siskiyou Base with people like Mouse and all the others made it even more special. We had a really good group.”

Gary Lee Mills made it a special experience for everyone fortunate enough to have known him along the way. RIP, Millsy. 🕊



Goat Mountain Fire

by Roger Cox (Missoula '69)

The Goat Mountain Fire was routine as far as smokejumper assignments, but the little adventures that occur on any fire assignment are what memories are made of.

Goat Mountain is located several miles downstream from Moose Creek Ranger Station on the west side of the Selway River. Luckily, the trail is located on the west side, greatly decreasing the efforts required for a packout. The fire was small, a two-manner, located 500 feet or so above the trail in ponderosa pine and fir. It was ignited by the lightning storm from a few days earlier.

One of the highlights of this fire was it being the first fire jump for my jump partner, **Dennis Kimbrough** (MSO-74). Although he was unproven as a smokejumper, I had little doubts about Dennis. Having worked with him around the West Yellowstone base for the past month, I knew he would do his share and more. Dennis was a man of few words and acted like this was just another day.

We jumped about 5:00 p.m., so we knew our fire would be an overnight task. The jump had no issues and we both got through the timber and on the ground. The fire was small and smoldering in the deep duff. By midnight the fire was cold. Daylight did not bring any new issues to the fire, and we called it out.

The packout started with a steep descent to the river and the trail beside it. Dennis said we could make it in 15 minutes. I said two hours. I was right. Our instructions were to leave our jump gear on the trail. I decided to pack my chute out because I was already on my second set of gear. My first set was still on a trail awaiting a packer to pick it up.

While we prepared for the hike upstream to Moose Creek Ranger Station, a guided tour of whitewater rafts floated by. We were just downstream of a whitewater section. These rafts caught our attention, and we stopped to watch them navigate through the rocks and waves. I had my camera and decided to take some shots of the whitewater rafters. Meanwhile, Dennis disappeared.

Rafts kept coming by and I kept taking pictures. Finally, as a group of four boats came by, to my surprise, on the last boat was my jump partner. He had hiked upstream and hitchhiked a ride down the river. As far as I know, this was a first. As he floated around the bend, I sat down and waited for the float to end.

Soon I could hear a squish-squish as Dennis walked up the trail in his wet boots. He had a big smile on his face but didn't say anything. I shouldered my pack for the 5-mile hike to Moose Creek.

We arrived before lunch and had some time before the Otter could pick us up. Other jumpers were coming in, and we would wait for them to arrive. The packer stated that he might as well get a mule and go retrieve Dennis' gear. Dennis was starting to develop blisters from walking in wet boots, so I volunteered to accompany the packer.

With the mule in tow, the two of us walked back down the river to Dennis' gear. The pack was just jump gear and parachutes but still weighed close to 90 pounds. The trouble was that one pack on the mule was very lopsided, and the mule was not having anything to do with a pack so unbalanced. As soon as the pack was tied on, the mule bucked it off. In doing so it also broke the pack frame the mule wore to secure the load. Well, the pecking order was soon established. I would carry the pack out for my second packout of the day. The mule would have the day off. 🐘



Looking Back: Cave Junction jumper rappelling from tree. (Courtesy Doug Beck)

Ring of Fire

The Gobi, 1966—Part I

by Wes Brown (Cave Junction '66)

EVERY SMOKEJUMPER HAS a story, a unique set of circumstances or a sequence of events which unfold in such a way that one day, beyond their control and better judgment, they ultimately show up at a place like Siskiyou Smokejumper Base looking for a job. This is a story of how I became a smokejumper and my first fire jump. Along the way I met strange new friends who think in strange new ways and experience the world in strange new adventures in strange, new and exciting places.

I guess you become a smokejumper when you make your first fire jump. Afterwards, at a crew meeting, someone awards you a silver smokejumper pin with words like, "Boy, if you lose this pin, you'll never get another one." You're finally "in," a made man, and the fact that you are a bona fide smokejumper can never be taken away from you even if you do lose your pin. But it's a long journey in a short time: the interval from arriving at the Gobi to receiving your jump pin! And all that running, those practice jumps and packouts, the shouting squad leaders and the pushups in the gorge don't add up to a thing until you finally slide your Buffalos out the door and onto the jump step, feel the slip stream tug at your leg pocket, hear the spotter's instructions shouted through your ear hole, and with his slap on your shoulder, leap out toward that burning ring of fire below.

My life as a smokejumper began like this. When I entered college in the fall of '63 I had planned to wrestle on the Chico State team, but I hadn't thought about football. An acquaintance convinced me to reconsider, and I decided to give it a try. I played undersized linebacker that year and varsity ball the next, mostly injured and on the bench.

While on that team, I met **Emett Grijalva** (CJ-66). Emmett was a perfect example of what a well-conditioned athlete should be. He was muscled up, a good runner, a tough football player, and a punishing boxer on Chico State's nationally ranked boxing team. An excellent student in every subject, he also knew by heart every

word to every pop song on every top forty hit list at any one given time.

I was too beat-up after my second season of football, so I gave it up to concentrate on my best sport, wrestling. Although I was no longer playing football, Emmett and I rented a house together during my junior year. Emmett had graduated by this time and was student teaching in physical education at Chico Jr. High.

One day Emmett came home and told me that his master teacher was a smokejumper and jumped in Oregon each summer while returning to teach at Chico Jr. during the school year. His name was **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59), and this upcoming season he was going to be acting foreman and was looking for recruits for the summer of '66. They were having a hard time filling the crew, as newly instituted civil service regulations required that smokejumper applicants must have had previous fire crew experience. Since both Emmett and I were qualified, Chuck wanted to know if we were both interested.

So, Emmett took me over to Chico Jr. to meet Chuck. I had no idea what to expect, assuming a brief information session followed by an, "I'll think about it and let you know..." response on my part. Therefore, I was surprised when I walked into a perfectly ordered office and saw a redheaded, high energy, track-coach-PE-teacher type person who, immediately after shaking my hand, walked swiftly across the office, opened a file cabinet drawer, pulled out a US government form 171 job application blank and inserted it into the typewriter on his desk. "Name?" he said as he began to type.

Fifteen minutes and twenty questions later, he had finished my application and asked, "Can you play softball?" I had the feeling it was a frequently asked question. "Yes," I lied, "I play second base." "Good," he replied, "we're weak at second." A direct man, he had me sign the application, folded it, sealed it in a government post-paid envelope and said, "I'll mail this tomorrow. Don't worry about the stamp." And with that the big choice was made. Slightly befuddled, I was later

accepted, albeit under the false pretense that I could play second base, along with nine other recruits from around the country to become a member of what became the rookie class of 1966 at Siskiyou Aerial Project in Cave Junction, Oregon.

Part II – The Rookies

“Rookies” seemed a strange term to me. I always thought it applied to baseball players in their first year who would or would not make it in the “big leagues.” Somehow the term, as applied to ten scraggly smokejumper wanna-be’s, didn’t seem to fit. But I got used to it and soon our group of intimidated strangers would assume a genuine group identity, each member learning about all other member’s strengths and weaknesses, working together, training, drinking, playing, arguing, and for the most part looking out for each other in all situations.

All the rookies lived in the new barracks on the base except for **Gary Mills**, a skinny 18-year-old “local” who



*Gary Mills
(Courtesy NSA files)*

lived at home, and suave **Jerry Brownwood**. Jerry and his new wife lived in the small residence on the base, and she came to visit him during training drills. She was beautiful and friendly to all of us. Jerry even got to go home for lunch while the rest of us rookies scrounged for seconds in the Mess Hall. Training was at times grueling, painful, and tiring and at other times fun. The physical part was not too bad for me as I was a wrestler and was used to long runs and intense training, often in hot rubber suits while “cutting weight.” Emmett and some of the others also had an easy time with training. On our two-a-day runs across what we now called the Gobi, **Davy Ward** and I were usually out front, followed closely by **Tom (Troop) Emonds** and some others. Davy was a good runner but was loud and generally obnoxious with a sophisticated and practiced ability to piss everyone else off. I admired these qualities. Troop, on the other hand, did not. He was from the East Coast and had just completed an around-the-world adventure trip stopping in unlikely

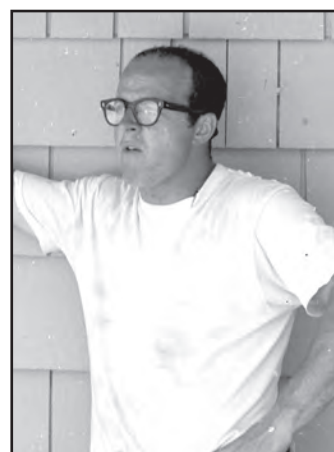
places like Austria, Syria, India, New Zealand and Australia. He told us stories, some of them believable, of his exploits, and on our long runs kept trying to get us all to join him singing “Waltzing Matilda,” one of the few songs that Emmett didn’t know.

Bringing up the rear was usually **Jim Tomasini** followed by **Lou Wayers**, sweating and constantly pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose. Lou was gutsy, but he just couldn’t run. In the middle of the pack were **Joe Niesen** and **Gary Buck**. Joe was tall and lanky and deliberate with a deep voice that imparted jokes, one-liners, and comments with a razor-sharp wit. Buck was tall with a blond surfer-boy haircut, long arms and a big chest. He had been a pole-vaulter at Western State in Colorado. His hobby was climbing ropes. He was generally quiet and soft-spoken, but had an ear shattering Tarzan yell which, with a little persuasion and a few beers at a party, could be heard in the next county.

The interval between my arrival and my first jump was intense but not unusual. Everybody knows what happens: running, training, calisthenics, more training and more running, punctuated by a few pushup-volleyball games in which we were trashed



*Tom “Troop” Emonds
(Courtesy NSA files)*



*Lou Wayers
(Courtesy NSA files)*



*Joe Niesen
(Courtesy NSA files)*



*Gary Buck
(Courtesy NSA files)*

was stung by a yellowjacket and shouted in a panicked voice, “It got me in the big ear!”).

Part III – The Other Characters

During this time, we became acquainted with the cast of characters at this place and some sense of its traditions. In this we were joined by **Delos Dutton** (MSO-51), the new Project Air Officer, who had just transferred in from



Delos Dutton (Courtesy NSA files)

goal, besides getting the plane off the ground in less than six minutes, was looking out for his troops. He wanted only the best for his crew but in turn he demanded a high level of performance. Another 40-year-old newcomer was the rookie pilot, **Hal Ewing**, who had been driving a school bus in Cave Junction when the need arose for a new pilot. Hal was contacted and took the job. He was a retired Navy jet jockey and had started his career as an 18-year-old fighter pilot during WWII.

Meals were a respite from the daily grind. Dee insisted that his jumpers be fed high quality food three times a day. There were bacon and eggs in the morning and roast beef and Congo Bars in the evening. There

again and again by the current jumpers. We also learned useful stuff like how to jump out of the back of moving pickups without getting hurt; how to rappel out of high places using a ridiculous cobbled-together-boy-scout rope and D-ring assembly that you better not get your glove caught in; how to climb tall trees in the wind (once while 150 feet in the air, Troop

was always plenty of ice cream for dessert. Gary Buck enjoyed the atmosphere and was always one of the last to leave after dinner. For dessert he performed a special ritual at the ice cream freezer every night, heaping gigantic amounts of vanilla ice cream from the five-gallon containers onto his full-sized plate which he would then leisurely eat, all the while engaging in pleasant conversation. Sometimes, when he found a container with just the right amount of ice cream still in it, he would take out his buck knife, cut off the top and carry the bottom part with the ice cream to his table, thus saving himself the effort of dishing it all out.

One day we got to watch jumpers make practice jumps. There had even been a small fire bust during our training and many of the jumpers were gone several days on early season two-manners. On one fire, a jumper named **Alex Theios** (CJ-65), a buffed-up philosophy major from San Bernardino, was “aced-out” on a fire as he arrived late to the plane on his day off and couldn’t get his boots on in time. He had been injured the year before, his rookie year, and this would have been his first fire jump. Being “aced” could be a “burn” in smokejumper society we learned as we watched Alex throw his left boot up and over the loft while the plane taxied off the ramp and onto the runway without him.

In Missoula, where Dee was from, there had been a tradition of harassing rookies in the days immediately preceding their first jump. Dee thought it a bad idea and did a great deal to squelch the tradition at the Gobi. He made it known that scaring rookies would not be looked upon favorably and could result in the



*Hal Ewing
(Courtesy NSA files)*



*John Robison
(Courtesy NSA files)*



Harold Hartman
(Courtesy NSA files)

Chit Chat, the local bar which just “got by,” thanks to a steady federal subsidy of payroll dollars... at least during each jump season. The game went on for what seemed like hours and involved much of the standard shouting, burping, farting, and laughing of previous evenings, punctuated by the frequent grating of ping-pong paddles across the heater vent louvers and expressions like “you’re all going to die, rookies, ha, ha, ha!” Intelligent stuff.

Eric (The Blak) Schoenfeld was a third-year jumper and reputed to be the smartest guy and best runner on the crew. What he hadn’t read probably wasn’t worth reading. Eric had led several of our rookie runs. Wearing black Friscos, staggered high above his black Converse low top gym shoes, a black T-shirt, with a black three-



Garry Peters
(Courtesy NSA files)

day beard, a black pinch of Copenhagen in his lower lip, and topped with a black cowboy hat covering his black hair, he was usually far out ahead of us rookies. As we ran, we speculated about how he got his nickname, but no one was sure.

Just about every morning before the volleyball game he would join John Robison, **Garry Peters** (CJ-63), and other members of the Chit Chat crew talking and laughing, mostly about the previous night’s exploits. Being a rookie, I could only watch and listen. After a few days I realized this was a game and the

offender, in his words, “kicking a can down the road.” However, they continued. The night before our first jump as we, nervously, tried to get some sleep, **John Robison** (CJ-65), **Harold Hartman** (CJ-65), **Eric Schoenfeld** (CJ-64,) and a few others started up the nightly ping pong game in the day room after a long night in the

game had a purpose. The object was to tell outrageous stories, exaggerations, and outright lies about the night before to start Eric laughing. After he started, they would concentrate all their efforts to increase the effect. Using this coordinated strategy, Eric’s laughter turned to unceasing intakes of air. Bits of Copenhagen dislodged from his cheek and filled his windpipe, which was immediately followed by loud snorts and hiccups, finally culminating in bent-at-the waist convulsions of laughter.

Chuck Mansfield (CJ-59) was a PhD physics student studying at the University of Idaho and was also reputed to be the smartest guy on the crew. He wasn’t so great in the running department though, as a pack-a-day habit limited his lung capacity. He was a small guy with a big brain and a bigger heart. They called him “Buzzer” because he had invented a battery-powered buzzer years earlier that, when activated and attached to a set of climbers, allowed it to be found after being free fallen from the plane into thick brush by the buzzing sound it made. There were some minor technical difficulties with the invention, caused mostly by spotters who almost always forgot to activate it before kicking it out. 🦉

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Wes graduated from Chico State, earned his teaching credential, and was “by chance” hired at Chico Jr. H.S. where he taught Special Education and coached wrestling. He later moved to Cave Junction with his family where he taught and coached at Illinois Valley H.S. He jumped at CJ 1966-80 and currently lives there. “Part II of Ring of Fire—The Gobi 1966” will be in the next issue. (Ed.)



Looking Back: Smokejumper rising from his landing roll. Photo taken by Stanley, 1947 (USDA Forest Service, National Archives 7107562)

Remembering Steve Wight

by Kjell Krane (North Cascades '65)

Since the passing of **Steve Wight** (NCSB-65) on February 4, 2024, most of us who knew him as a friend, former coworker, sibling, spouse, parent or extended family member have probably been sadly reflecting on his loss and the relationship we had with him during some of his 81 years of life. A few of us who first met Steve in 1965 as fellow smokejumpers at the North Cascades

Smokejumper Base in Winthrop, Washington, have decided to write down some of our favorite memories of Steve and our times together in that very specialized type of firefighting in the National Forests of our country.

I first met Steve early in June 1965 when all nine of us newly hired applicants for that summer's class of "rookies" were told to assemble at the North Cascades base

and airport for our first weeks of training. The next couple of weeks would be very challenging physically and mentally to see if we could meet the expectations of the base manager and the experienced squad leaders who would be training us. There would be classes in basic first aid, map reading, weather, firefighting, proper jump procedures, and wearing the full helmet along with specialized flame-resistant Kevlar padded jacket and pants to protect us from burns, sharp branches and rocks, etc. Of course, a lot of time was spent standing or crouched in the doorway of a wooden mocked-up partial aircraft fuselage to practice exiting the aircraft and dealing with possible emergencies if our parachutes didn't open properly.

Among the most unappealing aspects about being a rookie were the twice a day long group runs around the

entire base and runway perimeter especially the mid-afternoon run which was always during the hottest part of the day. There were also lots of push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, jumping jacks, and even full standing backbends while your legs were held against a low log frame with nylon straps. We were being tested to see if we had the stamina to endure parachute jumps into remote

areas and then immediately start firefighting as a two-man team, or, for larger fires, to work as a group of four, six, or even more to control the flames and prevent the spread of the burning area. We rookies came to "resent" our hard-driving designated trainer, John, who was back for his 3rd season as a smokejumper. He was tall and strong, plus he played multiple sports in his college months

during the rest of the year. One undeniable attribute was that he truly knew what skills and degree of strength were required to become a fully trusted jump partner who could perhaps even save an injured partner's life if a hard parachute landing broke a vertebra, leg bone or worse.

Some of us rookies suspected that he took some abnormal pleasure in setting a fast pace for every part of our physical training, and we schemed privately for some way to deliver a dose of payback once our two weeks of hell were completed. The last day of intense physical training usually ended with a sweaty, miserable hour-long hike with a heavy backpack up to the top of a local high ridge and then back down to the main base. It was a Friday afternoon and Steve had already approached me and a couple of other rookies about



*L to R: Kjell Krane and Steve Wight, NCSB 1965
(Courtesy Jim Grant)*

planning a “revolt” to spring on John. The final plan was that once we reached the top of the ridge, we would suddenly jump him and hogtie his arms and legs while we “prepared” him for the journey back to the airport. Steve and I had persuaded one of the other rookies to drive us into town the night before, and we bought some rope, liquid hair dyes of different colors, plus some lipstick, nail polish, and several felt tip pens.

The next day we all picked up our big canvas packs and, with the usual complaints about the weight and heat, lined up behind John. About 40 minutes later we finally reached the top of the ridge soaked with sweat and were allowed to drop our packs and drink out of our canteens. John seemed nervous and tried to rush us through the brief rest break, so I think he felt uncomfortable about the way we had spread out. Some of the guys had moved slightly downhill below our group. Steve even faked a question that he needed to ask John, so he could be standing very near him. Suddenly John bolted like a startled Mule deer and took long, leaping strides straight downhill, but Steve and three other rookies slammed into him like it was tackle football. We tied his hands behind his back and sat him down while we used our remaining water to mix up the hair dyes. Then we decorated his chest and back using the felt tip pens writing comments about his lack of manliness and muscles. He begged us not to dye his

hair because he was one of the key individuals in his best friend’s wedding next Saturday down in Wenatchee. We were very sympathetic but gave him the full salon treatment anyway. Before departing we used several long-dead tree limbs to fashion a large travois (A-frame) like the American Indians used to move their teepees and possessions from one seasonal camp to another. Since we did not have a horse, we “persuaded” John (by tying his hands to the A-frame) to pull the travois loaded with several packs and headed back downhill to NCSB.

John was not smiling during our return, but he knew there was not much to do that would make any difference now. He was thoroughly humiliated as our group approached the main hangar with his colorful body messages (graffiti), cosmetics and dyed hair. The other squadleaders and jumpers quickly hustled over to the hangar to welcome John back with loud laughter but mainly to heap ridicule and shame on his failed attempt to escape our trap. Our group of rookies all went into Winthrop that night to purchase some adult beverages and discuss the upcoming week where we would have to complete seven parachute jumps successfully to graduate and become fully accepted smokejumpers. There was more than a little tension in our voices that night about next week, but we also felt vindicated because of our work up on the ridge. 🍄



Looking Back

Former Recon Marine and Vietnam vet (three tours) **Allen “Mouse” Owen** (CJ-70) and **Clark Noble** (MYC-70) at McCall, 1981. Photo courtesy of **Tom “Troop” Emonds** (CJ-66). (*Smokejumper*, April 2001)

Mountain Pine Beetle and Forest Management

by Karl Brauneis, Forester (Missoula '77)

Mountain pine beetles are always in the forest ecosystem in an endemic state. The key that triggers an epidemic buildup is the age of the surrounding trees. When lodgepole pine reach on or about the year 100, they send out the message, "Kill me." It's time to regenerate. This is their life cycle. Mountain pine beetles require a "Robust" timber industry to control it. This is because the pine beetle is on a one-year life cycle as opposed to the spruce beetle on a two-year cycle. The spruce beetle will give you an extra year to catch



Karl Brauneis

up to them. Still, as a forester, I have had great success in controlling both pine and spruce beetle when we had a "robust" timber industry and multiple-use timber management of the National Forests. Both of those attributes are seriously lacking today.

When beetles go epidemic, they girdle the trees and kill them. The phloem layer directly inside the bark is the living tissue of the tree. Once this is girdled, the tree is unable to move water, nutrients, and sugars up or down from the roots to the needles, and vice versa. Trees are now weakened, die, and blow over creating the fuel bed required for a stand-replacement fire. Lodgepole have both cones (non-serotinous) that open without fire and cones that require fire (serotinous) to open. Serotinous cones are closed tight with a resin that require fire to melt the resin to open the cones and disperse the seed.

After a fire burns through the area, the lodgepole pine is often reseeded naturally and can become a "dog-hair stand." Often these stands burn twice as snags left from the first fire blow down again and add fuel for a new fire several years later. In the end you often get a very crowded and stagnate sterile environment supporting mainly chipmunks and squirrels within a dog-hair stand.

It is important to know that foresters study the natural systems of trees and can then enhance and improve the system to provide for not only the trees

and ecosystem but for the human population as well. We call this stewardship.

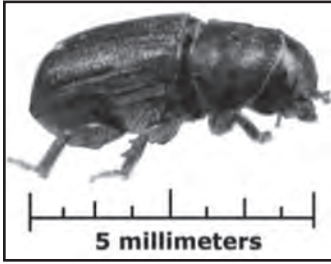
As foresters we might clearcut lodgepole at year 100 to circumvent the rise of beetles from endemic to epidemic. This also mimics the natural system but in a more refined way on a much faster time schedule. Trees are harvested for American jobs from the logger to the mill worker, and the savings are also passed along to the individual buying 2x4s at the local hardware store. Forestry was designed to

provide first and foremost to the communities adjacent to the forest. This was the brain child of President Theodore Roosevelt and his first Forester, Gifford Pinchot.

Following timber harvest, the cutting units are then burned of slash and regenerated naturally. We can also supplement with artificial regeneration (nursery stock) or add in other favorable species that might be desirable for wildlife on the site. In the Wind River Mountains, we supplemented with Whitebark pine. The nuts from Whitebark are a key food source for black and grizzly bears. You can see the remnants of the Whitebark cones in their feces.

The cut areas are now open for regeneration. They also become key habitat for large ungulates, like elk and deer, and are truly loved by black bears and the grizzly. Many of our large clearcuts in North Idaho on the Kaniksu N.F. soon became full of huckleberry in the natural succession process after we broadcast burned the slash. Soon the black bear feces would stain the ground around it in a purple and blue. I saw my first grizzly bear back in 1979 in one of our recent clearcuts. He was rooting around in the stump wads left by the logging.

Berry picking was also a huge pastime for the local citizens who understood the relationship between the bears, timber harvest and huckleberries. Fireweed



Mountain pine beetle
(*Dendroctonus ponderosae*)
Courtesy US Forest Service

also came in after our clearcuts and broadcast burns. We then issued permits to the bee keepers. The honey from fireweed is simply amazing.

On one timber sale in North Idaho, we harvested 10 million board feet of

Engelmann spruce in one winter to stop a spruce beetle infestation. There are 5,500 board feet to a fully loaded log truck or 10 cords. Take your pick. So, 1 million board feet equals 182 fully-loaded log trucks. On this timber sale we extracted 1,820 log trucks of timber infected with spruce beetle. The timber was all milled locally in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, and we stopped the spruce beetle epidemic cold while providing good paying jobs for middle class Americans. We estimated that 1 million board feet was directly responsible for three full-time jobs and nine folks indirectly. Revenues (3/4) from the sale of National Forest timber go directly back into the U.S. Treasury. One quarter of the sale revenue goes to the local school districts. It's a win-win all the way around.

The units are later thinned (8 by 8 foot spacing) at about year 20 to reduce competition and provide for a large diameter, healthy stand of lodgepole pine. During the thinning process, the suppressed trees are

cut along with those that are damaged. This leaves the intermediate and dominant trees on site to help improve the genetics of the stand. These clearcuts are now often the healthiest stands within a drainage, so vigorous and healthy that the lay person often has no idea they are standing in a clearcut.

The beetle epidemics of today are a direct result of the loss of America's timber industry in the west. The USFS is no longer able to practice pro-active forest management with the absence of a robust timber industry. Compare this to a rancher who turns out a steer to breed his cows. Not a lot is going to get done. Forests require foresters and loggers to be managed for both the good of the forest and the people.

So, the environmentalists got what they wanted—"Forests la Natural," denuded watersheds, loss of American jobs, burned-up homes, high transportation costs of timber and lumber from Canada to the US and, of course, the beetles. Environmentalists used federal acts, attorneys, and judges to shut down forest management on the National Forests and the US Congress simply stood by as an absentee landlord and watched the destruction from afar.

You might remember from your history class that Lewis and Clark almost starved to death when trapped in the Bitterroot mountains in a sea of thick lodgepole pine before they were rescued by the Nez Perce. It's tough to keep horses and men alive on squirrels and chipmunks. I suppose some things never change. 🐿

High contrast photo showing beetle-infested forest (light gray areas), east of Breckenridge, Colorado, 2008.
(Courtesy Hustvedt, CC By-SA3.0)



Ben Musquez: Vietnam Veteran, Airborne, Smokejumper

by Eden Duncan Gilbreath

(special to the *Hood County News*, Texas, March 2024; reprinted with permission)

IT'S BEEN YEARS since **Ben Musquez** (MSO-56) jumped out of an airplane. A bit over a decade ago, Musquez was 82 years young on his last jump. He did so with a team of former soldiers, all there for the same reason—to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade. It would be his 300th jump and out of a C-47, no less. Musquez counted days not only as a "sky soldier" but as a "smokejumper" as well.

At 93, Musquez, now of Granbury (TX), resides with his bride of 71 years in their immaculate and beautifully decorated home. On the walls are photos of the family they are so proud of. Six children were born to the Musquez couple and five remain. Their family has grown to include many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Behind the Musquez abode is a small, tidy building that displays the memorabilia of Musquez' memorable life. It's an impressive collection. Both Musquez and his wife, Maria, remain active and can recall minute details of their amazing journey together.

Musquez' mother died when he was just 18 months old. He was raised mostly by his grandparents and then aunts and uncles. Musquez is old enough to remember boys from his community in Sabinal who didn't return from World War II. He can still recall the wails of a woman who had lost a young man who was like a son to her. Of the 20-something young men drafted from the tiny south Texas community Musquez hails from, 11 did not return.



Ben Musquez (Courtesy NSA files)

"There were many who hated the military. They hated the war. And I could understand that. But I felt differently. We need the military," shares Musquez. Musquez decided he would enlist as soon as he was old enough and did so in 1949 at the age of 17.

"When I signed up, I told everyone right then I was going to be career military." Musquez served for almost 30 years through the Korean War and two tours in Vietnam. He was first assigned to AA Artillery at Fort Bliss. The unit was ready to deploy to Korea when the mission was cancelled.

Musquez and some buddies attended a matinee in town one afternoon. They heard the roar of a low flying plane. On the plane's second run, a paratrooper jumped onto the parade field in front of them.

"Wow! So right after that I said, 'Man, there it is. I've got to go Airborne!'"

A buddy of Musquez' decided to go Airborne as well. Musquez' recommendation helped his friend acquire a spot. They stayed in touch all these years until his friend died of COVID.

When he got his orders, Musquez was assigned to the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. "The 82nd Airborne went on maneuvers once a year for three months. I went on a maneuver and when I came back, I said, 'I'm gonna go home and ask that girl (to marry me).' And so, I went home to San Antonio."

The proposal was direct. Musquez and Maria had been dating for five years. She waited for him as he was in training and serving. "Are you going to marry me or

not? Yes? Well, why didn't you tell me a long time ago?" he asked her.

Maria Musquez described their beautiful church wedding and said she insisted that her bridesmaids wear whatever dress they like. "I had been a bridesmaid so many times, and every time we were in a wedding we had to get a new dress. 'Just wear one you have, I said.'" This flexibility and humility would serve her well as a military wife.

During their time stationed at Fort Bragg, the Musquezes saw a movie that would change their course. "They showed a movie called *Red Skies of Montana* with Richard Widmark. I saw that movie and I said, 'Oh boy! I just have to do that. Here I was for a military career, but jumping out into the wilderness to put out a fire? I told my wife, 'You know what, I love the military, but I have been thinking I should try some civilian life,'" Musquez said.

Maria Musquez kept the home fires burning in support of Musquez, whether in the military or out. To make ends meet, she stretched the dollar with frugal shopping and creative cooking, and she made many of the children's clothes. "I had to work at making the dollar go farther. I was very, very busy," Maria Musquez says with a smile. The Musquezes both express what blessings their children have been.

While in the Airborne, Musquez—already a corporal—volunteered to cut the hair of the soldiers when no one else would. This skill came in handy during years out of the service when Musquez would use this skill to get his barbers license. Cutting hair created an additional income stream.

"When I got out, I came from North Carolina to San Antonio. I went to barber college to have something to do right away. And it paid off. When I moved to California, all I had to do was get my license. Then I ended up in Montana as a smokejumper."

"When I started in the California firefighting force, the pay was \$1.10 an hour. Then when I got to smokejumper, I got a raise to \$1.75 an hour."

Once during training, he became tangled in the parachute during a jump. He has the photo to prove it. He still landed on his feet on that jump.

Musquez remained in the reserves during his time as a smokejumper. He decided to return to active duty in the military knowing he would have to start at the bottom again as a buck private. Musquez was not concerned as he planned to apply the same enthusiasm and hard work ethic he always had.

"I was soon selected for drill sergeant duty and later would become senior drill sergeant at Fort Polk, Louisiana. We were getting feedback from Vietnam that the trainees from Fort Polk were some of the best."

Knowing their lives depended on their training, Musquez took a special interest in making sure the young soldiers were well prepared.

Musquez volunteered to go to Vietnam. He told his wife if he could save even one life it would be worth it. At the time, the Musquezes were expecting their fifth child.

"Initially they put the word out 'No drill sergeants in combat zones' because they were losing too many of them," Musquez said.

When he deployed to Vietnam, Musquez had just begun recovery from hernia surgery. While he was out in the jungle, he picked a young sapling tree which would be his constant companion and literal support as he traversed the landscape. He still has the sapling which became his walking stick.

"There are a million stories to tell," says Musquez. His recall is no less than incredible. He can recall names, places, dates, and conversations. This gift will no doubt be enjoyed at the next reunion of his brothers in arms which takes place in the metroplex this year as the C-Company 2/1 of the 196th gathers to reminisce.

He ran into more than one old friend while in Vietnam, as well as peers and those he had trained—even his own brother. One friend promised to "take care of him," keeping him out of harm's way.

"I didn't volunteer to come here and be taken care of," Musquez replied. Musquez was even recognized out of uniform. Once when clearing an area for a chopper to land, Musquez stripped down to his shorts as he cut away the thick growth. As the chopper lowered, he realized the pilot was shouting his name. The pilot was a former trainee—Musquez had been his senior drill instructor.

During his deployment to Vietnam, Musquez received word that another baby girl had joined his family. That baby went on to join the military and serve her own combat tour overseas. Patriotism runs deep among the Musquez family, and many from each generation serve.

"I operated as a platoon sergeant from the top of the Delta in the south to the central highlands to the DMZ. I'm proud to say that I accomplished all my assignments without losing a single soldier on my watch," Musquez said. 🕊



ODDS AND ENDS



Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)

Congratulations and thanks to **Lawrence Gordon** (Associate) who is our latest Life Member.

Mike Nielson (MYC-73): **Rod Dow** (MYC-68) wrote a nice piece about **Mike Silva** (MYC-73) in the April issue of *Smokejumper* that captured both the character and essence of a remarkable human being. The rough stock he rode as a Red Bluff, CA, cowboy was spared when Mike decided to ride a DC-3 as a smokejumper. **Dick Jeppson** (MYC-67) trained us rookies that year, but **Thad Duel** (MC-56) administered the PT test. Thad seemed to be intent on using the test as a disqualifying measure which seemed ridiculous considering the physical conditioning that had gotten us there thus far. Nevertheless, we gave each exercise an added touch of gusto and vigor to assail Thad's overly strict and inane expectations.

When it came to the required pull-ups, palms facing inboard (chin-ups) or outboard (pull-ups) were acceptable, but Thad only counted the number that he deemed acceptable. Mike Silva proceeded to step up and pump out 10 chin-ups, reverse his palms and without dismounting, pumped out 10 pull-ups.

Gary "Gramps" Johnson (RDD-69): Chuck—Just received the *History of the Redding Smokejumper Base* history book, looks great! Looking forward to reading the entire book. Please pass on my congratulations to all who helped put it together. The amount of work that it takes to do something like this has got to be incredible.

Stan "Clancy" Collins (MYC-67) and **Ralph Ryan** (RDD-77) were the key figures in the RRD Base History Project. Clancy has been the leader in the five books that the NSA has published. Writing and gathering information and photos is a tremendous project. Then the tough work of editing, arranging pages, photos, chapters, and all the rest begins. Without Clancy's work, our History Preservation Project would be a skeleton of what we have now. (Ed.)

Rod Dow (MYC-68): I want to state openly how impressed I've been with the commitment and energy level that I see at the NSA Board meetings. While I'm

the new kid on the block and so am just settling into my position, it is clear that the group is very professional and shares a common fidelity both to each other and to our efforts to promote and preserve smokejumping. It is readily evident that each individual board member is committed to a level of excellence and that this attitude extends throughout the board.

So, thank you so very much, **Robert McKean** (MSO-67), as you announce your retirement, for your years of leadership as Board President. And to our new president, **Mike Bina** (MSO-68), I have little doubt the trend will continue under your tenure as well.

Rod is a new and valuable member of the NSA Board of Directors. Mike is our new President. There is no way we can thank Bob McKean enough for his leadership. As a teacher, I can't understand how a person can come out of leading the Portland Public School System and still have the energy to lead the NSA. I owe you a beer or two Bob. (Ed.)

Guy McMahan (Associate/Brookings, OR): We live in the black. Curry County, Oregon, is the poster child for "Let It Burn." Over one million acres have burned since 1987. **Some areas burned over 5 to 7 times.** \$500,000,000 spent on just fighting wildfires. We are the "Let It Burn" capital of Oregon.

There is a lot being written and touted by the USFS that the current managed fire policy that is burning our forests will prevent future fires. One just has to go to the Siskiyou N.F. to see the fallacy in that thinking. (Ed.)

Quentin Rhoades (MSO-89): I would urge everyone to visit the site of the Chetco Bar "mega-fire" (Siskiyou N.F.). You will observe a horrifying mess on National Forest lands where the Silver and Biscuit mega fires preceded the Chetco Bar mega-fire. Experience the miles and miles of snag patches (including what was once beautiful old growth), deciduous brush run amok, and very little coniferous regeneration on federally owned lands. Scores of thousands of acres of "hazardous fuels" are ready for conflagration when the next fire starts. You will be sadly sobered.

It will be even more troubling to compare the federal lands with those of South Coast Lumber Company, which were also burned in the Chetco Bar fire. South

Coast quickly salvaged its private timberlands (within months) and now has them fully rehabilitated and replanted with impressive young coniferous forests. It's an example of stewardship at its finest. A half-day sight visit to these two ownership sheds damaged in the same fire will open your eyes like nothing anyone could say.

Bill Ruskin (CJ-58): You may be interested in knowing that a program I started in Colorado Springs in 1974 is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. What began then as the Volunteer Conservation Corps (VCC) is now Volunteer Vacations, a foundation program of the American Hiking Society (AHS). I've attached a link to a six-minute video New Trails of the first VCC project at the USFS Monument Fire Center (<https://youtu.be/4CO3qUr59eo>). If you go to americanhiking.org, you'll find the current state of the program.

Through the Volunteer Vacations program, AHS volunteers provide over 12,000+volunteer hours and improve or maintain 170+miles of trails on average per year, across the country.

Bill Dennison (Assoc. Ex-Plumas Co. Supervisor): Chuck, I completed the reading of your latest edition. I commend you for gathering and releasing these stories by past smokejumpers which contain historical

information even beyond their actual jump training and experience.

1965 Southeastern U.S. Track & Field Championships: 60-yard dash, 1st—Wallace (Ky. State) 5.9—Ties World Record held by Bob Hayes. 4th **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64) Alabama 6.2.

Dennis Cleary (RDD-85): Chuck—Great article about the Lahaina fire. I hope you keep writing about these fiascos, then maybe someone at the top of the pyramid will have the nerve to make substantial changes in prevention, tactics and strategy as well. Thanks for the read.

Bill Mader (BOI-75): Chuck: Good piece on the Maui fire (July 2024).

Breanna McCabe/NSA breakfast honoring **Roger Savage** (MSO-57):

Thank you so much for the incredible opportunity to celebrate Roger's masters degree over coffee and breakfast. I'm so thrilled to see Roger recognized for his unwavering dedication to preserving smokejumper history. I admire him greatly and I'm not sure I've received a higher honor than a seat at the smokejumper table. Thank you so much for including me. 🙏



Lori Messenger
(Courtesy L. Messenger)

In Times of Need, You Are There!

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

In the July 2024 issue of Smokejumper **Lori Messenger** (MSO-00) wrote an excellent article about the accident that changed her life. On January 15, 2023, Lori was walking across Reserve Street in Missoula when she was hit by a person driving 60 mph. Her life as a teacher at Missoula's Sentinel H.S. was changed forever.

The NSA membership has always stepped up to help jumpers and their families in times of need. Your response to that article has been great. Let's continue helping.

*The NSA Board of Directors asks you to consider donating to the Good Samaritan Fund on behalf of Lori. Your tax-free donation will directly support Lori (MSO 2000), **Scott Jones** (MSO 2001-current), and their family through this difficult time. Let's make sure they have the resources they need to modify their home and find new ways to enjoy the mountains as a family. **Donations should be made out to NSA with "Lori" on the memo line. Please send to Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Lane, Chico CA 95926.***

We All Need to Know Our Smokejumper History

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

In many publications, including some by the USFS, there are mistakes repeated in smokejumper history. One of the biggest is the when and where of the founding of smokejumping. **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) has done extensive research into this subject. In his book, *Smokejumper Experiment* (edited by **Mike McMillan** FBX-96), early USFS parachute use by the USFS and other organizations is covered. There is extensive detail on the 1939 experimental program and the start of smokejumping in 1940 at Winthrop, Washington. I would encourage all smokejumpers to have a copy of this book which is available in the NSA webstore (www.smokejumpers.com).

The following is from Fred:

The Winthrop Ranger Station was the first Jump Base, becoming operational on June 14, 1940, after the "new men" made the last of their training jumps to a simulated forest fire in the timber at the annual Chelan NF Guard School. The Winthrop Ranger Station had a rigging table, a ready room for jump gear and fire packs, and the Forest Service owned an airport less than five miles away. The Winthrop smokejumpers were Virgil Derry, George Honey, Francis Lufkin, Glenn Smith, and Dick Tuttle. The "new men" were Honey and Lufkin—the other three had considerable parachuting experience. Al Davies from the Regional Office was the Base Manager. Base Managers in 1940 were directed to not be trained as a jumper and Al never continued with the smokejumper program after the fall of 1940. Two fires were jumped out of Winthrop in 1940—August 10 by Lufkin and Smith and the other on August 11 by Honey and Derry. The airplane was under contract with the Johnson Flying Service from Missoula. Tuttle was seriously injured in a non-smokejumper accident shortly after his last training jump and never did return to the smokejumper program.

The second Jump Base was the remote Moose Creek Ranger Station with an adjacent airstrip on the Bitterroot NF. The "new men" were trained from June 23 to July 5 at Seeley Lake, MT. On June 6, the crew flew to Moose Creek and from June 8 to 10, they built a 16' by 40' rigging loft

with tables and prepared fire packs. The Moose Creek Base was declared operational on July 11 when Dick Johnson flew in with a Travel Air 6000 and the jumpers were given a final training jump at the airport. Merle Lundrigan was the non-jumping Base Manager; George Case, Moose Creek District Ranger, was the Administrative Officer; and Frank Derry the instructor-rigger. The jumpers were Jim Alexander, Earl Cooley, Chet Derry, Dick Lynch, Rufus Robinson, and Jim Waite. The following day, July 12th was the first smokejumper fire jump by Robinson and Cooley. It was recorded as the "Rock Pillar" fire along Marten Creek on the Nez Perce NF by Dick Johnson in his Pilot's Log Book—also reported in many publications as the "Marten Creek" Fire. 🦅



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. (Ed.)

“Animal Ed” Weissenback

The Final Chapter

by Lee Gossett (Redding '57)

First, I want to thank Karen Weissenback Moen for her excellent article that appeared in the April 2022 issue of *Smokejumper*. Karen and I, along with my wife, Mary, go back to day one with Ed and Karen when they first came to Vientiane, Laos, in 1968. I would also like to thank **Bruce Jackson** (RAC-69) and **Bill Vaughn** (RAC-79) for their excellent article on Ed that appeared in the April 2023 issue of *Smokejumper*.

My first meeting with Ed was at the American Community Center Restaurant in Vientiane, Laos. Mary and I walked into the restaurant one evening for dinner and noticed a couple of former smokejumper Air America “kickers” sitting at a table. I said a quick “hi” and noticed a third person sitting with them whom I did not know. As we sat down, I could see the kickers were discussing and pointing to me. Soon the third person got up and came to our table. This person looked like a Detroit Lion linebacker, and as he reached our table, he said, “Are you Lee Gossett?” I replied, “Yes,” and he extended his hand and said he was a former smokejumper and a new hire “kicker.”

This was the start of a long and wonderful relationship with Ed Weissenback, and we soon met his lovely wife, Karen. Funny things ensued. Ed wrote Karen and said, “I found a house and a car, and I have found you a best friend.” It turned out that Ed was right. He had found a “best friend.”

Recently married, Karen had assumed women would find their own “best friends” without the aid of their husbands and didn’t know quite what to make of this declaration. Mary and I, along with daughter Lisa, immediately bonded with Ed and Karen. Ed was right, he found a “best friend” for Karen in Mary.

As Karen mentioned in her article, Ed was furloughed later in 1969, as the kickers were overstaffed, and they returned to Ashland, Oregon, to finish their college degrees at Southern Oregon University. Ed was recalled back to Air America in 1970 and when they arrived, we had them as house guests until they found a place to live.

Those who knew Ed knew of his love of animals, and Ed, being Ed, started making trips to the morning market and brought to our home an assortment of

animals. Mary knew of his liking for snakes but drew the line on “not having snakes” in the Gossett house. Ed and Karen rented the house next to us and our friendship grew.

On December 27, 1971, I received a call on our CB radio from the Base Manager of Air America and he asked me to come to his office. I thought this strange as I had not flown as a pilot for Air America for several years since I switched over and was now flying for Continental Air Service, across the ramp from Air America. When I arrived at the Base Manager’s office, I noticed that the Chinese Air America doctor was also sitting there. I immediately sensed something was not right. The Base Manager said, “I understand you are friends with the Weissenbacks.”

Now I knew where this conversation was going. The Base Manager said the C-123 aircraft that Ed was on as a kicker was overdue, and they had started a search. In my 6 1/2 years in Laos, I had heard this before and it was not good. The Chinese doctor and I visited Karen, and I will never forget that awkward moment as long as I live.

I told Karen Ed’s aircraft was overdue and there was a search underway. Karen was seven months pregnant with their first child and my Mary was in New Zealand for Christmas with her family. I immediately sent Mary a telegram of the news and said Karen could use her support. Mary and Lisa were on the next flight back to Vientiane. I soon learned the possible area where #293 disappeared. I had been flying in the general area the day before and remembered poor weather and a strong southwest wind at altitude.

Ed’s aircraft left out of Udorn, Thailand, in a flight of three C-123 cargo planes. The flight’s destination was a Lao military base in Northwest Laos and their cargo was ammunition, or what we call “hard rice.” Flight one arrived and offloaded their cargo and departed for Udorn for another load. Soon flight three arrived and offloaded their cargo. Flight three assumed the cargo on the ramp was from flight two, but it was the cargo from flight one. Several hours passed when #293 did not check in with the radio station in Ban Houi Sai and give them their estimate to Udorn. At this point, an aerial

search was started by aircraft and helicopters in the general area, but #293 was not found. Now it's a full-on search with all available aircraft.

On day two, I flew as an observer in an Air America Porter and concentrated in an area near the Chinese road, which we knew was supported by anti-aircraft guns. A couple of weeks earlier, a Lao DC-3 airline flew over the Chinese gun position and was shot down. I had a gut feeling #293 missed its turn point over the beacon at Luang Prabang and wandered across the Mekong River into bad guy country. As it turned out, this was exactly what happened but was not known for many years.

An Air America Volpar aircraft with Air America Chief pilot Jim Rhyne and Chief Kicker **Bob Herald** (MSO-55) were in the cargo area of the plane dropping leaflets near the Chinese road about the missing #293 but took a direct hit to the belly of the aircraft with AAA which severed the leg of Jim Rhyne. Bob Herald applied a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, but it still took one hour to fly to the USAF hospital in Udorn, Thailand.

We continued to fly search missions but at a standoff distance from the Chinese road. As the days went by, we knew the chances of finding #293 and its crew grew slimmer by the day. Fast forward to 1997. The crash site was finally located, but it took years for the USG to go forth with the request to the Lao Government to visit the crash site. Karen and the son of the Captain of #293 finally were able to visit the crash site, and Karen gives an excellent description of that visit in her article.

In 2018, Ed's remains and that of the Captain and First Officer were finally DNA identified. It's taken 47 long years to finally know for sure Ed had been positively identified. Ed's remains were finally laid to rest at the Eagle Point, Oregon, National Cemetery on June 17, 2022. Those present were family members, Air America personnel, Continental Air Service personal, a CIA representative, and members of the Smokejumper community. I have been back to visit Ed as the cemetery is only a few miles from my residence. I have also included the grave marker where Ed was finally laid to rest. RIP my friend. 🕊

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Notes from the Ranks



Pat McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

"Boots - boots - boots - boots - movin' up and down again!" -Rudyard Kipling — "Are you ready, boots?" -Nancy Sinatra

WHAT'S YOUR FIRST interface with public land? For a smokejumper, in terms of a place that jumpers likely never heard of until a fire call, that interface is the inimitable boot touch and Parachute Landing Fall, or PLF. Mastery of the PLF is accomplished over dozens if not hundreds of repetitions in sweltering heat with full jump gear under scrutinous rookie trainer eyes. Yours truly had to prove mastery by holding a single piece of paper tucked tightly between his boots for ten perfect PLFs—or else. What else? Maybe I wouldn't be writing this article right now or be part of this wonderful organization and Bro Network For Life.

Boots. I just returned from the Grey Towers, Gifford Pinchot's mansion in Pennsylvania, from a leadership program for GS-7 to GS-9s in the USFS. Some of these newly minted sevens and nines are in their first year with the USFS, thanks to a master's degree from Tufts, or

Brown, or somewhere nowhere near the West. Some of them have sixteen years of fire experience on a hotshot crew to be a GS-7. The concept of a land management agency is lustrous to some of the first years. But most of those people never wear boots. Some of their friends haven't died in their boots. Their grand ideas require other people to actually push the concept to fruition, while wearing boots. The USFS just can't win when the gauntlet of experience across its many departments is so misaligned. What happened to the Ready Reserve?

Pinchot and his wife, Cornelia, were kinda 'out there' for their time. It seems to be that angsty, semi-aristocratic period of the American psyche where the true idealization of public lands was disparate among political and cultural groups. What is a national park? Lost profit or transcendental garden? What is a tree, if not lumber, if not something to be regarded quizzically and spiritually, or intimately when you're hung up in one? The Grey Towers estate is well worth the visit if you're in the area. Pinchot and Roosevelt and the Midnight Forests are perhaps one of the most unheralded elements of western and smokejumper culture; my life and that of many jumpers would be phenomenally different without that crux of ideal and executive power. Crayons on maps. Just like what we do on fires today. Red turned to black.

I stopped in Gettysburg on Memorial Day weekend, right after the Grey Towers. There may be no more perfect battlefield with terrain

and personalities and compunction and chaos and luck to interpret in hopes of understanding. Like Yarnell, like Storm King, hallowed ground remains for "We the Living" to carry on and attempt enlightenment before we ourselves are carrion. The land remains whilst we are but a memory. Again, an imperative to stand for the land ethic.

I write my resignation letter (four sentences!) from my prevention position on this trip out east to the Grey Towers. "That much personally, man? You'll be eaten alive in DC." Noted. I gotta get back to the people that move dirt and eat dust and wear boots. Egalitarian concepts of climbing a passive, aggressive ladder can pick goat heads and prickly pear outta my parachute lines. Perhaps the Park Service is my eventual landing pad, but I gotta pull that drogue handle a few more times before that decision is clear. Missoula cover letter is written.

Boots. The public I deal with daily now (now that we're looking down the barrel at fire restrictions and an extreme fire summer in R4 and R1) are also new to the boots. My count is fourteen abandoned campfires and it's only July 10.

Two weeks later after Grey Towers, I am demonstrating the "Matchstick Forest" to elementary school kids, showing how logging, thinning, or prescribed fire units may mitigate a crown fire, and ask the kids what the mosaic forest of matches before me looks like. "HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY" says a young boy. Sure, dude! I agree

with his diction, having entered Imagination Land (TM) with these kids mere moments earlier with, “Is this match a tree or a match?” A match? You’re not in Imagination Land, kid!

The forest doesn’t burn with a lightning strike at the top of the slope of matches. The forest completely burns via the crown fire started at the bottom of the matchstick forest slope from an abandoned, human campfire. Some trees around the mosaic survive. HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY saved the trees! We need HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY! The kids are stoked. Lesson learned.

Higgledy Piggledy is a word. This six-year-old knew it and I did not. What also don’t I know?

What I do know is that reinstating the 10AM policy is neglecting the health and safety of modern smokejumpers, drives against the concept of being a data-driven and nimble organization, and truly shows the divide between the boot wearers and the keyboarders. I asked a keyboarder, ChatGPT, to help me understand the argument for and against suppressing wildfires quickly. Here is ChatGPTs immediate response:

For: “Quickly suppressing wildfires is important to prevent the rapid spread of flames that can devastate large areas, causing significant loss of life, property damage, displacement of communities, and long-term ecological damage, while also minimizing air pollution and health hazards.”

Against: “Quickly suppressing wildfires can be detrimental because it disrupts natural fire cycles that many ecosystems depend on for regeneration, can lead to the buildup of flammable materials

increasing the risk of more severe future fires, and can hinder certain plant and animal species that rely on periodic fires for their survival and propagation.”

All told, I am immensely proud of two friends of mine, one in the NCBS “The Birthplace” and one at Redmond, who successfully completed rookie training this year. One minted himself in the tundras and spruce of Alaska and the other is

out of service which can only mean a Good Deal Somewhere (GDS). Hell yeah, bros.

On the Salmon Challis, a national shutdown of the medium helicopter platform for rappel operations means McCall snipes a fire on my forest. Great to hear it on the radio and stoked my forest duty officer ordered them! Baby steps. Baby steps. For people with boots on. 🧑🏻



Looking Back: Bob Caldwell (McCall-46) shaves Paul Claybaugh (McCall-46) using the keen edge of their Pulaskies. Both men were WWII veterans. Caldwell was with the Patton’s 80th Infantry Division. Claybaugh, a medic, jumped on D-Day and landed behind German lines. He spent the rest of the war in a POW camp. Photo by Jim Graham (McCall-47). (*Smokejumper*, January 2001)

The Sleeping Child Fire

by Jeff R. Davis (Missoula '57)

The summer of 1961 was a bonanza for smokejumpers like me. It was one of the busiest seasons of my career, which one way or another spanned twenty-two years.

I had just returned from a fire in the Skalkaho country of southwest Montana, deep in the Bitterroot Mountains. The jackpot and downfall was so tangled and thick it took nearly an hour to hike from the jump spot to the fire. I had clambered a full quarter mile without once touching the ground.

On the day of the Sleeping Child Fire, we were headed back into the same country. We'd been ordered to an eight-man fire deep in the Skalkaho. I was along strictly for backup. There were twenty of us packed into the C-46; twelve were low on the jump list and aboard only if needed. The fires this summer were so intense that we carried backups aboard whenever we could.

When we arrived over the fire, it was apparent the original eight would be enough to handle the blaze. When the drop was done, I shuffled back to the forward end of the aircraft, shucked off my helmet, loosened my harness and prepared for an easy ride back to Missoula. I could already taste the steak and beer I planned for supper. It was about 1900; twilight was beginning to fall.

As I got settled, spotter **Hugh Fowler** (MSO-47), an experienced jumper I held in awe, hollered at me, "Whadaya doing getting outta your jump gear, Davis? I've got another smoke for you. Come here!"

I couldn't believe it. There'd been no word of a second fire, and it was getting too damn dark anyhow.

"Here's your fire, Davis!" And he pointed down into the haze below.

Now I couldn't believe my eyes any more than I had my ears. Below me spread an absolute holocaust of a wildfire. It was crowning in a 360-degree circle, the only one I'd ever seen do that. It didn't have a single running front; the whole damn thing was a front, and it was



Jeff R. Davis

blowing up like nothing I'd ever seen before.

I had only one thought as I reluctantly shuffled up to the door: I wished to hell I'd worn running shoes instead of loggers on this run. If I had to jump this son of a bitch, I wanted to hit the ground running, as far away as I could get. Screw this fire! Nobody in their right mind would put a man on that thing, not even a smokejumper.

When Hugh saw he'd got me good, he told me the whole thing was a joke. We just happened to be flying home over the massive Sleeping Child Fire. Right when

we passed over, it had trapped a crew of sixty who nearly died. It spread that night from 900 to 9000 acres, raising a cumulous cloud towering to 40,000 feet. Jumpers were never requested for it. It was accessible from several nearby logging roads. It required massive attacks of manpower, bulldozers, and fire experts from across the country before it was finally contained and patrolled for months until the snows finally extinguished it. Its final size reached over 25,000 acres, conservatively put.

Hugh figured it was a good opportunity to loosen me up a little and have a good joke at my expense. He sure got his laugh from the other jumpers aboard, and he sure loosened me up. I thought I was going to shit a ring around myself as I stood there in the door contemplating my demise.

During my career with the jumpers, I was to look down on nearly a hundred fires I'd jump myself, and peer down at countless hundreds more as I dropped jumpers from Montana to California to New Mexico and back. But that view of the Sleeping Child Fire in the Skalkaho is etched forever in my mind as the granddaddy of them all. 🧠

Jeff Davis passed away on August 16, 2024. (Ed.)





SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

Was It The Greatest Generation?

NOVEMBER 11 WILL be Veterans Day. I usually use the October issue of *Smokejumper* to honor our smokejumper vets. You can read the article written about my good friend **Ben Musquez** (MSO-56) in this issue. The Cave Junction Base was headed up by **Jim Allen** (NSCB-46), one of the most respected persons in my life. Jim jumped as a 19-year-old in Operation Market Garden and was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge.

I'm going to take a different approach in this issue and talk about the teachers whom I worked with and learned from. Most never said anything about their service in WWII. I had to wait, in some cases, for their obits before I found out about that phase of their life. In this day when PTSD is listed as a cause of many things, I wonder how these individuals went through

unimaginable amounts of hardships, came back, got a college degree, and mentored us young teachers and made a big difference in the lives of many young men and women.

One weekend Bob Kirker, our shop teacher, Bush Dalrymple, fellow P.E teacher/Korean War vet, and I were building a drying cage for our football players gear. Bob was the knowledgeable carpenter and leader. Bush and Bob were going back and forth giving each other a good-natured hard time. I loved the banter between the two of them.

Then Bush said something that really caught my attention: "Hey, Kirker, your feet are so big the Japs probably had to give you the shoebox instead of shoes." They both laughed and continued to work. Bob turned to me and said, "hand me that Oklahoma screwdriver, please." That meant a hammer. He quit teaching and went into contracting where the money was better, and I lost track of him.

A few years later, I got the Head Track Coach position at Chico H.S. In order to establish the top 10 performances in the history of the school, I spent a whole summer in the archive stacks at the Chico State University Library. This meant going through rolls of microfilm of the town newspaper one day at a time way back to 1910. When I got to the WWII years, I was sidetracked by updates on the local men in the service. I'm a history nut and had to read each page a sentence at a time. My track record progress slowed, but my knowledge of local men and women in the service expanded.

That got me on another project. Make a list of the Chico H.S. men killed in WWII. There was not a high school in Paradise at that time, so the list included all the students that came down from Paradise and logging town of Sterling City. Bob Kirker was one of the Paradise kids.

When I got through those years, I had a list of 70 young men killed in that war. The number was overwhelming to me as Chico was a town of only 21,000. Many later showed up on my list of top track athletes, Student Body President, yearbook editor, and on and on.

Bob moved on from teaching, and I forgot about the comments made that day but knew that he must have been a POW of the Japanese where it was a 50-50 chance to survive. When he died, the obit did not say that much, and I had to dig deeper. What I found was an amazing story, should have been a book, a movie.

Bob was in the Army Air Force, captured when the Philippines fell to the Japanese, and survived the Bataan Death March. That's enough for one lifetime, but it gets more intensive from there.

In September 1944 as the allies moved across the Pacific toward Japan, the *Shinyo Maru* was headed to Japan from the Philippines with 750 allied POWs, 300 of them Bataan Death March survivors. The ship was torpedoed by the USS *Paddle* who had no idea that it carried American POWs. The Captain of the *Shinyo Maru* was close enough to beach the ship to prevent it from sinking.

The guards machine-gunned the POWs as they tried to get out of the holds where they were locked up. Quote from one survivor: *"Suddenly the Japanese pulled the hatch covers off and dropped hand grenades down in there and then turned machine guns down the hold. I had been down in the hold for nineteen days and eighteen nights."*

Someone was able to kill the person manning the machine gun. Those who were able to make it into the water were also under fire from other Japanese boats in the area. Killed were 688 of the 750 POWs but 83 of them were able to make it to shore under fire. One of the 83 died the next day. The escaped POWs went inland where they met a Filipino guerilla group commanded by a US Colonel. On October 29, 1944, the submarine USS *Narwhal* picked up the survivors and took them to safety.

After Bob got back from the war, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill and went to college. He got a degree and became a teacher, a really good one. Were there other teachers in Chico that were involved in WWII? They never said anything. They didn't write any books. They were just good teachers. Where was the PTSD? More research and I found a lot.

Mel Jones, my mentor Track Coach, joined the US Navy in 1944 and served on the USS *Mellette* as a radarman earning a purple heart for his services in WWII.

Al Crowson, who I just knew as a Vice Principal, was a Marine paratrooper, severely wounded at Iwo Jima and spent 18 months in a hospital.

Bill Kemp, a fellow coach, served in Northern Africa where he was a decorated B-26 pilot attaining the rank of Captain and ended his

military career as a Lt. Colonel. Bill was one of the best football players in Chico State history and played a couple years of professional football. His brother was killed in action in Italy.

I knew Ben Matthews as the Principal at Citrus Elementary School. He enlisted in the Marines at age 17, fought at Peleliu and Okinawa and later in the Korean War.

Milo Randolph (Math teacher), Lt./pilot in Army Air Corps; Al Kostiz (Vice Principal) Staff Sgt., Army; Winston Roberts (Science Teacher) Lt., Navy, South Pacific.

"Bush" Dalrymple (P.E. and coaching), tank battalion Korea, wounded in action with permanent disability.

Two of our female teachers also served. Dottie Collett (Art) was a radioman (probably radioperson now days) in the Navy. Nannette Carter (English) was a Lt. in the Navy. She worked in the Bureau of Yards and Docks, a small annex of the Pentagon. She had top secret security clearance, was armed when on night duty, and shortly became officer-in-charge of several WAVE officers and yeomen.

There were probably a lot more that I don't know about. They never said anything. Yes, they were "The Greatest Generation."

More on John Cooper (Missoula '59)

RECENTLY COVERED IN the "Sounding Off from the Editor" in the July 2024 issue of *Smokejumper*, little was known about the disappearance, 52 years ago, of John Cooper while climbing Mount Aconcagua, the highest

peak in the Western Hemisphere, in Argentina. The bodies of John and another climber, Janet Johnson, were recovered. After autopsy, it was determined that both died of similar injuries to the brain and skull. The stories of the other two climbers were questionable. The mystery remains unsolved—what really happened on that climb?

I received an email with a couple photos from **Roger Savage** (MSO-57) the other day.

"I jumped a two-man fire with John Cooper in September of '58. That was probably the last time that I saw John as many of us were headed back to college. I have often thought about John over the years especially after DB Cooper hijacked the Northwest 727 in 1971. I'm sure John got a call from the FBI after that event. Now, thanks to your article about John in "Sounding Off from the Editor," I know more about his life. Unfortunately, I've known too many jumpers with successful lives who have had their lives cut short by some tragic event such as this."

Just before the climb, John was working at mission control in Houston for the final Apollo 11 mission. He was a surface operations engineer, helping guide the lunar module. 🪖



L-R: John Cooper and Roger Savage,
September 1998



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.

Albert Kenneth “Ken” Axelson (McCall ’47)

Ken, 100, died April 11, 2024, in Wanamingo, Minnesota. He was born April 2, 1924, in Welch, Minnesota, and graduated from Red Wing H.S. in 1943. Ken served as a medic attached to the 348th Engineers and landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He worked with the first air evacuation hospital until the fall of 1944 when he transferred to the 502 Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. Ken’s Division was sent to Bastogne in December and, after two weeks, was overrun by the Germans and taken prisoner on January 2, 1945. He was liberated by American troops on his 21st birthday, April 2, 1945.

Ken married Willene “Billie” Dalluhn on May 6, 1950. Ken and Billie lived most of their life in Wanamingo raising six children. Ken worked as a carpenter, Goodhue County Building Inspector for 10 years, and photographer. Ken served on the Wanamingo City Council for 20 years, the Wanamingo Volunteer Fire Department, and the Wanamingo VFW Quamme Post 186. Ken jumped at McCall in 1947.

Donald L. Smith (McCall ’48)

Don, 97, died September 29, 2023, at his home in Rock Island, Illinois. He was born June 20, 1926, in Cedar Rapids, Illinois. Don was a US Navy Veteran. He obtained an associate’s degree from St. Ambrose’s College and retired in 1990 from Chrysler Motors after 40 years as a General Manager. Don was a member of St. Pius X Church where he was a lector, and a member of the Knights of Columbus, Allouez Council, Rock Island. He was an avid reader and volunteered as a reader. Don jumped at McCall in 1948-49.

Floyd L. Bethke (Grangeville ’61)

Floyd, 86, died June 12, 2024, in Hamilton, Montana. He was born April 2, 1937, in Roundup, Montana. Floyd grew up in Missoula and graduated from Missoula County H.S. in 1957 where he played football. He graduated from Montana State with a degree in Forestry and spent his 32-year career with the Forest Service and BLM in Fire Management. He jumped out

of Grangeville 1961, 1969, and Missoula 1962-68, 70-76. Floyd was a Life Member of the NSA.

Wayne H. Finney (Missoula ’60)

Retired USAF Lt. Col. Wayne Finney died March 15, 2024, in Lake Forest Park, Washington. He was born in Hamilton, Montana, November 17, 1940. Wayne graduated from the University of Montana and began pilot training in the USAF and was stationed at Great Falls, Montana, with the Montana Air National Guard. In retirement he and his wife, Sharon, ran a bed & breakfast in Great Falls. Among Wayne’s proudest achievements was founding a public library in Lakeside, Montana. After retiring from both the hospitality business & real estate sales, Wayne and Sharon moved to Polson to facilitate accessing Montana Grizzly football games, which they attended regularly. Wayne jumped at Missoula 1960, 1962 and 1963.

John Kootenai “Jack” Seagraves (McCall ’63)

Jack died March 20, 2024, in Ecuador where he lived for the past 14 years. From **Larry Moore** (IDC-59): “It is my understanding that Jack died of complications of Covid and pneumonia. To me he was a rather amazing guy who became a full-fledged dentist and, after a hiatus of 22+ years, gave it up and came back to jump fires at the age of 46. Word had it that he wanted to apply and jump in Alaska but was thought to be too old. So, he came back to McCall in 1988 and jumped until 1997 averaging close to 10 fires a season in the 13 seasons he jumped. From there I understand he bought a small farm near Parma (Ecuador) and lived there until he passed. He was an adventurous, humorous, and lovable sort of guy and will be missed by many. Rest in Peace, Jack.” Jack jumped at McCall 1963-65 and 1988-97.

James J. Thain (Missoula ’51)

Jim died September 16, 2010. He was born in December 1931 and lived in Fairfax, Virginia.

James Joseph “Jim” Haack (Missoula ’67)

Jim, 77, died April 10, 2024, in Bemidji, Minnesota. He was born February 13, 1947, in Fargo, North Dakota,

and raised in Bemidji where he graduated from high school in 1965. Jim graduated from North Dakota State University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He served in the Army in Vietnam as a combat engineer earning the Bronze Star. He founded Haack Engineering in Bemidji in 1979 and operated that business until his retirement in 2005. Jim jumped at Missoula 1967-69.

Robert M. “Bob” Clithero (Missoula ’50)

Bob, 91, of Bigfork, Montana, died November 18, 2021. He was born March 31, 1930. Bob jumped at Missoula 1950, 1954, and at West Yellowstone in 1951. (*Anyone having more info on Bob, please send to me. Ed.*)

Harley Sterling Jackson (Redmond ’86)

Harley, 31, died in an accident March 31, 1996, in Klamath Fall, Oregon. He was born August 7, 1964, in Klamath Falls and graduated from Henley H.S. in 1982. Harley graduated from Central Oregon Community College in 1989 with a manufacturing technology degree, and the Oregon Institute of Technology in 1991 with a manufacturing engineering technology degree.

Harley was an honor graduate in police officer training from the Federal Law Enforcement Center, Marana, Arizona, in 1991 and was an Indian Law platoon leader and a handgun expert at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, GA., where he received criminal investigator training. He was in the U.S. Army where he received the distinguished honor graduate of the Airborne School, 75th Ranger Battalion.

Harley was game management supervisor and officer at the Klamath Tribe of Oregon from 1991 to the time of his death. He was elected three consecutive terms on the Executive Committee for the Klamath Tribe and retired from the Executive Committee to serve as regulatory commissioner for the new Klamath Gaming Center. Harley jumped at Redmond in 1986.

Stephen William Wight (NCSB ’65)

Steve, 81, died February 4, 2024, in Boise, Idaho. He was born in Bremerton, Washington, in 1943. Steve grew up in Bremerton and Yakima, Washington, and graduated from Yakima H.S. He furthered his education at Wenatchee Valley College and the University of Washington and, after graduating from the Univ. of Washington, enlisted in the Army. After his military service, he earned his law degree from Gonzaga University Law School and was admitted into the Washington State Bar and later the Idaho State Bar.

Steve’s tenacious spirit led him to diverse professional pursuits. He worked on the construction of the

Alaska pipeline, held a seat at the Chicago Board of Trade and worked for many construction engineering companies including Bechtel, Morrison-Knudsen, and Lemley & Associates. After being diagnosed with Fragile X-Associated Tremor/Ataxia Syndrome (FXTAS) later in life, Steve took part in many years of research at the UC Davis MIND Institute, knowing that the research would not change the course of his illness but hoping it would help others in the future. Steve jumped at NCSB 1965-67, 70-73, and LaGrande 1974-76.

Scott Frederick Whitmire (Redding ’87)

Scott, 65, passed away on January 16, 2024, in Fresno, California, from a massive stroke, a complication from his battle with Parkinson’s Disease. He was born on January 3, 1959, in Fresno and grew up in Auberry, California, and graduated from Sierra H.S. in 1977. He began his firefighting career as a seasonal employee on the Sierra N.F. where he worked on the Mountain Rest Engine Crew and on the Trimmer Helitack crew.

In 1987, Scott rookied with the California Smokejumpers in Redding California. Over the next nine years, Scott completed 185 parachute jumps and earned his Senior Rigger’s License. In 1996, Scott left the smokejumpers to lead a helicopter module based at White Cloud Station on the Tahoe N.F. In addition, he also managed the engine crew stationed there.

In 2000, Scott helped at the Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program (WFAP) when it was located at Fort Hunter Liggett in Jolon, California. In 2001, he detailed to the WFAP program as a Battalion Chief, Assistant Academy Coordinator and assisted with the move to the USFS McClellan Training Center in Sacramento, California. In 2002, he accepted a permanent position there. At the academy, Scott made what probably was his biggest contribution in his fire career, assisting in the training and educating of thousands of apprentice students, beginning with Academy 11 thru Academy 44. Scott was a valued member of the program, and it was mentioned that “his legacy will live on through those he inspired.”

In 2008, Scott was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease, which led to an early retirement from his fire management career. Shortly thereafter, he left the academy and moved to San Rafael to be with family where he spent time adjusting to his medical condition. In 2013, Scott underwent experimental brain surgery at University of California San Francisco, which allowed him to continue to be physically active.

In 2016, he published his book *Jumper Tales*, a collection of short stories from his smokejumper years.

Scott received an A.A. in Journalism from Humboldt State University in 2001. In 2019, Scott moved back to Auberry where he continued to stay active writing, hiking, and duck hunting with his son. In his final years, Scott lived at an assisted living home in Fresno, where he continued to stay active helping staff and residents with physical fitness training. Scott jumped at Redding 1987-95. (*Special thanks to **Hank Falcon** (RAC-83) for his research of this obit. Ed.*)

Frank Austin Fowler (Missoula '52)

Frank, 92, died May 13, 2024, in Dillon, Montana. He was born May 5, 1932, in Washington, D.C. After high school Frank moved west and enrolled in the University of Montana where he graduated with a degree in Forestry in 1954. He jumped at Missoula 1952-54 and authored his book *High Mountain Two-Manner* and felt it was significant that two from the 1952 rookie class jumped on fires as a single jumper. He went to work for the USFS in Asheville, NC, before being drafted into the Army where he served 1955-57, part of which in Germany with the 11th Airborne.

After his discharge he returned to Colville NF and then took District Ranger position on the Sullivan Lake RD, Clearwater NF. After six years, Frank moved to the Flathead NF where he led a study of the Jewel Basin that resulted in it becoming a recreation area. He also led the study to bring the Flathead Rivers into the Wild and Scenic River System.

Frank was working in land management planning on the Idaho Panhandle NF when he retired in 1984. In retirement he worked for Stoltz Lumber Company for several years. Frank was involved in the NSA Trails Program and was a volunteer host at the Lochsa Historic Ranger Station for many years.

Roderick E. "Rod" McIver (Missoula '64)

Rod, 82, died May 18, 2024. He was born April 5, 1942, in Darlington, South Carolina, and grew up in Conway, SC. He lived in Kalispell, Montana, and jumped at Missoula 1964-65, 1970-83, 1985-88, and at West Yellowstone in 1966. Rod graduated from Sewanee: The University of the South with a degree in Forestry. During the winters of the 20 seasons that he jumped, he taught school. He also worked as a logger, a ranch hand, a canoe dealer, and general laborer. Rod served in Vietnam with the Marine Corps and was severely wounded. He is a Life Member of the NSA.

In his last two decades, he developed a homestead orchard in Kalispell, Montana, where he tested and grew some 400 varieties of apples. Rod was an active

volunteer in several conservation and environmental organizations, and he assisted friends and family with their enterprises. He led canoe and hiking trips. He enjoyed friendship with many smokejumpers, hikers, canoeists, cyclists of Montana, and numerous cousins in South Carolina and throughout the country.

Curtis A. Marshall (Redding '68)

Curtis died May 20, 2024, in Portola, California. He was born October 2, 1943, and graduated from Portola H.S. in 1962. Curtis started a career with the USFS, beginning as a smokejumper. During his time with the Forest Service, he began working for the Portola Fire Department and was the Fire Chief for 40 years. He married Linda Tarantino September 18, 1976, and shared 43 years of marriage.

At 11 a.m. June 3, a deeply resonant sound filled the crisp Portola mountain air—the city's air raid siren. It was reactivated for the first time in over three years to honor former Fire Chief Curtis Marshall. The siren was a poignant tribute steeped in firefighter tradition, reminding the community of his lifelong dedication. As the siren's echo faded, it left behind a community united in remembrance and respect. The reactivation of the siren underscored the profound impact of Marshall's 40 years of service and the enduring legacy he left behind.

Curtis rookied at Redding in 1968 and was part of the retreat program jumping the 1969-70 seasons. He was an NSA Life Member.

Gary Ray Hettrick (Missoula '80)

Gary, 83, died December 15, 2020, from complications of Pulmonary fibrosis. A lifelong resident of Hamilton, Montana, he was born November 1, 1947, and graduated from Hamilton H.S. in 1966. He enlisted in the Marine Corps and enrolled at the University of Montana after his time in the service. Gary graduated with his Bachelor's degree and then earned a Master's in Economics from Columbia University. After graduate school, Gary jumped at Missoula 1980-83. He took a position at Rocky Mountain Labs (RML) and worked over 27 years in the Visual, Medical Arts, and Scientific Photography department. One of his proudest accomplishments came in 2012, after his retirement, when he published an article in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* about RML's role in a yellow fever vaccine during World War II.

His passion for the outdoors, natural resources, and the environment led to an annual canoe trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in Minnesota and mountain biking trips in Moab.

Edward R. Evatz (Missoula '51)

Ed died January 12, 2023, in Reno, Nevada. He was born December 29, 1929, in Spring Canyon, Utah. After graduating from Carbon H.S. in Price, Utah, he worked in the coal mines of Spring Canyon during the summer months and odd jobs during school to put himself through college. In spring of 1951, he graduated from Utah State University (Logan, UT) with a degree in Forestry Management. He worked for the USFS and jumped the 1951 season at Missoula. In October 1951, he was drafted into the Army and was stationed in Anchorage, Alaska, and he was a member of the Army's Alaskan Command. After two years of service as a 2nd Lieutenant, he returned to the Forest Service and was a timber boss based out of Eugene, Oregon, and then Craig, Colorado.

Continuing with his government service, in 1955 he began his long-standing career with the BLM. His work included the construction and management of the Job Corp Center in Price (UT), many range-management leadership positions at various BLM Offices located in Colorado, Utah, and Idaho, and a four-year stint at the Department of Interior office in Washington D.C. In 1975 he transferred to Reno (NV) where he started his final chapter with the BLM, working as the Deputy State Director, Chief of Resources.

Edward Clarence "Ed" Lungren (McCall '51)

Ed, 94, died June 8, 2024, in Collierville, Tennessee. He was born April 3, 1930, in Sioux City, Iowa. Ed was raised in Boise, Idaho, and graduated from Boise H.S. in 1948. He took a year off during high school and joined the Army before returning to finish high school. After high school, he attended Boise Jr. College then transferred to the University of Idaho on the GI bill. During his college years, 1951-52, Ed worked the summers as a smokejumper at McCall. After graduating from college, he served two years in the Army then entered the Air Guard, the beginning of a long love of flying.

Once completing his pilot training, he went to work for West Coast Airlines in 1957 flying DC-3s throughout the NW. As time passed, he earned his captain status with the airlines and moved his family to Seattle, Washington. While in Seattle, he became the Chief Pilot of the Seattle base. In 1976 he relocated to Phoenix, Arizona, where Ed assumed the Chief pilot position for the Phoenix base of operations and joined Moon Valley Country Club.

Ed lived in Phoenix until a job relocation moved him to Memphis, Tennessee. Ed retired in 1990 at the age

of 60, two years later he was hired by FedEx to start a training program for the MD-11, a new airplane that FedEx was bringing online. During the 13 years Ed worked for FedEx, he also enjoyed building and flying RC airplanes and playing golf.

Earl Warren Raymond (Missoula '51)

Earl, 94, of Falmouth, Maine, died Feb. 2, 2024. He was born in Lowell, MA, May 23, 1929. After graduating early from high school, Earl enlisted in the Marines, serving as a Corporal at the Marine Air Station at Cherry Point, N.C. He received a B.A. in Forestry from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1952. Earl hitchhiked across the country to spend college summers working as a smokejumper with the USFS in Montana. He received an M.S. in Forestry from Yale University in 1953. Earl spent his entire working life with the James W. Sewall Company in Old Town, Maine, retiring as COO. He was integral to the formation and leadership of the Maine Society of Land Surveyors.

Earl was a lifelong outdoorsman, skier, kayaker, and hiker. He was a Maine Guide and a founding member of the Maine Chapter of the International Appalachian Trail. He spent his retirement researching and writing about the history of surveying and mapping in the state of Maine, writing more than a dozen papers that he donated to the Maine Historical Society. Earl also traveled the world. In Africa, he climbed near the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Into his last few months, he enjoyed kayaking local lakes and ponds and across Falmouth Harbor to Clapboard Island. Earl jumped at Missoula in 1951 and at West Yellowstone in 1952.

Warren Frank "Pat" Pattison (North Cascades '53)

Pat, 79, died January 26, 2012. He was born November 1932 and raised in Aberdeen, WA. Pat graduated from Weatherwax H.S. where he played football and was Student Body President. After high school, Pat attended Oregon State University where he graduated with a degree in Forestry. He joined the USAF and received his wings in 1956 after flying F-34s, T-28s, T-33s, B-25s and C-119s throughout Europe and Africa.

Pat went into teaching after the Air Force. While teaching in the Shoreline District and supporting his family, Pat pursued his Master's in Counseling at Seattle University. At the high school where Pat was a teacher and counselor, he was credited with caring for students and never giving up on anyone. Pat would find a way to reach the students on a level where he became their friend and trusted advisor. Pat jumped at NCSB in 1953.

Howard W. Chadwick (McCall '52)

Howard, 91, died August 24, 2023, at his home in Sequim, Washington. He was born in Cleveland in September 1931 and went through his primary education in Nova Scotia and Massachusetts. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Forestry from the University of Idaho where he was a classmate of **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49).

Howard spent 1953-57 on active duty with the Army as an explosive and ordnance disposal officer. Prior to that, he jumped at McCall for the 1952 season and worked as a lookout before jumping. He worked 1960-62 as a Range Analyst on the Rio Grande NF, 1962-65 in Range Research, USFS, Tempe, AZ; 1965-85 in Natural Resource Studies, Dept. of Interior in Seattle.

Donald Montgomery Clark (McCall '52)

Don, 91, died January 29, 2024. He was born July 22, 1932, in Boise, Idaho. Don graduated from Boise H.S. and the University of Idaho.

After college Don spent two years in Germany with the 4th Armored Division 899th Group Tank Battalion, US Army. Following his stint in the army, Don joined Price Candy Company in Kansas City, started as a dishwasher in New Orleans, and ended as Executive Vice President over 160 restaurants all over the US. During his restaurant career, he was featured in a national restaurant magazine citing "Excelling in management and organization."

In 1980 Don moved "back home" to McCall, Idaho, and established Clark Real Estate, which he ran for 25 years. In McCall Don was active in local issues and committees, including serving as a Fire Board Commissioner for many years. Don jumped at McCall 1952 and 1954-55.

Richard V. "Dick" Clearman (Missoula '52)

Dick, 91, died April 27, 2024, in Missoula, Montana. He was born December 15, 1932, in Choteau, Montana. He grew up in Wilburn and Helena and graduated from Helena H.S. Dick received his bachelor's in History from the University of Montana and his master's from Boston University.

Dick was in the Army as an Artillery Officer for 20 years and retired as a Lt. Colonel. "My best job was being the Executive and Commanding Officer of a 155mm, 600-man Artillery Battalion in Vietnam." During the time he served in the Army, he was deployed during the Vietnam War to Korea and was stationed in Germany twice as well as several different locations around the United States. While serving he graduated

from Command and General Staff College and earned an MBA from Boston University.

Dick taught ROTC at the University of Montana for three years. Dick worked as a New York Life Insurance agent for 20 years. He jumped at Missoula during the 1952-54 seasons.

Max C. Dolato (Grangeville '52)

Max, 93, died November 15, 2019, in Salem, Oregon. He was born March 3, 1926, in Wisconsin. Max grew up in Oconto County, Wisconsin and served as a Marine during WWII. Max jumped at Grangeville in 1952 and graduated from Montana State University. He worked for the BLM for over 30 years.

Howard C. Verbeck (North Cascades '51)

Howard, 87, died December 18, 2019, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. He was born September 7, 1932, in Washington state. Howard jumped at NCSB in 1951.

Richard L. Verbeck (North Cascades '53)

Richard, 84, died February 24, 2019, in Wenatchee, Washington. He was born January 1, 1935, in Tonasket, Washington, where he grew up. He jumped at North Cascades 1953-54.

Rudolph Kenneth "Rudy" Yellowtail (Missoula '87)

Rudy died December 18, 2006, at the Crow-Northern Cheyenne Indian Health Service Hospital, Crow Agency Montana. Rudy was one of a very few Crow tribal members who received a liver transplant (Los Angeles) and survived for one year and two months. He was born in Los Angeles, California, April 15, 1958. Child of the Sun Dance "Iishkishee Bakada" was raised by his grandparents and was keenly aware of the Sun Dance way. He observed the teachings of the renowned Shoshone Sun Dance Chief John Trujillo. He was a member of the Whistling Water Clan and a Child of the Big Lodge Clan.

Rudy received his education at Wyola and St. Labre schools. He later took classes at Little Big Horn College, Fort Belknap Community College and Glendale Community College where he completed his certificate as a substance abuse counselor. He worked in this field until moving back to Montana. Rudy jumped at Missoula 1987-88 and 1990.

John Howard Heckman (Missoula '49)

John died August 10, 2005. He was born January 9, 1929, in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and grew up in Arlington, Virginia. He graduated from Montana State University in 1953 with a degree in Forestry. John was deployed

to Korea that year with the US Army. He stayed in the Army Reserve and retired as a Lt. Colonel in the 1980s.

John worked as a Forester with the state of Montana (1955-57), Assistant District Ranger USFS, Warland, Montana (1957-64), Assistant District Ranger USFS, Bozeman, Montana (1965 to mid-1980s), and Gypo sawyer (mid-1980s to mid-1990s). John jumped at Missoula 1949-51.

John Richard Lindlan (Cave Junction '52)

John, 90, died May 8, 2020, in New Brighton, Minnesota. He was born in March 1930. John jumped at Cave Junction 1952-54 while he was in dental school at the University of Minnesota. He practiced dentistry in North Dakota while waiting to enter the Army, and was stationed in Texas and Colorado, attaining the rank of Major. John practiced in Portland, Oregon, before beginning a tour with the Public Health Service in Guam. He returned to Minnesota in 1968 and practiced there until his retirement in 1996. John had done volunteer work in Brazil and Honduras.

James Blair Barron (McCall '53)

Jim, 88, died March 31, 2021, in Castleford, Idaho. He was born January 14, 1933, in Twin Falls, Idaho. Jim went to school and graduated from Buhl schools, then attended University of Idaho and later received his master's degree at the University of Virginia. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, working in logistics for 28 years. Jim was never without a job. In high school he ran a trap line, setting mouse traps for Buhl businesses. In college he "wrangled" horses for dudes near Stanley, Idaho. Jim surveyed the canal system across the canyon west of Sinking Canyon, and other jobs such as farm work, door to door salesman, tending bars, even selling toasted cheese sandwiches during study hour from his room in the ATO house in Moscow, Idaho. Jim jumped at McCall 1954-54 and Idaho City 1955.

Richard Jeremiah Hensel (Idaho City '53)

Richard, 93, and a 67-year resident of Alaska, died February 5, 2023. He was born in Weatherly, Pennsylvania, January 2, 1930. After high school he enlisted in the US Army, serving in Heidelberg, Germany. An early interest in wildlife led to a degree in wildlife management from Utah State University. He jumped at Idaho City 1953 and 1955. Seasonal work in Alaska progressed to graduate studies at University of Alaska Fairbanks. His long career began as assistant manager of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge for ten years, where he did pioneering Kodiak Brown bear

and Bald Eagle research which led to the publication of several scientific articles.

After transferring to Anchorage in 1970, his career included working with Alaska Native village residents on Land Claim Settlement. Subsequent employment with the National Park Service and State of Alaska involved designating Wilderness lands, Polar bear studies, oil spill damage in Prince William Sound and rocket launch impact on Kodiak Island. He served on the Alaska Board of Game.

Richard was an avid reader and lifelong learner. He had a particular interest in American Indian history, among his many heroes were Chief Seattle and his daughter Angeline. He was passionate about service and volunteerism. He contributed many years of leadership to the Boy Scouts of America. He was a founding member of the Quiet Rights Coalition in addition to membership in many environmental conservation organizations.

Donald Dean Isbell (Missoula '52)

Don, 85, died April 26, 2016, in Kealahou, Hawaii. He was born in Montier, Missouri, August 11, 1930. Don was a retired high school music teacher, musician and Army veteran. He taught band as well as psychology at Pahoa and Konawaena High Schools. Don was a substitute teacher at Kealahou Intermediate and High schools. He was a music teacher, musician, Boy Scout leader, artist and a member of the West Hawaii County Band, Kona Symphony Orchestra. 🎵



Looking Back: Smokejumper unpacking radio and fire fighting equipment packs dropped to jumpers by cargo chute. Photo taken by Stanley, 1947. (USDA Forest Service, National Archives 71076497)

Three Benjamins

by Mike Nielson (McCall '73)

Instigateur

If there is such a word, the McCall Smokejumper that the term most applied to was **Neil Satterwhite** (MYC-65). He didn't provoke so much as he instigated situations and scenarios that caused you to question your involvement in them. By '73, Neil had been demoted from training "Neds." His training methods were deemed by the Brass to be too physically harsh, included lake swimming and around the clock roll calls. To Neil, if he hadn't trained you and deemed you worthy of passing his standards, you were just a jumper-in-training who had the name, "YOU!" And "YOU!" was not a salutation so much as a command, as in "YOU! Lakefork Cantina, NOW!"

All of the watering holes in McCall had the three things in the forefront of a smokejumper's mind—beer, food, and the occasional eye candy. It was Lardo's for beer, a mushroom burger and recycled eye candy. The Brass Lamp for beer, pizza, and old eye candy. The Yacht Club and the Foresters for beer and no candy. The Shore Lodge Resort with transient candy and The Mill Steak House for flesh of dead cow thermally altered with imported lakeside condo-owning resortee candy bought, paid for, and partially consumed from Boise. Also, there was the Lakefork Cantina, south of McCall, half way to Donnelly with beer and a combination plate that included rice, beans, enchiladas, chile relleno, and a taco with never-ending tortilla chips and salsa, no candy. The entrance to the Cantina fronted Highway 55 making for parking on the other three sides which, with all the jumpers' pickups parked outside, looked like an old West saloon with rides parked at the hitching rail.

On cue and in character, Neil walked in like he owned the place and started arranging the tables, nodding to the owner and his wife like this had been done before and "We're back with mucho dinero."

The first sign of the bacchanalia to come was when the "YOU!s" started arriving from the summons by the Instigateur with the command given to the owner on the first order of beer, "Run a tab. One ticket." The beer never stopped. The chips and salsa kept coming. The combination plates arrived and disappeared. What part of Satterwhite training was this? Would we ever pass this standard? I was somewhere between no mas and digesting when the Instigateur summoned the owner with a more respectful, "Señor, por favor, la cuenta?"

The occasion had run its course. Satiation was the order to the point of sufficiency where any more would have been an over abundance. And Neil knew it, hence the summons for "the bill." What was to follow was another part of our training, a heads-out flip to pay the tab.

Those that could still figure started figuring what the total could be as Neil left the bill face down and instigated the beginning of the flip with a still-in tails. The thought crossed my mind that whoever didn't heads-out on this bill might end up no longer being known as "YOU!" But I sure didn't want to have to "buy" that status, so I was relieved when my flip was a heads. I was out. I could go back to digesting.

Not so Neil. It seemed like his flipping quarter had two tails. On the last deciding flip where the opposing "YOU!" flipped a heads, Neil quietly made two reaches. One for the bill and one for his wallet. Again, with respect, he summoned the owner and surrendered the bill with a smile and three Benjamins: one for the beer, one for the food, and one for the tip. Training: Satterwhite style. Class. To this day, I carry a Benjamin and a Grant in my wallet, and a quarter for flipping. 🐼



Doug Gochmour (BOI-74) just completed his 50th, and final season, as a high school football referee. "Officiating sports was a great way to get accepted into a new community as my Forest Service career progressed. I worked games in five western states, numerous playoff games, and four state championships. It was quite a ride." Doug retired as the Forest Supervisor of the Malheur National Forest and now resides in Star, Idaho.

Catastrophic Reburns Threaten Forest Towns

by Roger Jaegel (Associate)

On August 24, 2004, I submitted the op-ed (below) to the *Redding Record Searchlight* regarding the lack of fuels management on National Forests in Trinity County, California. Since that time, environmental zealots shut down most logging and needed fuels mitigation. The influence of the Endangered Species Act and many court decisions favoring preservation and halting land management made cleaning up the massive fuel loads after fire, and insect and disease outbreaks near impossible.

We now have approximately half our National Forest (100 million acres) in a condition that is ready to burn. Multiple fires on the same landscapes are converting our once prime forests to brush and invasive weedy vegetation.

It is estimated this is now costing the American public over one trillion dollars per year as fuel conditions on our public lands continue to worsen. As we continue to pay large non-profit environmental organizations under the Equal Access to Justice Act to sue the Federal Government, fuels management work on public lands is still not near the pace and scale needed to protect our rural communities and the surrounding National Forests. When the public debates turn to "Salvage" and the accusations fly, please remember to ask about the fire next time.

2004 Op-ed to *Redding Record Searchlight*

It is time to redefine the political debate about "salvage" of fire-killed trees. The fighting is about doing the economically responsible action, using fire-killed saw timber and recovering economic value, or leaving the land alone and letting it naturally recover. Nothing is natural about the current fire threat to Western families left with the remains of a forest fire on the edge of their community. The threat is very real and not just a debating point.



Roger Jaegel

The debate, currently masquerading as environmentalists versus forest industry, and focusing on the commercial use of killed trees, ignores hard realities. It prevents more important dialogue and the opportunity to discover common ground. We must elevate the dialogue and get some help solving a huge fire threat in the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains of Northern California and southern Oregon—the fire next time.

When fire-killed trees are not removed and the area is not replanted, fuel loads of up to 150

tons per acre (over 50 tons is considered a fire risk) stand at the edge of our town. Over the years the brush grows up around the standing dead, dying and drying trees.

When the fire burns through the next time, the results are terrifying. The fire is extremely hot. Dead trees burst into flames 20 yards from the flame front. Brush 20 feet high blocks firefighters' access. Retardant slurry is totally ineffective against the snags that have no branches to catch it. The fires are extremely resistant to control and an extreme danger to firefighters. We experienced this during the Prairie Fire in 2002, which was a reburn on an untreated portion of the Flume Fire of 1987. The fire reburned so hot the ground looked like a moonscape.

In the past six years, we have seen big stand-destroying fires burn to the edges of our town. The Big Bar Complex in 1998, the Journey Fire above Ruth and Ruth Lake in 2000, The Hyampom Fire next to Hayfork in 2001, the Loma and Reys Fires next to Del Loma and Hyampom in 2003, and the recent Sims Mountain Fire. Most fire-killed trees are still standing, and the brush is coming up. The reasons for the lack of reforestation are varied: environmental lawsuits, lack of planning dollars, deterioration of the commercially usable trees, etc.

The scary part of this increased risk is that it will last for 50 years and end in a raging fire. This happening at a

time when the volunteer fire departments are short on manpower and resources. Add to that the hard reality that our fires generally start late in the season, when there are fires in other parts of California. Four times since 1987, large fires in different areas of the West have overwhelmed suppression resources. The agencies moved into “triage,” and high-population areas have priority. They do not come to Trinity County.

When burned areas next to our towns are not cleaned up and replanted, our risk exceeds the tolerable limit. We have five towns in this condition now. If we do not move very quickly to recover the value from the fire-

killed trees, then we do not have money to clean up the damage and replant the forest. We all need to ask the Forest Service and our neighbors to quickly deal with this danger.

When the public debates turn to “salvage” and the accusations fly, please remember to ask about the fire next time. 🌲

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Roger Jaegel is retired from the USFS and was a director of the Hayfork Fire Protection District and lives in Redding, California.

New Faces by Chuck Sheley (CJ-59)



Sarah Doehring
(Courtesy S. Doehring)

NSA Has New Treasurer Sarah Doehring (MSO-91)

Sarah had a long, successful career in smokejumping where she gained extensive knowledge of firefighting and firefighting leadership. Sarah jumped for 24 seasons (MSO 91-96, 98-11; GAC 97, 12-14). During her career, she served as Base Manager in Region 3 (Silver City, New Mexico), was the Operations Foreman in Missoula and the Base Manager in Grangeville, Idaho.

Sarah spent her last three years on the Gila N.F., retiring as the Forest Aviation Officer. During active fire seasons, Sarah continues to fill in where needed as a dispatcher. Sarah resides with her husband in Silver City, New Mexico.



Sarah Altemus-Pope
(Courtesy S. Altemus-Pope)

New NSA Bylaws and Policies Chair Sarah Altemus-Pope (MSO-01)

Sarah was an active smokejumper for 11 years (MSO 01-11). She received her law degree in 2014 from the University of Oregon. Sarah worked as a disaster management specialist for the Forest Service for several years before joining the Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative as the Coordinator in 2014.

Sarah is currently the Executive Director of South Willamette Solutions, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that oversees the Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative and Oakridge Air projects. Sarah resides with her husband in Oakridge, Oregon.



Rod Dow
(Courtesy R. Dow)

New NSA Board Member Rod Dow (MYC-68)

Rod was an active smokejumper for 31 years (MYC 68-74, FBX 75-99) and a wildland firefighter for 45 years. He retired from smokejumping with 284 fire jumps and approximately 480 total jumps; close to evenly split between rounds and squares. Early in his career, he used his smokejumping money to pay for college at Washington State University where he earned two bachelor degrees, one in education and a second in world history. A few years ago, he archived 70 jumper stories in a book called, *Just a Few Jumper Stories*. A recent issue of *Smokejumper* magazine included a poem he wrote inspired by smokejumping called, “So, Is There a Fee?” He loves to travel. Recent trips included a month in Bali, three weeks in Switzerland and Italy, three weeks fly fishing in New Zealand, and two trailer camping trips to Virginia and Wisconsin. Rod resides with his wife in Yakima, Washington.



THE JUMP LIST

The Men of 1958



This column is part of the NSA History Preservation Project. The bios may have been shortened due to lack of page space. The complete bios 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.

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Larry P. Moore (Idaho City '59)

Larry was born March 2, 1939, in Muskogee, Oklahoma, and grew up in Wagoner, Oklahoma, where he graduated from high school in 1957. He later continued his education at the University of Arizona (Tucson) and graduated with a degree in Agriculture in 1970. Larry jumped at Idaho City 1959, McCall 1960-64, and Fairbanks 1970-71. He served eight years in the Army National Guard. Larry worked for the CIA in Southeast Asia 1964-69, and Chemonics Industries 1971-2005 as Northwest Regional Manager. He retired in 2005 and is living along the Snake River at Weiser, Idaho.

Wincel E. "Dub" Raborn (Missoula '59)

Dub was born January 17, 1940, in Progress, Mississippi, and graduated from Mississippi State University in 1961. He jumped at Missoula 1959-61 and 1964. Dub broke his back on a jump near Libby, Montana, in 1964, ending his jumping career. He joined Travelers Insurance in Nashville,

Tennessee, in 1968-73. Dub then founded Raborn Insurance Agency in Smyrna, Tennessee where he worked until retirement. He is an NSA Life Member.

Ronald V. "Ron" Rockwell (Missoula '59)

Ron was born July 6, 1938, in Great Falls, Montana. He grew up on a farm in Fort Shaw, Montana, and graduated from Simms H.S. (MT) in 1956 before spending six months active duty with the Army Reserve at Fort Ord, California. Ron received his bachelor's in German from the University of Montana and his master's in German literature from Middlebury College in Vermont. He jumped at Missoula 1959-60 and Fairbanks 1963-64.

Ron work for U.S. Agency for International Development in Vietnam 1967-68, taught German at Wartburg College (Iowa) 1969-70, taught at Vaughn Public School (MT) 1970-72, and was Principal at Vaughn 1972-73. He then worked for the Drug Enforcement Agency as a Special Agent 1974-87, and as a Supervisory Special Agent 1987-94 when he retired.

Harold Schlachtenhaufen (Cave Junction '59)

"I was born in Rockwell City, Iowa, March 15, 1940, in a large old white wooden frame house that was used as a Clinic. My father was a Lutheran pastor, and my mother was a secretary. I had one older brother born three days before I was on March 12 and one year earlier.

Two brothers later we ended with four boys in our family. When I was in first grade, my parents moved to Ottumwa, Iowa. In my 6th grade year, we moved to Waterloo, Iowa, where I attended the last half of 6th grade and three years at McKinstry Jr. H.S. and graduated from East Waterloo High School in 1958.

"The prior summer I spent working on a ground crew at Clearwater Timber Protective Association in Weippe, Idaho, and returned for a second summer in 1958. I caught a ride along with a group from Iowa State University going to Missoula, Montana.

"In the winter of 1959, I decided to apply for a smokejumper position in Cave Junction, Oregon. It was a more challenging learning experience than I imagined. I liked the mixture of personalities and common concerns for the preservation and improvement for all human and environmental life.

In August of 1959, after completing all our practice jumps, I contacted a full body case of poison oak or ivy and was disabled for two weeks and forced to resign from work in the forests and environment which I cherished.

"I finished college, went to graduate school, and then ended by earning a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology."

Nils A. "Swede" Troedsson (Missoula '59)

Swede was born November 1, 1933, in New York City, New York. He grew up in Orange, New Jersey,

where he graduated from Orange H.S. in 1952. Nils then served in the Marine Corps 1954-56 before entering the University of Montana where he graduated with a degree in Forestry in 1960. He started his career as a Timber Forester for the Northern Pacific Railroad 1960-61 before taking a Forester position with the USFS Colville N.F. 1961-63. Swede finished his career with the Forest Service on the Beaverhead N.F. 1963-94 and retired to Dillon, Montana. Nils taught map/compass at the Univ. of Montana Western 2000-16 and was active as a volunteer ski patrol 1970-2016. He authored the book "Smokejumper and Other Stories." Swede jumped at Missoula 1959.

Stephen M. Turner (Missoula '59)

Stephen was born March 13, 1939, in Omaha, Nebraska, and grew up in Clarinda, Iowa, where he graduated from Clarinda H.S. in 1957. He then graduated from William Jewell College in 1961 and from the University of Iowa Law School in 1964 with additional degrees from the University of Chicago Law School and the University of Paris Law School in 1966.

After serving as US Attorney in the Northern District of Iowa, he joined Squire, Sanders & Dempsey as an associate in 1968. Stephen served as a senior staff member of the President's Council on Executive Reorganization 1969-70 and was named a partner at Squire, Sanders & Dempsey in 1974. In this position he directed the firm's office in Brussels, Belgium (1975-82). In 1989 Stephen joined Texaco as Senior V.P. and General Counsel heading its Legal Department of 150 lawyers around the world.

Stephen jumped at Missoula 1959-61.

Barrie H. Turner (Missoula '59)

Barrie was born December 1, 1937, in Ventura, California, and grew up in Ojai where he graduated from Nordhoff H.S. in 1956. He started working for the USFS as a tanker crewman on the Los Padres N.F. and rookied at Missoula where he jumped 1959-60. Barrie was drafted in 1960 and enlisted in the 101st Airborne at Fort Campbell, KY, 1961-62.

He went to Helicopter Flight School at Ft. Wolters, TX, in 1963, Korea 1963-64, and 1964-65 at Ft. Lewis, Washington. 1965-66 found Barrie in Vietnam as a helicopter gunship pilot for the 1st Air Cav. Division. He took part in the Ia Drang Valley Battle.

Barrie was discharged in 1966 and flew helicopters out of Oxnard, California, until 2009. He flew offshore oil work, firefighting, powerline and survey work. His last years were agricultural flying. Barrie finished with 47 years flying and 24,000 plus hours.

He retired to Thailand in 2009 where he and his wife lived, growing sugar cane and tapioca on 60 acres. Barrie is an NSA Life Member and now (2022) lives in Truckee, California.

Charles N. "Chuck" Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

Chuck was born October 10, 1938, in Chico, California. At the start of WWII, his family moved to the Sierra Army Ordnance Depot at Herlong, California, where he grew up until high school. He moved to Chico, lived with grandparents, and finished high school in 1956. He earned a bachelor's degree in

Biological Science from Chico State University in 1960 and a teaching credential in 1961. Chuck participated in Track & Field for four years while at Chico State running hurdles, 440, and mile relay. Went to NAIA Nationals in 1957, NCAA West. D-2 1958-60.

Chuck taught Physical Education at Chico Jr. H.S. for 36 years and coached Cross Country and Track in Chico for 53 years. He was instrumental in developing the sport of Cross Country in Northern California and was one of the first coaches in the section to start a girl's program. His teams won 30 league and 22 section championships in Cross Country and his 1977 girls' team (Charlie's Angels) were ranked #2 in the nation. Three of these runners went on to All-American status at the university level.

Prior to the advent of Title IX, he organized a girls basketball officials association to handle the increased participation by girls in athletics. He assigned officials for 22 years and officiated the California State Girls Basketball Championships at the Oakland Coliseum in 1980. He currently assigns Track Starters for the California North Section. He has been inducted into the Chico State University and the Chico Sports Hall of Fame.

Besides teaching/coaching, Chuck had a dual career with the USFS and BLM. He started with the USFS on an engine crew during the 1957-58 seasons and went on to smokejumping at Cave Junction 1959-66 and Alaska 1967-70. After a brief break he was hired by the Mendocino N.F. to run the Type II Crew Program which he did until retirement in 1996. He is extremely proud of the Type II Crew Program that fielded 300 firefighters annually

and trained close to 4,000 during its existence. Twenty-three of his recruits went on to become smokejumpers and many others went into careers with the BLM/USFS and CalFire.

Chuck was elected to the Board of Directors of the National Smokejumper Association in 1995. He took over the merchandising program in 1998. After the editor of the association's newsletter quit in 1999, he started producing and editing *Smokejumper* magazine which he has done since. Chuck's main goal is to preserve the history of smokejumping in the U.S. and record the bios and achievements of the 6,000+ men and women who have done that job.

Ken Rosenberg (Cave Junction '57)

Ken was born November 25, 1938, in Tillamook, Oregon, into a family engaged in the forest products

industry. His father ran the cedar shingle mill, one uncle ran the plywood mill, and another uncle ran a lumber retail store.

With the outbreak of WWII, his father was called up to serve as an officer in the U.S. Army Air Corps, and we moved to Tacoma, Washington, living at McCord Field for the duration of the war. The airplanes Ken saw flying over McCord Field were the same models he later jumped from or observed dropping fire retardant on fires. With a family history in the forest products industry, forest fires, and WWII aircraft, it was almost pre-ordained that Ken would become a smokejumper.

At the end of the war, his father left the Army and moved to Cave Junction and started Cave Building Supply. Ken played football and wrestled at Illinois Valley High School (IVHS) in Cave Junction. When he graduated from high

school, he rookied at CJ and jumped there through 1961. As planned, his five years as a smokejumper paid his way through college. At the end of his fifth year as a smokejumper, he was drafted into the U.S. Army where he served for eight years with tours in post-war Korea, Germany, and Vietnam.

After the Army, Ken joined First Interstate Bank of Oregon and ultimately worked his way into the International Banking Department as a Trade Finance Advisor. During his career in International Trade he became a senior executive and has over 50 years of experience in Trade Finance and Supply Chain Finance. Ken testified as an expert witness on Export Trading Companies before committees of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Ken is currently living in Livermore, California. 🍷



Looking Back

Rocky landing for **Barrie Turner** (MSO-59) at the Shovel Creek Fire, 1960. (*Smokejumper*, July 2001)

Environmental Lawsuits Have Direct Effect on Mortality

by Bob Zyback (Associate), *Rogue Valley Times*, June 30, 2024; reprinted with permission

Oregon is now beginning this year's fire season, and southwest Oregon will likely be inundated with days and weeks of deadly smoke. It's been happening most summers sometime from June until October since 1987.

For the first 40 years of my life, we didn't have a fire season. We had wood heat, field burns, wigwam burners, bonfires, and clearcuts; but from 1952 until the Silver Complex Fire in 1987 there was only one wildfire bigger than 10,000 acres in all western Oregon: the 1966 Oxbow Fire in Lane County.

The 2002 Biscuit Fire was nearly 500,000 acres in size, the largest wildfire in Oregon history, and the Kalmiopsis Wilderness has now burned four times. Anyone who has lived here a few years has likely experienced the catastrophic Chetco Bar, Taylor Creek, Klondike, South Obenchain, Almeda Drive, Slater, and/or Flat fires - and breathed their smoke.

Anybody less than 40 years of age, or that moved here in the last 35 years, probably thinks major fire seasons are "normal," or even "natural," and that breathing wildfire smoke part of the year is mostly unavoidable. But we didn't used to have fire seasons, and wildfire smoke can be deadly.

The 2020 Labor Day Fires killed 11 people in southwest Oregon and burned more than 4,000 homes. During these fires, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality recorded the worst air quality in the world, including record-setting "Air Quality Index" (AQI) numbers for Portland, Eugene, Bend, Medford and Klamath Falls communities.

AQI numbers for these communities varied from 332 to more than 500. A "Good" AQI number is from 0 to 50; "Unhealthy" numbers are 101 to 200; 200-300 is considered "Very Unhealthy," and anything 300 and above is considered "Hazardous"—500 is the highest number that can be measured, and Bend even exceeded that rating.

According to recent National Library of Medicine research, short-term health effects of "wildland smoke," such as asthma attacks, are well known and recognized, but a study from 2007 to 2020 indicated more than

11,000 US deaths per year from long-term effects of wildfire smoke. Lung cancer and cardiopulmonary diseases were identified as major causes.

A University of California study of smoke-related mortality from 2008 to 2018 estimated 52,000 to 56,000 Californians suffered "premature death" due to wildfire smoke inhalation during those years, or about 5,000 deaths per year.

If major wildfires and their smoke were mostly uncommon during the 35 years from 1952 to 1987, and they have now become an almost annual concern, what changed? And can it be fixed?

According to the USFS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), West Coast governors and environmentalists, the principal culprits in this deadly development are "climate change" and "wildfire suppression."

Those are misleading excuses and not supported by facts. First, the climate in western Oregon has been pretty much the same for centuries; and second, the build up of fuels is almost entirely due to changed federal forest management policies, as documented, and has little to do with fire suppression history of the past 120 years.

What did change, and dramatically, was the reaction of the federal government to anti-logging lawsuits first brought by environmental organizations when spotted owls became an "endangered species" in 1990. Active forest management was mostly stopped as a direct result, fuels built up rather than being harvested or treated, and they subsequently burned, as clearly predicted.

The recent litigation on local BLM projects initiated by Oregon Wild and Cascadia Wildlands is the most current example. BLM wanted to manage hazardous forest fuels and the environmentalists wanted to stop logging and get attention.

Our ancestors on the land showed us how to fix this problem. Stopping these costly lawsuits is key. Restoring active management of our public roads, trails, and forests will mostly end these deadly events and provide jobs and income to restore our rural schools, industries, communities, and clean, healthy air. 🌲

Legacy of the Siskiyou Smokejumpers Burns Bright

by Paul Fattig (Associate), *Grants Pass Daily Courier*, April 2, 2024; reprinted with permission

With the continued threat of more thunderstorms rumbling overhead as Oregon continues to battle fire dragons, one can't help but be concerned about the burning peril. After all, we are just entering peak wildfire season.

Unfortunately, this summer has already proven flammable. Since mid-July, 17 lightning-caused fires erupted on land protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry in Jackson and Josephine counties. Fortunately, those fires have all been contained.

When the human-caused Upper Applegate Fire burned more than 900 acres in June about five air miles from our home, we were more than a little worried about the potential for it to reach our property. But firefighters for the ODF, Applegate Fire District and other entities, aided by fixed wing and helicopter attacks, put it out before it could spread farther. Their hard work was much appreciated.

While I am certainly no wildfire expert, as a journalist I've covered wildfires in southern Oregon, Alaska and northern California. Most of the fires were relatively small and long since forgotten.

But others continue to burn in my memory. There was the lightning-sparked Silver Fire starting on Aug. 30, 1987, growing to more than 96,000 acres in the then Siskiyou National Forest before it was contained on Nov. 2 of that year. And I'll never forget Oct. 20, 1991, in California's East Bay area when I was interviewing former Oakland Athletics pitcher Vida Blue. The legendary lefthander suddenly looked over my head and asked, "What is that?" I turned around to see a large column of smoke billowing up from the nearby Oakland Hills. I would spend long hours covering what became known as the Oakland Hills Fire which killed 25 people and destroyed more than 3,000 homes.

Nor can one forget southwestern Oregon's Biscuit Fire sparked by lightning in early July of 2002, burning nearly 500,000 acres to become the largest in the nation that year.

And we all remember the horrific human-caused Almeda Fire that erupted in early September of 2020, destroying some 2,000 structures in Talent and Phoenix.

As a youngster reared in the Illinois Valley, I recall feeling largely safe from wildfires because of the aerial firefighters stationed at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base a few miles south of Cave Junction. Indeed, they were, and remain, heroes to those of us who watched them jump from the sky in our youth.

After the base was closed in 1981, former Siskiyou jumpers created a unique smokejumper museum at the site which originally opened in 1943 as one of the nation's first smokejumper bases. Visitors to the museum can see historic firefighting gear and learn firsthand about aerial firefighting from their hosts who are former smokejumpers. There is no admission charge, but donations are accepted.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. seven days a week until October. For reservations, call 541-441-4804.

"They should have never closed this base," observed museum host **Gary Buck** who rookie'd in 1966 and jumped for 17 fire seasons. "The Forest Service stated that the Biscuit Fire alone cost \$480 million just to suppress it."

Had the base been operating in 2002, Siskiyou smokejumpers would have likely stopped the fire when it was small, he noted. The fire was sparked by lightning on Biscuit Hill about a dozen airmiles southwest of the base.

"They told us they were closing the base to save money," he said. "When I started here, I was making \$2.30 an hour. They lost unbelievable amounts of money by closing it. They need this base as much as ever."

Former Siskiyou Smokejumper **Tom "Troop" Emonds** (CJ-66) served as a museum host earlier this summer. He continues to work in his retirement to help agency firefighters as well as those living in or near forested areas prepare for today's extreme wildfires. "The climate is changing but people are smart," he said. "Everyone can learn how to create a black space. That's the key."

He was referring to creating an area around a home structure where flammable material is removed. Of

course, the work needs to be done before peak wildfire season.

“Get rid of all the calories before the main fire hits a structure,” he said of flammable material. “That includes dry grass. Nothing carries fire faster than light fuels like dry grass. The homeowner needs to know how to save a home from fire. I’ve trained a lot of people to do it.”

He started fighting wildfires in the eastern hardwoods in Connecticut while still in high school.

“I also fought wildfires in Australia and then came back to the U.S. where I did 24 years as a smokejumper,” he said. “Then I became a fire management officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

Upon retiring, he developed aptly-named Dragonslayers Premium Fire Tools and unique wildland firefighting guidance systems such as “Dragon Whiz Wheel” to help folks battling today’s wildfires.

“These aren’t all my ideas,” he stressed. “It is a combination of ideas from the best people I’ve worked with on wildfires around the world. I intend to continue making fire tools and hope to someday establish a school to train firefighters to defang the enemy dragon we face out there now.” 🐉



Looking Back: Cave Junction jumpers on a cone picking project in 1978. (Courtesy Doug Beck)



Meeting for lunch in Oroville, California, Summer 2024

Left to Right:

Larry Boggs (RDD-63)

Bill Bowles (RDD-57)

Phil Collins (RDD-59)

Jim Klump (RDD-64)

Rookie Observations

by David W. Owen (Redmond '66)

Even though I was a rookie at Redmond 58 years ago, many recollections, some unusual, remain with me. This isn't meant to describe the smokejumper program in general or Redmond in particular. They are not really jumper stories, just a few memory snapshots back to my rookie season in 1966.

In 1965 I was on a USFS engine crew on the Tahoe NF right out of high school and probably heard about smokejumping once that summer. Smokejumping seemed about as accessible as becoming an astronaut. That September I was riding a Greyhound bus heading off to college with the hills in the distance all on fire. I noticed someone else staring at the glow. It was **Harold Hartman** (CJ-65), who had just rookied at Cave Junction. He told me about the program and suggested that I apply to Redmond since the base was new and possibly in need of jumpers the following year.

Once offered a job at Redmond, I broke down and took a PE course that I was allowed to design myself. It was basically lifting weights, running the track, running stairs in the football stadium, doing sit-ups, pushups and pullups. There was a minimum PT standard that you had to pass to qualify for the program. Since I could meet all the requirements easily enough, I was thinking, "How hard can this be?" I didn't quite grasp the fact that the qualifying test only got you in the front door for Day One. And, of course, it was physically harder than I had thought.

The RAC-66 class was young, many 19-20 year olds with a few guys in their early to mid-twenties. There were about 16-18 rookies in the initial group and another group of 6-8 started a bit later. Unlike today, with a lengthy fire resume required to get into the smokejumper program, most guys only had a single fire season. Since you had to be 18 to fight fire in the federal agencies, age 19 was the usual earliest qualifying age to become a smokejumper. There was an age 19 second year jumper with four seasons of fire experience (he had fought fire for the State of Oregon at age 16 and 17), a tough record to match.

We started rookie training June 13 and made our 1st training jump 16 days later June 30. For some reason we didn't jump on July 1. We were then off for the weekend and the July 4th holiday. We made two training jumps on July 5, completed our 7th training jump on July 8 and then went on the Jump List. This amounted to 26 days from the start of training to going on the Jump List. That included weekends off and a holiday. And as I recall, the entire

rookie class made their first fire jump the next day on July 9. That is a testament to the efficiency of our trainers and the pace of the program.

I think that it is a testament to the program that in 2-3 weeks a group of young, minimally experienced firefighters were trained into functioning smokejumpers, pretty much turning us loose in the woods unsupervised, other than on your first fire jump and on larger fires when squad leaders would be in charge.

In 1966, RAC was only in its third year of operation. As the summer progressed, some time was spent by the rookies trying to compute how Redmond jumpers figured in the "which is the best base" order of things. Being young jumpers at a young base, we didn't have a lot of information to allow us to scientifically make this calculation, but it didn't stop us from trying.

With second year jumpers **Jim Gardner** (RAC-65) and **Mike Clarkson** (RAC-65) running the PT part of the training, what can I say? Does brutal but necessary describe it? I remember trying to grab a quick nap after training one day, during the first week, and having someone wake me up. Not knowing what time it was, I asked if they were still serving dinner? No, it was the next morning, and I had already missed breakfast and training was about to resume. I was still wearing my boots and clothes from the day before.

If we were on long runs out on the runways, I don't think we were allowed to have water breaks, but they weren't cruel enough to deny us the occasional smoke break.

I think everyone had made peace with the fact that we were going to be jumping out of planes. But I think most of us were shocked and intimidated when they took us out into the woods in the first few days and introduced us to tree climbing. I don't think it helped that the trees we were learning on were so large in diameter that you could barely get your climbing rope around them. On some trees, you had to climb a bit to even get the rope around. If you encountered a sizable branch, you usually had to unhook and, defying death, cross over the branch and re-hook. Of course, we received gentle encouragement from below in the form of yelling and threats to either get up the tree or come back down and pack your bags. Several of us only got up so far and then just held on for dear life. I know that I didn't pass the tree climbing test that day and I had plenty of company. However, a bunch of us weren't

sent down the road that night in disgrace and shame. We heard some more about what a disappointment some of us were. But that weekend, several experienced jumpers took us back out to the woods, on their own time, and we learned the ancient and noble art of tree climbing. In fact, I really came to enjoy it. That showed me that I was with a great bunch of people who would take the time and put in the effort to show us the way. I really needed that because I did hang up on my 7th training jump and on my first fire jump the next day.

One day we were pulled out of training and told about the death of **Arden Davis** (FBX-64) in Alaska and given clear instructions to go through the complete let-down procedure, even if we were only a foot or less off the ground.

On one of our training jumps, the French Minister of Agriculture was there to see us jump. I'm sure he returned to France wondering what that had to do with "le Agricole."

The day before our first jump, **Hal Weinmann** (NCSB-47) and others popped in to teach us "the emergency landing position." Your main chute doesn't open, and your reserve fails, and what to do next? Everyone gets all alert because we didn't want to miss this. I know I was still there, right up to where you "stick your head between your knees and kiss your ass goodbye."

We had 16 rookies in the Doug on our first jump. Probably half had never flown in a plane before. By the end of the summer, some had taken many flights but had never landed in a plane.

We jumped from planes that were WWII vintage, and I think our pilots had been WWII pilots. I do recall their remarkable flying skills. Being in a Doug dropping several two-man sticks on fires and then being in the plane as it made those tree top cargo runs in the mountains—well, let's just say that you can't buy that kind of thrill.

When I stepped to the door for my first training jump, I was met with encouraging words from Hal Weinmann, "Now I've got you where I want you, you SOB." I was laughing when I got the slap on the leg.

Our 5th and 7th jumps were into the timber. The jump spot "X" on our final training jump was at the base of the largest tree in the area, the top of which was where I landed. **Randy Cunningham** (RAC-66) sideswiped a tree 50 feet up, dumped the air out of his chute and had a freefall to the ground, pruning the tree on the way down. He hit, bounced to his feet, unhooked his harness and walked away. The final two rookies landed right on the "X" at pretty much the exact same time, arguing and running their chutes into each other as they came in.

After that seventh training jump, we packed our gear out for several miles. An argument (almost a fist fight) started in the first 100 yards about which was the right direction. The rookie class split into two groups and stomped off in different directions. One group came out exactly where the trucks were parked; the other about 200 yards up the road, this being in the days before GPS. Knowing how much GPS is relied upon today, and knowing how unknown the country we jumped into was, it kind of amazes me that we found our way out of the woods.

My first (and most difficult) fire jump was on the Willamette NF with second-year jumper **Dave Pierce** (RAC-65). It was a full Doug load **dropping two jumpers at a time on small fires right after lightning had passed through.** (*This would still work today.* Ed.) Hal Weinmann called me over and said, "That looks too rough down there for a rookie. Would you like me to find you an easier fire for your first jump?" Looking down, it did seem like a good idea, so, of course, I said, "Yes." Hal responded with, "Get in the door, you SOB." Fooled again, but with less laughing this time.

As the summer progressed, I think more guys came off the jump list from injuries sustained during jungle rules volleyball games than from actual jumps. One rookie got a 15-minute descent when he drifted into a thermal. When the plane came back around, one chute was on the ground, but the other was still at the altitude he had jumped from and climbing. I jumped a fire on the Deschutes NF with longtime jumper **Rey Zander** (NCSB-55). He described hitting a tree, falling upside down, and seeing a stump directly below his helmet getting closer and closer. His chute finally snagged and flipped him feet first just before impact.

Redmond's biggest jump that season was two Doug loads on the Fremont NF. Hal Weinmann spotted, and **Tony Percival** (NCSB-54) and **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) jumped the fire. It was a 10,000-acre fire and we had the world's best jump spot in a long meadow right at the head of the fire. When we were pulled from the fire, we flew over it and could see that it had been stopped at our sector but was still running on the flanks of the RAC fireline.

Though I jumped for two seasons, I'm still surprised by how little I knew about the history of the smokejumper program at the time. I didn't know about Mann Gulch until coming across Norman Maclean's book decades later. I didn't know about the Triple Nickles. I knew a little about the role of conscientious objectors during WWII, and I worked for **Skinny Beals** (MYC-45) on the sewing machines. (*Dave jumped at Redmond 1966 and at Fairbanks 1967. He lives in Sequim, Washington.*) 🍷

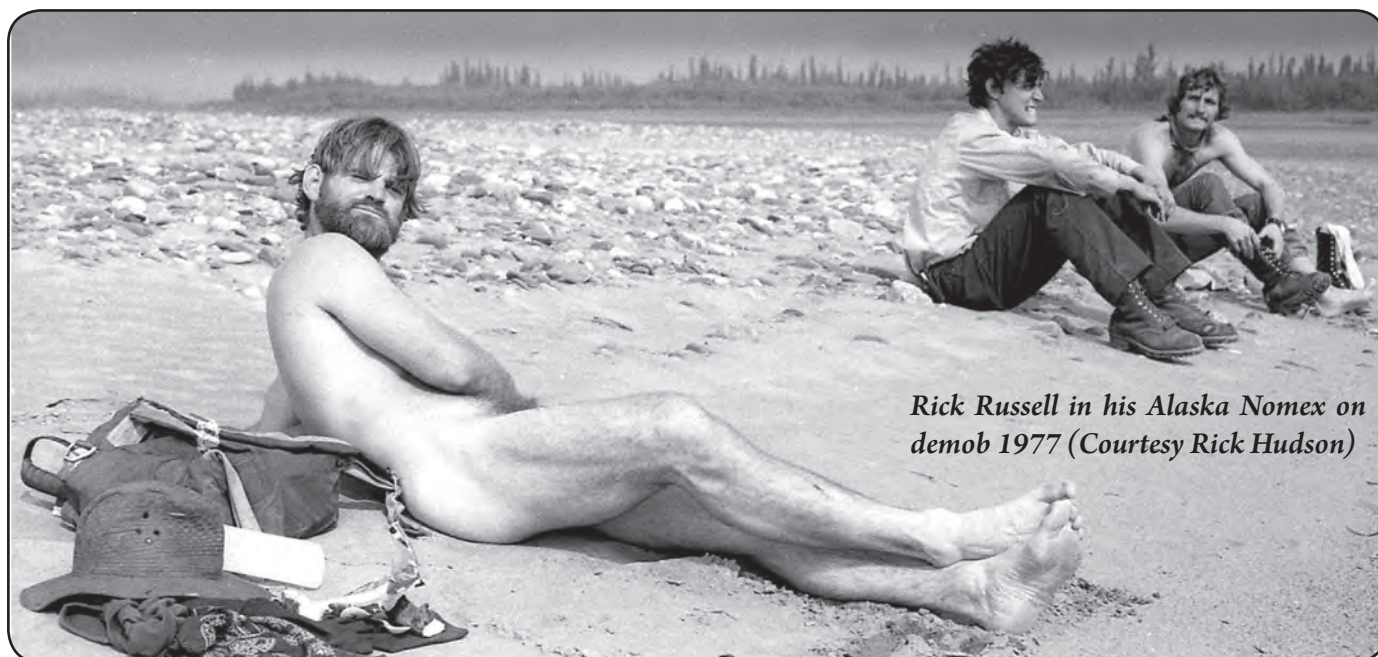
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Rick Russell in his Alaska Nomex on demob 1977 (Courtesy Rick Hudson)