

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

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JULY 2025

SMOKEJUMPER



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FRONT COVER

Davis Perkins with Shia Militia members

"They had captured the vehicle and gun the day before. They kept pointing to the handcuffs (seen behind my head)—ISIS was handcuffing their fighters to the guns. These guys, who hated ISIS with a passion, gleefully made chopping motions indicating what they did to the guy's arm!"

RECEIVE SMOKEJUMPER ONE MONTH EARLIER

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

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

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.

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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



Message from the President



WE ARE LOOKING forward to the “Celebrating 85 years of Smokejumping” reunion in Missoula. We want to thank the Missoula organizing committee made up of co-chairs **Bob McKean** (MSO-67) and **Barry Hicks** (MSO-64) and members **Sarah Doehring** (MSO-91), **Dick Hulla** (MSO-75), **Mark Wright** (MSO-76), **Jeff Kinderman** (MSO-75), and **Charles Palmer** (MSO-95) for attending to all moving parts essential for ensuring a great get together. The MSO committee had

a hard act to follow with the high bar that the Boise reunion committee set but in smokejumper tradition duplicating excellence is the standard.

How good it will be getting together again, reuniting, seeing old friends, enjoying the camaraderie, and the telling of stories. Interesting thing about our gatherings is when we meet even a total stranger, the fact you have both shared the common experience and bond of smokejumping feels like you already know this person. Soon into the conversation the person is no longer an unknown stranger. It doesn't make a difference if the two of you rookied in 1950 or 2025 or where you trained, or if the BLM or Forest Service cut your check. You both put on a main and reserve and experienced those first training and fire jumps and the adventures that followed each time after the “fire call” siren sounded.

One is never at a loss for words when you are with another smokejumper. The stories flow. You feel an instant comfort level with the person. There is a mutual understanding and respect. When my wife detects that there is another smokejumper on the phone, she quietly sneaks out of the room. She smiles, politely shakes her head, and waves “bye bye.” She knows that the caller and I will be “jumping” into a deep conversation and will be unavailable for 40 minutes—or more likely—up to an hour. There is no need for Mary to hear the retelling of smokejumper adventures probably having heard my stories at least once or twice or maybe 50 times. Once for her was plenty good and certainly enough.

At the reunion the air will be enriched with verbal storytelling and the regaling of our cultural traditions.



by Mike Bina
(Missoula '68)

These stories will be welcomed music to our smokejumpers' ears. Telling our oral stories serve a good and essential purpose. They perfectly align with the NSA's mission statement of preserving the history and lore of smokeumping. Certainly, smokejumper artifacts, photographs, videos, and written narratives in Smokejumper magazine preserve our history. Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) provided a list of 30 authors who have published one or more books of their experiences. Thanks to the following for preserving their stories in perpetuity:

Murray Taylor (RDD-65), **Rod Dow** (MYC-68), **Major Boddicker** (MSO-63), **Jason Ramos** (NCSB-99), **Edward Arnett** (MSO-45), **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64), **Gene Jessup** (NCSB-57), **Tom Emonds** (CJ-66), **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74), **Stan Collins** (MYC-67), **Del Hessel** (MYC-59), **Howard Chadwick** (MYC-52), **Patrick Lee** (MYC-56), **Robert Hubble** (MSO-91), **Jack Daniels** (MSO-54), **Pferron Doss** (MSO-77), **Bud Filler** (MYC-52), **Jerry Dixon** (MYC-71), **Lee Gossett** (RDD-57), **Tom Tutt** (MSO-64), **“Swede” Troedsson** (MSO-59), **Starr Jenkins** (CJ-48), **Asa Mundell** (MSO-43), **Earl Dodds** (MYC-49), **Karl Brauneis** (MSO-77), **Gary Shade** (MSO-69), **Randy Hurst** (MSO-54), **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40), **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62), and **Mike McMillan** (FBX-96).

Our written and oral stories add to our folklore preserving the lore of smokejumping. Our word-of-mouth verbal stories carry smokejumping's past into the future for future generations. **John Berry** (RAC-70) and I recently were “story tellin.” John pointed out that every good smokejumper story contains the phrase “*No shit, there I was!*” No doubt this phrase needs to be inserted in the conversation because as the story unfolds it is necessary to reassure the listener that the unique unbelievable event is totally factual—and really happened! We all know that smokejumper stories are never embellished nor do they need to be. But we also know there is nothing that spoils a good smokejumper story like the arrival of an eyewitness or fact checker. As you listen to stories at the reunion, count the times you hear, “*No crap, there I was.*”

Preserving these oral history stories are important. The NSA has archived many oral history treasures including the absolute stellar Higgins Ridge documentary and *The History of Smokejumping* video. To expand upon these treasures, the NSA recently donated \$100,000 over a three-year period to fund the NSA Oral History Studio in the National Museum of Forest Service History under construction in Missoula. In addition, the board also recently approved funding for a documentary on smokejumper camaraderie and how our stories are the glue that connect us and enhances our mutual well-being. The documentary will capture the campfire conversation of a group of smokejumpers on the **Mark Urban** (NIFC-03) memorial tribute ride. This connectedness fulfills another element of the NSA's mission—responding to and supporting smokejumpers and their families when significant needs arise, as they do in life for all of us.

Another way that the NSA promotes preserving our history is through our website and social media. The board two years ago approved funding to revise the NSA website which is loaded with historical information including all of our jump records. In addition, the NSA board recently approved funding for a social media coordinator. **Luke Barrett** (NCSB-13) was contracted to tell our stories expanding the lore of smokejumper and our reach to a wider audience.

When your spouse leaves the room when you start telling smokejumper “Tall tales,” tell him or her that you are not merely telling stories living in the past, you are on a secret and critically important mission. You are preserving the history and lore of smokejumping for future generations. Let the stories of our cultural traditions and heritage continue to be told! “*No crap, there we were!*”



Andy Fujii, grandson of Lee (RDD-57) and Mary Gossett was a Feb. 2025 graduate of the Denver F.D. Fire Academy. Andy was a winner of an NSA Scholarship in 2021. He graduated from Lewis/Clark in 2023 and worked on the LaGrande Hotshots. L-R: Mother Lisa Gossett, Mary Gossett, Andrew Fujii, Lee Gossett, Dad Taka Fujii.

T-Hangar Years

1974-1977

by Rod Dow (McCall '68)

IN 1941, CONGRESS passed the Lend-Lease Act in order to set up the movement of arms to Russia and Britain. This legislation set up a system that would allow the United States to lend or lease war supplies to any nation deemed "vital to the defense of the United States." Many items shipped to these countries were aircraft that couldn't be transported by ship because of enemy activity on both oceans, and so to get aircraft to Russia, a system of airfields was established to facilitate that movement of material. At the same time, and for the same reason, the ALCAN Highway was built. From Wikipedia: "In 1942, the Army Corps of Engineers assigned more than 10,000 men, about a third of whom were Black soldiers, members of three newly formed African-American regiments." Their assignment given was to complete the 1,600 miles from Dawson Creek, BC, to Delta Junction, AK, in one year.

As part of the movement of planes, the Northwest Staging Route was established. Beginning at Great Falls, MT, it set up airfields every 100 miles and included Edmonton, Alberta, and stops in Ft. Nelson, Liard River, and various up to Alaska and places like Burwash Landing, Teslin Lake, and Whitehorse. Ft. Wainwright was built as one of several airstrips that allowed the aircraft to hop from the U.S., up the ALCAN and across Alaska to Siberia. Also, the Americans set up fueling stations for the Russians at Galena and Marks Airfield (just west of Nome).

Three main types of combat aircraft were ferried to the Soviet Union under Lend-Lease. Fighter aircraft were the Bell P-39 Airacobra and later its successor, the Bell P-63 Kingcobra, favored by the Red Air Force, which used the two types with great success. The majority of the P-39s shipped to the Soviet Union were the definitive Q models. Bombers included the Douglas A-20 Havoc light-attack bomber and North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers. Transport aircraft were made up predominantly of the Douglas C-47 Skytrain.

The Bell fighters and the B-25 Mitchells were flown up to Ladd via Minneapolis; the C-47s and A-20s

came up via Great Falls. A handful of other aircraft types—North American AT-6 Texan trainers, some North American Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters, three Republic P-47 Thunderbolts and one Curtiss C-46 Commando transport—were also ferried to Russia. The aircraft were supplied with Russian-language operations and maintenance manuals, as well as painted in Red Air Force camouflage colors and national markings.

The Russians set up a command at Ladd Field and Nome, where their pilots were trained to take over the aircraft and fly them to Krasnoyarsk in Siberia and on to various fronts in Western Russia. The first group of Russian pilots arrived at Nome on August 14, 1942, on their way to Ladd Field. Along with the pilots were civilians from the Soviet Purchasing Commission and a group of Red Air Force mechanics. Most were located at Ladd, with a secondary group at Marks Field. The first Lend-Lease aircraft, a group of 12 A-20 Havocs, arrived at Ladd on September 3, 1942. The first Russian pilots, after five days of training on the aircraft, took off for Nome and the long trip to the Eastern Front.

Initially, the USAAF provided the training on how to operate and maintain the Lend-Lease aircraft. Later, after an experienced cadre was developed, the Russians assumed the responsibility. The Russians also meticulously inspected each aircraft and would reject any aircraft that presented the slightest problem.

The USAAF was then left with the chore of correcting them. It was sometimes quite exasperating, as the USAAF would work long hours of overtime to get the aircraft into first-class condition so that all the Russians had to do was fly them from Fairbanks to the Eastern Front. Nearly 8,000 aircraft were transported to Russia, most of them through Ladd Field. In 1947, Ladd Field was renamed Ft. Wainwright after General Jonathan Wainwright, a hero of Bataan.

In the mid-70s, the Alaska oil pipeline was under construction on a north-south line spanning the entire state. It was 800 miles long and crossed some of the wildest country in the world: two major mountain ranges, the mighty Yukon River and mostly roadless

wilderness. There were also huge herds of caribou—moose that are about halfway in size between a deer and an elephant—tons of grizzly and black bear, wolverines, lynx, musk oxen and a bunch of very cool native villages. Access to those villages is still by riverboat or airplane to this day.

Fairbanks was dead center, the only town of any size in the interior. The original cost estimate to complete the project was \$2 billion, but for reasons I won't bother to explain here, nobody really cared how much it ran over budget. The final tally was \$11 billion (and remember, this is 1976), with maybe half of that total funneling through a town of 30,000 residents. If you do the inflation calculation for modern days, that would be like running about \$40 billion through Pocatello, ID, or Redding, CA, in a three-year period.

It was a full-fledged boomtown. Pipeliners would cash their checks from six weeks of labor, and the smart ones would head home to momma back in Louisiana or Texas for a week. But the rest would head into downtown Fairbanks. Two Street, we called it, after 2nd Avenue. The nine square blocks that made up downtown Fairbanks had 25 to 30 bars, most of which were open 23 hours a day; they'd close up from 6:00-7:00 am to mop the floors. You could just sit outside on the sidewalk for an hour with your beer and then head back inside when they reopened. The Flame Lounge, a topless dance club, was the center point. There were 50-100 professional women walking the street all night, mostly Black ladies from Oakland, Tacoma and Seattle. A few weren't hookers at all, just professional pickpockets. Several of them would get tired of "working" and would borrow my '64 Chevy Impala junker just to cruise around for a while. It didn't need a key, being hot-wired, and they would just take it and then tell me later where they had parked it. There were two illegal gambling halls, Sam's being the most well-known. You could walk into Sam's place, order a free steak dinner, eat it, order another if you so chose and walk out without even gambling if that was your preference for that evening. I saw a guy in there one night with a pickle jar almost full of gold dust from one of the far-flung mines. Dead center in the middle of all this broad-daylight debauchery was a popcorn stand.

The scene was halfway between a Hieronymus Bosch painting and a carnival. The Alyeska Pipeline Company headquarters was in that Army building straight across from the New Shack. There were literally hundreds of brand spankin' new white Chevy Blazers all over the base and all over Fairbanks with "EXEMPT CARRIER" stenciled on both sides.

Meanwhile, the Alaska smokejumpers were operating out of the T-Hangar on Ft. Wainwright. It was a junky old WWII airplane hangar that didn't even have indoor plumbing. The paint was peeling off the walls, there was no heat, and the interior was dark and dingy. It was definitely the hobo camp of jump shacks and had a crew to match. Sixty-five guys were on the list, many of whom were rejects from other bases, all of whom loved jumping the enormous, wild and scenic Alaska country and seeing giant moose, huge brown bears, midnight sun and northern lights. We had epic outdoor pig-roast beer parties—the first pig party was at **Gordy Henson's** (MSO-63) house in '76 and was my 100th jump—parachuted into some of the most beautiful country imaginable (also into some of the nastiest mosquito-infested swamps anywhere, but that just made for good stories) and survived endless numbers of all-nighters in those bars downtown. One night I got tossed in jail twice . . . two different jails.



The T-Hangar and the Volpar fleet in 1977.

We called Building 1542 home from 1974-1977. No bathrooms, no running water. One porta-potty for 65 jumpers sat next to the parking area on the other side. We called it the Astrocrapper. The loft was still at "Three and a Half Mile" (where the State Forestry complex is, on the corner of Gaffney and University) in '74 and '75. In '76, all loft operations were moved to Ft. Wainwright, just west of where the New Shack now sits.

On the south end of the T-Hangar were the ready racks and a tiny office where the term The Box originated. Inside were a desk, two chairs and one phone connected to dispatch. The jump list was outside of The Box on the east wall. There was a big rack of Dexion bins facing The Box and forming a wall that in turn separated the ready room from PC. Every jumper had one of those Dexion bins for his jump gear. If you were on the first two loads, your gear was on the ready racks, so your bin was empty. Everybody had a government sleeping bag (mostly those old brown Army bags) and a pillow from the barracks in their bin. That allowed you to use the bin for naps. Most of the time, every jumper had an assigned task each day just like now, but there was one big difference. If you were on first load, you were expected to stay very handy to the ready racks because we were competing against Helitack for fires. Everybody's job for the day was listed on your tag on the jump list, and the guys on first load just had "First Load" on their tag. No additional assignment. This meant most of the first load was either reading in chairs in front of the Dexion wall or sleeping in their bins. (Most of the bins had burlap curtains across the front so you could nap in private.) Consequently, a guy on first load could go downtown and party all night, as long as he drove up to the T-Hangar in time to say "here" when his name was called at 0800. After roll call and PT, you just hopped in your bin and dozed off, got up to go to

the mess-hall for lunch and headed back to your bin for the afternoon. You either jumped a fire that afternoon or got off work after standby and went back to your barracks room or back downtown for more barhopping.

When the siren went off, eight of those burlap curtains would explode open, and guys would scramble down to the floor level and over to the racks. Also in the ready room was the "I Hear Ya Walkin" chair made by **Gary "Pops" Johnson** (FBX-74) and **Buck McCoy** (RDD-73) out of a cable spool. It was intended for anybody for whom things weren't going great that day. Maybe you had a spat with your girlfriend or were down for some reason or just needed some quiet time. If you were sitting in that chair, nobody would bother you. If you happened to be walking by and saw one of your buddies sitting there, you wouldn't say a word, just give the chair a couple rocks and move on. On the outside wall of the T-Hangar, there was an empty can of Copenhagen nailed to the wall. That was the "Snooze Locker." If you happened to have bought a brand-new can, you'd go to the Snooze Locker, open the can and put in a healthy pinch of tobacco, then put the lid back on. That way, if anybody ran out of Copenhagen, they could get a chew. That was another of Pops Johnson's additions.

Back then, there weren't any swaths of territory on the map of Alaska labeled "Full" or "Limited." Every fire was fair game. The main sub-bases were Galena,



***Murry Taylor** (RDD-65) making plans with **Davis Perkins** (seated) (NCSB-72), **David Mellin** (RAC-66) (behind Murry's right shoulder) and **Phil Perkins** (hand on hip) (FBX-76). Twin Lakes Fire, '76.*

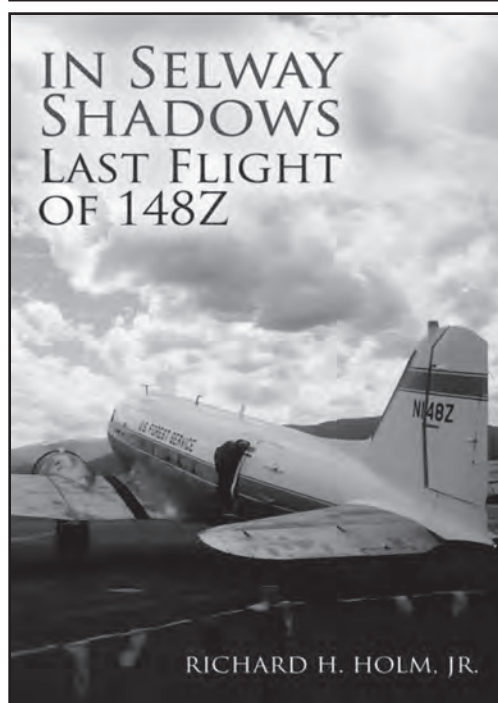
McGrath and Ft. Yukon, with occasional standby at Bettles, Tanana, Minchumina and Dahl Creek. (Palmer didn't happen until about mid-80s or so.) All six of those had BLM kitchens and at least minimal warehouse capacity. And federal regulations were less rigid; any BLM employee could ride in any available seat in any aircraft. So if you had a girlfriend in Galena and you were off the clock, you'd hitch a ride on "BLM Airlines" and go visit your honey Friday night. Then, late Sunday, there would probably be another plane to get you back for Monday morning. If not, you'd just call in on Annual Leave and fly the next day.

The jumper situation was thus pretty wild. Every fire was full attack until resources ran thin. The pipeline construction was also in full-attack mode, going both directions up and down the Haul Road, and downtown Fairbanks was nuts. And the fire season always involved a ton of native village crews. Statewide, we could put together probably 50 village crews, each one 16 persons. The first 20 or so were damn good crews. We were all jumping T-10 round canopies and flying all over the state in DC-3s and Volpars (a 210-knot twin-tail Beech 18 converted to turbines). The Units were in the same position as they are now, right next to the Chena. Ft. Wainwright security was very lax compared to now, and the military population was probably about a third of current staffing. The mess-halls at all the BLM stations (McGrath was in the BLM system back then) were extremely good! The Howling Dog moved from Ester

to Fox in about 1976 and has been in the same spot ever since.

After about ten days on a big fire southwest of Nenana, 32 guys, including some Lower-48ers, demobed back to Ft. Wainwright. Eight of them flew back. The other 24, including yours truly, rode home in the back of a two-ton stake-bed truck along with five cases of beer. **John Wallock** (FBX-74) spent virtually the entire time sitting on the roof of the truck, facing backwards, rolling joints and handing them out (marijuana was legal in Alaska back then). It took us four hours to do the 50 miles because of multiple piss stops and a half-hour "heads out" coin flip. Everybody put in \$5, and the winner was required to use the money to buy an evening with the hooker of his choice down on "Two Street." **John Dube** (RAC-70) won. We got passed by a cyclist whom we later re-passed and regaled with a beer. He stopped in the middle of the highway and chugged it to huge applause from the guys in the truck.

When we finally arrived at the military gate, we were pretty drunk, so **Michael Clarkson** (RAC-65) got us all singing some sappy Boy Scout song, and the guards just waved us through. When we got to the T-Hangar, at least two guys—**Eric "the Blak" Schoenfeld** (CJ-64) and one other—were passed out on the bed of the truck. Turns out, we arrived at the T-Hangar just a few minutes after the District Manager had left, following his only visit of the year to the jumpers.



The US Forest Service endured its deadliest aviation disaster when a DC-3 carrying 12 people aboard crashed deep in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of Idaho on June 11, 1979. Photographs taken by a backpacker caught one of the plane's engines falling off midair before it plummeted into the white water of the Selway River.

Richard H. Holm, Jr. has spent the last eight years detailing the events before and after the flight through the eyes of two survivors, the rescue pilots, Region 1 and 4 smokejumpers and pilots, boatmen, divers, and government employees, as well as the investigators and the victims' families.

To order copies (6x9, 400+ pps, 100 photographs), contact author directly (boundforthebackcountry@gmail.com). Direct orders are \$30.00 per signed book (includes tax and mailing costs). For multiple book orders please contact author regarding combined shipping costs. Personal checks (to: Richard Holm) can be sent to: PO Box 742, McCall, ID 83638. PayPal is accepted upon email request. Also available on Amazon.

Burned Out

Deadly National Forest Fires

Now Entering Towns

by Dr. Bob Zybach (Associate)

In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt created the US Forest Service by transferring 56 million acres in 60 Forest Reserves from the US Department of the Interior to the US Department of Agriculture. His good friend and collaborator, Gifford Pinchot, was put in charge of the new agency as its first “Chief.”

Pinchot’s famous slogan regarding the mission of the Forest Service was “to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run.”

The year 1910 was also the year that the mission, focus, and budget of the USFS were dramatically changed. Massive wind-driven flames burned and uprooted 3 million acres of forestland, destroyed several railroad towns from Montana, through Idaho, and into Washington, and killed 86 people—mostly firefighters under the direction of the US Forest Service.

The 1910 Fires galvanized the new agency into action and its mission became “fire prevention” above all else. Increased funding, research, and a great expansion in uniformed personnel soon took place.

The Forest Service became the trusted stewards of the nation’s forests for nearly a century. There were some bad fires in the extended droughts and heat waves of the 1920s and 30s, but these largely took place on private, state, and reservation lands. The uniformed Forest Ranger and his popular mascot, Smokey the Bear, became internationally famous for the slogan—and assignment of personal responsibility—with: “only you can prevent forest fires.”

But things began to change in the 1960s and 70s. Forest fires were increasingly seen as past events from earlier times and focus changed to Wilderness areas, endangered species, riparian buffers, and Deep Ecology. The 98,000-acre Silver Complex fire in 1987 gave warning, and the 500,000-acre Biscuit Fire in 2002 emphasized the point -- the mission and membership of the USFS had changed dramatically from strategic fire suppression to “managed wildfires” with the purpose of “returning fire to the land.”

Not only had the mission changed, but so had the personnel. Highly motivated foresters, researchers,

and firefighters had been replaced with a much smaller workforce that was more likely to be found in a meeting, “remotely working” with a computer, or attending a conference, than to be found working in the woods.

As one career USFS retiree lamented: “The Forest Service we knew doesn’t exist anymore. The sad reality is that retirees of the last 10 to 20 years have no desire to continue a relationship with the Outfit. Apparently, to them, their career is just a job that is secure and offers a good retirement plan. Our generation viewed it more like a lifetime mission.”

The September 2020 Forest wildfires were the worst since 1910, or even 1871, and today’s Forest Service barely noticed. More than 10 million acres of forest burned, more than 40 people died, US cities experienced the most hazardous air pollution in the world for several weeks, and at least 13,000 structures and 20 towns burned.

It is the last number that is most startling. That is the largest number of US communities burned in a forest fire in a single month ever, and almost everyone occurred in a USFS wildfire—and the Forest Service has done nothing about it!

According to current research, from 1905 until 2015, fewer US towns burned in forest fires during those 110 years, than the 48 -- and counting -- towns that have burned from that cause in the past 10 years. And almost every one of these damaged or destroyed towns was burned in a USFS fire.

Hundreds of people have been killed, tens of thousands of homes destroyed, businesses have gone bankrupt, schools have gone broke, millions of acres of old-growth and tens of millions of wildlife have been killed, deadly smoke has filled our cities for weeks, and somehow there is no accountability.

We know how to fix this problem. Earlier generations showed us how. The question is how much longer we are going to allow this costly and deadly mismanagement of our nation’s forests?

The Passing of Frank Fowler

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

Hey Chuck, first off, I want to echo what **Ron Thoreson** (CJ-60) wrote in the "Odds and Ends" section of the April 2025, issue regarding your and K.G.'s 25 years of producing Smokejumper magazine and bringing it to its' current level. What you two have done is the stuff of legacy. Not only the work, but the story choices editors must occasionally make to keep close to the heart of smokejumping.

It's in this regard that I'm writing about your decision to include Alan Weltzien's, A Soft Landing in the April issue. Alan (Professor of English Emeritus, University of Montana, Western) put pen to paper and created a lovely tribute to friendship. I can imagine you and K.G. reading it and concluding that here is a story that will resonate with many.

Right from the beginning, the honesty with which **Frank Fowler** (MSO-52) is remembered is impressive, "... hunched over, left hand cradling his forehead, trying to dull the pain in his gut." Then the next paragraphs and you know this is going to be a special piece: "He'd wanted to die for many seasons. But his body wouldn't let him go. As a widower of four-and-a-half years, and trying to adjust to the solitude and quiet, he said of his wife, Alicejane, 'I just want to hold her hand and walk into the sunset.'"

Then comes the last ride to Barrett hospital, "He spoke little, shading his brow with his left hand. I knew where this

ride would take us, yet I didn't quite know." Later, in the ER admission room, "The doctor had authorized some morphine that quickly cut the stomach pain and prepared him for dying." In the next few hours his daughter, Jody, and son-in-law, Ed, gathered around Frank's bed. His smokejumper buddy, **Bill Kolar** (GAC-59) walks in, and asks, "Well, Frank, are you ready for your last jump?" A few hours pass. The room goes quiet. "I try to control my tears, and Frank, by noon breathes increasingly shallow, his body at rest." And then the end, "I am holding his hand. It's 12:08 but the nurse will register his time of death as two minutes later. Jody, his daughter, places his smokejumper cap on his chest. Frank has landed softly on the ground after all."

Chuck and K.G., I was so moved by this piece that I felt I had to comment on it. I can't add much given its detail and how it so fully took me into the realm of deep and dear friendship. Such clarity, such honesty, such heart. I'm so grateful to Alan Weltzien for writing this. To me it's the ultimate Buddy Check. Being there in the final moments before your jump partner goes out the door, into the great beyond. Like I said here earlier, a big thanks to you and K.G. for seeing the value in this extraordinary piece of writing. It carries a special meaning for many of us as we prepare for that last jump into the great beyond ourselves.



Dale Gardner (CJ-67) and Sarah Altemus-Pope (MSO-01) did a smokejumper presentation at Pleasant Hill Elementary School (OR) December 2024 to a 2nd grade class. (Courtesy D. Gardner)

Revisit Nugget Lake Fish Planting

by Ash Court (North Cascades '63)

IN *SMOKEJUMPER* MAGAZINE October 2021, I described how four of us planted fish in two remote mountain lakes in the high country of the North Cascades. Nugget Lakes are located just south of the Pacific Crest Trail, near the headwaters of the Methow River.

John Lester (NCSB-60), who owned an L-2 military reconnaissance aircraft, and his cargo dropper, **Ken Borg** (NCSB-64), air dropped about 250 west slope cutthroat trout to me, and **Keith Larsen** (Associate). We had the fish in the lakes within 45 minutes after the fish hatchery delivered the fish at North Cascade Smokejumper Base. Everything worked perfectly.

After planting the lakes, our original plan was for Keith and me to try to get back to the lakes in three years to see if the fish had survived and what size they were if they had.

However, we couldn't wait that long, so Keith and I hiked back the following year. Surviving the difficult North Cascade winters in this extreme cirque would be challenging for these fish. The slopes of the surrounding mountains are so steep that you can see where avalanches come down with so much volume and force that they cross the lakes and destroy trees on the small strip of land between them. Could fish survive under the lake ice and this much snow? To our absolute joy, they had and were doing great!

We thought all the fish we planted were cutthroats, but we caught a few rainbows. Using a measure net, all the cutthroats we caught ranged in size from 5 to 7 inches, but the rainbows did much better. I caught one that was 10 ½ inches and another that was 10 inches. One thing about rainbows is that they are great fighters, and everyone I caught jumped like crazy.

We knew they had survived, so we were excited about returning in the next year to check on them again. But plans sometimes go differently than you hope. The following year, fires in the North Cascades kept us from returning, and the following May of 2023, I had a full replacement surgery on my left knee.

So, the summer of '24 was going to have to be it. Keith was now 77, and I was 79. I got in a few short hikes during the summer, as did Keith, but again, fires in the



The hike in (courtesy A. Court).

North Cascades fouled things up. They fouled things up so severely that the Pacific Crest Trail was closed for almost the entire month of August. Fortunately, we had some substantial rains, and we were on the trail the 1st of September.

I was very nervous about how well my surgically repaired knee would hold up. I had had issues with minor pain and swelling on previous trips, and none of those trips were even close to the 32-mile total we were going to need to cover this time.

We wanted to get as close to the lakes as possible without completely tiring ourselves or irritating my knee. Even though Keith hadn't been exposed to the "smokejumper experience" for conditioning, he'd been quite active as a young man. He had been an excellent hiking companion for the last several years. Still, the length of the trip and the "assault" up to the lakes were big concerns for us.

There were campsites 10- and 14-miles in. The lakes are 16 miles from the trailhead, so the 14-mile campsites would work the best. We were curious if our bodies could do the 14 miles to reach that camping spot.

We planned to get to the trailhead as early as possible, take lots of rest with good healthy food supplements, and stay hydrated. A huge plus was that we were hiking on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). I refer to it as the I-5 of



(Courtesy A. Court)



Stocking Nugget Lakes By Air. L-R

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

the trail systems. It is usually decently maintained, and grades are never extreme, which lends to easier hiking conditions than most Forest Service trails. We were still feeling good when we got to the 10-mile campsite. We ate some extra food, and after a rest, we decided to push on to the campsite at the Methow River. This positions us for the best opportunity to maximize our time at the lakes.

We made the river site by about 6:30, and fortunately, my knee had done great. The next day would be the real test, as most of that day would be spent climbing up to the lakes and back down to the Pacific Crest with no trail. We would be faced with some severe slopes and lots of underbrush.

We were up early the next morning, and soon, we were on the trail, maintaining a nice, slow pace. We knew the push up to the lakes would be very taxing. This would be our fourth trip to the lakes, and there was no easy way. In a straight line, it's only $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the lakes from the PCT. It took us 3.5 hours. Lots of short rests and energy bars, but we made it!

When we reached the first lake, it didn't take long to see fish activity. This was the easternmost lake, and there were fish rolling. The "shores" on these two lakes are steep and brushy, with logs lining the shore in some places, evidence of the winter avalanches. Finding a spot to put your line in the water is a challenge. Since we'd arrived on the north end, we worked our way to the other end of the lakes and checked out the smaller, western lake.

When we checked on the fish the first year, there was no fish activity in this smaller lake. That wasn't the case this time. There wasn't much activity on that lake, and we only caught about a half dozen fish, but they were slightly bigger and fatter than the fish in the other lake. We caught one right at 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the biggest fish of the trip. Apparently, there is not as much competition for the food supply, and there is no connecting stream that runs year-round, so fish can only cross between the two during high water in the spring, and even then, it is a tiny stream. Interestingly, a nice stream flows out of the smaller lake year-round, but it must be fed entirely from underground sources.

The eastern lake was incredible. Having at least twice the surface area of the smaller lake and deeper water, it was home to a much larger fish population. In short order, we were landing fish, most of which ran around 13 to 14 inches. When we first started landing fish, invariably, other fish would follow the hooked fish, and

often, much larger fish would follow, almost coming right up on shore. There was virtually no beach, so the water depth could be several feet deep, just a few feet out. The good news was that we caught one fish about 6 inches and saw another about the same size, indicating the fish were reproducing.

A disappointment was not seeing or catching any rainbows as we had on the first trip. Everything was West Slope Cutthroat. Not only do rainbows fight like crazy, but their growth was such that first year that we were hoping to catch some of those in the 18–19-inch range. We planted primarily cutthroat because they are supposed to be hardier than rainbows, and since the rainbow didn't survive, that must be true!

We hated to leave, but we knew the hike back down to the trail was not going to be a "cakewalk." After about three hours of fishing, we packed up and headed out. We made it down faster than going up, but it still took considerable time. After the previous day's hike and what we'd done that morning, we were glad to return to the PCT. We were beat, to put it mildly.

We had a great hike out, even though we were barely moving at times. We knew we wouldn't be able to cover the 14 miles to the trailhead in one day like we did coming in since the trip out is mostly uphill.

Throughout the entire trip, Keith and I commented on the fact that our bodies just aren't what they used to be. We mutually agreed this would be our last trip. But within the week of returning, we talked about doing it again next year. Once we overcame the aches and pains, all we could remember was the beautiful country and the great fishing. Maybe we could entice a couple of younger bodies to accompany us to help share the incredible experience next year.



Global Triage

Helping the Sick and Wounded in West Africa, Iraq, and Ukraine

by Davis Perkins (NCSB '72)

ON FEBRUARY 22, 2022, Russian paratroopers launched an airmobile assault on the Hostomel airport in the suburbs of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv. Additional Russian forces attacked from the Crimea in the south and the Donbas to the east. The Russo/Ukrainian war had begun. In early March, I got a call from the director of Global Outreach Doctors, asking if I could deploy as a paramedic with a small medical team to Ukraine. I was off to my second war.

It's been a long journey after jumping 13 seasons, starting at NCSB in '72 and ending with the Alaska jumpers in '85. I was a former Army paratrooper (82nd Airborne Division and later with the 12th Special Forces Group of the Army Reserve). Like many jumpers, the job was ideal for attending college, and I graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in Fine Arts.

I continued to jump and pursued my art career in the Bay Area during the winter. While jumping in AK, I became part of the EMT program, and 12 of us became EMT 11's. We were extraordinarily lucky to have the strong leadership of **Everett "Sam" Houston** (MYC-71). Sam was a former Special Forces medic in Vietnam (later becoming a nurse practitioner). **Bill Neumeister** (MSO-68), also a Special Forces medic, then took over the program, followed by **Kent Harper** (RDD-75). BLM then sent Kent to an intense paramedic course during the winter. Being a part of this strong jumper EMT program and my interest in emergency medicine would impact the rest of my life.

In 1985, I made the difficult decision to resign from jumping and start to pursue a career as a firefighter in the Bay Area. I was fortunate to be hired by the Belmont/San Carlos FD (600 applicants for one position). I was later told that being a former smokejumper and my military background was the deciding factor in my selection. After completing the fire academy, I began a 23-year career with the department. Again, I was incredibly fortunate as the department knew of my interest in emergency medicine and offered to send me

to paramedic school. I was a firefighter/paramedic for my final years.

With retirement, I began volunteering for overseas medical teams. First, I was sent to rural Haiti with several small mobile teams. This led to deployments to Cambodia, Ethiopia, Vanuatu, and Nepal, all with various teams and organizations. I was beginning to develop some wonderful friendships with the various members of these teams.

In 2014, the world was stunned by the lethal outbreak of Ebola in Western Africa. Heart to Heart Int'l, a great humanitarian NGO, was tasked with sending a team to Liberia to set up an Ebola Treatment Unit. I got the call. So began an unprecedented mission for all of us: treating patients in a very remote area of the country. It was an impressive team of professionals: doctors, nurses, and me, a paramedic.



With kids in Liberia.

Personal protective gear was paramount. After working with patients in the most austere conditions, doffing the protective gear and decontaminating was painstakingly slow and arduous, as you were sprayed down with a 0.5% chlorine solution. We knew we were literally covered with the Ebola virus. This was deadly serious stuff. We hired local Liberians to help us and act as interpreters, as the entire health infrastructure of the country had been decimated by the outbreak. Our team had good success in keeping stricken patients alive, primarily by keeping them hydrated with IV fluids and letting the virus run its course.



Ebola dress.

We worked in pairs, and I was teamed up with a wonderful RN from Vermont, John Caron. John and I would become great friends and later team up for deployments in Iraq, Lesvos, Greece (refugee crisis), Haiti, and, more recently, Ukraine.

In 2018, the liberation of Iraq from the radical Jihadist group ISIS began. ISIS, a deadly, powerful occult terrorist group, had an iron grip on the country, literally enslaving the people with torture, beheadings, and rape. This struggle culminated in the Battle of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. Again, I got a call asking if I could deploy. So began the most intense nine-week period of my life. This was war, with all its stark brutality. My team was attached to the Iraqi Army and tasked to set up a Trauma Stabilization Point. Our mission was to triage and treat battle casualties, stabilize them as best we could, and get them transported to more definitive care. Once again, I was with a team of absolutely top-notch professionals who knew the danger, believed in

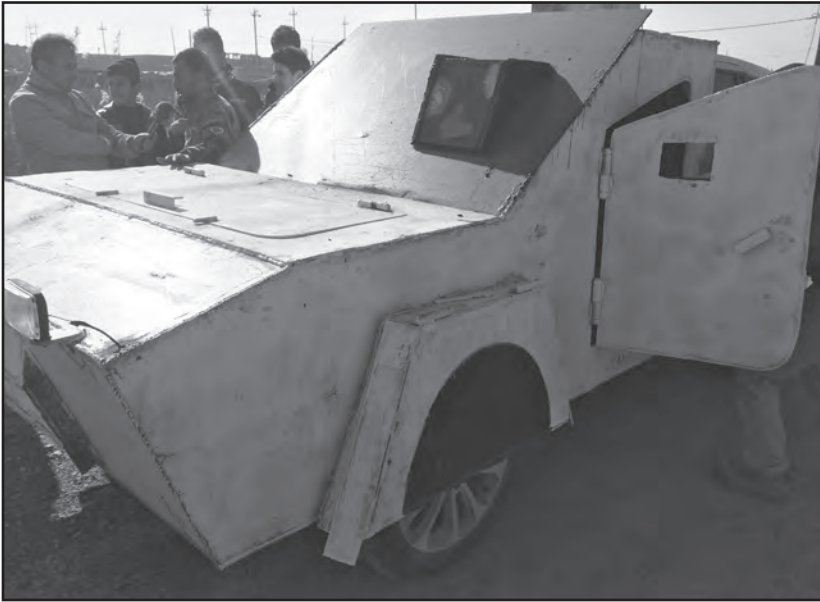
their purpose, and were dedicated to the mission. Being in the company of such extraordinary people often reminded me of being around smokejumpers. Different settings and missions but professional to the extreme. I was proud to be a part of it.

On the outskirts of Mosul, a massive military buildup was in place, with tanks, armored vehicles, and helicopter gunships crisscrossing the sky. The day before the offensive commenced, we received an invitation from the commanding Iraqi general, who wanted to greet us personally. He dispatched a small convoy of Humvees to transport the eight of us to his headquarters. The building was a substantial stone house, and just as we arrived out front, two successive explosions happened just 50 yards away. An ISIS mortar team had obviously followed our arrival. Fortunately, their rounds landed short and behind a berm. We all sprinted to the protection of the structure. Later, the general apologized profusely for the incident, saying in broken English that the ISIS mortar team would be "dealt with." It was a brief comic moment.

The next day, what became the largest urban battle since the Second World War began. The setting was an environment of massive artillery fire, helicopters overhead firing rockets, and constant gunfire. The first casualties arrived, often several at one



Foot infection.



ISIS suicide vehicle.

time. ISIS began using the tactic of suicide vehicles to penetrate Iraqi troop concentrations and roadblocks. The scene at our trauma point was often gruesome and chaotic: gunshot victims, shrapnel injuries, amputations, eviscerations, and burns. During one moment of frantic pandemonium, I starkly remember having to continually step over the body of one Iraqi soldier who had been unceremoniously dumped on the floor by his comrades. One-half of his head was missing.

What followed were days of long hours of work and movement. With the slow, arduous advance of the Iraqi forces, we would pack up our equipment and move to the next location, set up, and begin seeing patients. We soon found ourselves in the narrow confines of the city itself with violent street fighting, sometimes only a block away. Suicide vehicles packed with explosives and ISIS combatants were a constant threat. ISIS intentionally targeted us with occasional mortar fire, and members of our Iraqi security force were critically injured. It was a time of extreme vigilance.

During the conflict, we developed a wonderful repour with our Iraqi security force personnel and the ambulance crews that transported the patients to us. Several of these brave individuals were killed during the fighting, and we all mourned their loss.

What I found particularly heartbreaking were the children. We would often see entire families arrive with gunshot wounds intentionally targeted while trying to escape ISIS under a white flag. Women also arrived after escaping months of being held as virtual sex slaves to the ISIS fighters. Most appeared almost comatose with

the ordeal and were gently directed to the wonderful women on our team. It was my first real exposure to the utter brutality and barbarism that man is capable of.

Six weeks later, our team was relieved, and I returned home. I intently followed the progress of the fighting. The intense battle was ongoing, and the casualties continued to mount. I was asked if I could return and join another trauma team. I readily agreed and found myself back in Mosul. Once again, we were doing invaluable work with another group of dedicated team members. Three weeks later, we witnessed the final occupation of Mosul and the defeat of ISIS. I joined my teammates and our Iraqi colleagues

in a wild and jubilant celebration.

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, I soon got the call. My good friend, John (RN), from Vermont, got the



Destroyed ambulance

same. We were instructed to proceed to Warsaw, Poland, and make our way to Ukraine via train. Once in Kyiv, we would link up with our additional team members, two paramedics from England. Our task was to staff three ambulances that the UK had donated. Intense activity surrounded us in Kyiv. The city was obviously on a war footing, with constant air raid sirens and the occasional bombing taking place. The Russian advance had been abruptly halted in the suburbs just to the city's northwest.



UK ambulance bound for Ukraine.

We contacted the Ukrainian Health Dept and Defense Dept, and they determined our assignments. It varied daily. Primarily, we were to go to various locations that had been attacked, treat immediate patients, and transport them to the nearest hospital. In the outskirts of Kyiv, we set up in the suburbs of Bucha and Irpin. Both these locations were in the world spotlight as they were where the Russian offensive to take Kyiv was stopped cold. It was also the location of the notorious killing of innocent civilians by the Russian forces. We heard estimates that up to 400 civilians were brutally slaughtered. Bodies remained in the streets and burned up vehicles. Patients we treated for gunshots and transported said the Russian soldiers were drunk and rampaging the streets. Dozens of burned-out armored vehicles and destroyed buildings were evident in the affluent suburbs. Once again, the barbaric nature of

man was exposed. The destruction we saw brought back memories of Mosul.

The next few weeks found us traveling in a three-ambulance convoy to various locations east of the country. At one point, our progress was abruptly stopped by reports that the Russians had cut the road just ahead. At another point, as I looked at our map, I suddenly realized we were less than 10 miles from the Russian border. Our progress was considerably hampered by the numerous checkpoints we had to navigate, with our interpreters being interrogated by Ukrainian soldiers and our papers examined thoroughly. Several times at checkpoints, the doors of the ambulance would be suddenly thrown open, and we faced the muzzles of AK-47s leveled at us by nervous soldiers. Reports of Russian Spetsnaz (Special Forces) infiltrating were rampant. Tensions were extreme. Everywhere was the evidence of violent combat—dozens of destroyed armored vehicles, bridges, and homes. We then deployed to the city of Kramatorsk, where a Russian rocket attack on the railway station had killed and injured dozens. We packed our ambulances with the injured and refugees and transported them to safety.

Our team was eventually relieved, and we returned home. It was difficult to leave. On my return, we got word that one of our team members, Pete Reed, had been killed by a Russian anti-tank missile as he was attending to casualties in the street. It was sad news. Pete was a former Marine who some of us had worked with in Mosul. I am full of admiration for the Ukrainian people. I fervently hope that our incoming administration will continue with resolve to support these brave people who are defending their homeland. The Ukrainians are a brave people and formidable adversaries indeed!



With Ukraine soldiers.

Planting Grizzly Bears

by Roger Cox (Missoula '69)

The request was for a Doug load in the Pryors. That is smokejumper jargon for a full DC-3 load of 12 smokejumpers for a mountain range just east of the north end of Yellowstone Park. We didn't have far to travel as we would be coming out of the West Yellowstone smokejumper base.

The Pryors is an isolated mountain range just barely big enough to be called a mountain range. No major peaks, the south slopes are grassy, the north is Doug fir and Ponderosa. This was the first time I had ever known of a dispatch to the Pryors.

The fire was located mostly on the north side of the ridge. Although several acres in size, it was not a hot fire and didn't seem to have much potential. What was interesting were the hundreds of sheep in what was to become our jump spot. We could see sheep feeding in small flocks with an occasional sheep dog minding their flock. A small sheep camp trailer was parked and, of course, there was a lone sheep herder on horseback nearby.

The jump preparation was very normal with little drift in an area with few hazards. I jumped second man on the first stick. It had to be one of the easier jumps I ever made, landing among the sheep on green grass and alpine flowers. Nothing to see here.

As I gathered my gear and prepared for the cargo drop one of the following jumpers said something about the sheep herder. Not really paying attention to the sheep herder, I asked about his observation. Apparently, the horse did not appreciate funny-suited men under strange contraptions sailing in from above. When last seen, the sheepherder was charging through the underbrush trying to get his horse under control, dogs accompanying.

I thought no more about it and went to work. The weather was changing to rain and the fire was soon in mop up stage. Aided by a mist that blew in, the fire was in the final stages of mop up within several hours. We retired to our jump area where we would be spending the night, perhaps a rainy one.



Roger Cox

The entire crew was setting up camp and planning its dinner menu when the sheep herder approached. His appearance was what you would expect of a man who spent the summer alone with a half dozen dogs and a thousand sheep. But he appeared friendly and inquisitive of an equally unusual collection of wanderers. But there was a problem.

Over his shoulder was a 30-30 Winchester carried in what I would call a jungle sling. It always pointed the way he was looking. He was

not threatening in any way, but the rifle definitely got your attention. Anyone who asked him a question was immediately covered by the rifle. The sheepherder did not seem to notice but we certainly did. It wasn't long until we learned not to ask questions. It was safer that way.

The sheepherder was impressed with our procedures as smokejumpers. He also was impressed that we had come from Yellowstone Park. Apparently, the park had the policy of disposing of grizzly bears in the Pryors. When a problem bear was captured, it was sedated and placed in a net. Then a helicopter would ferry the bear in a sling load underneath to a remote site, the Pryors.

At first, he would note the helicopter coming in with the sling. Then after a while a grizzly bear would appear with sheep planned as its evening meal. This was immediately dealt with the 30-30 Winchester.

The sheepherder soon realized that the helicopter delivered the problem. So; when the bear was flown in, he would be waiting. As soon as the helicopter left, he would kill the bear since it was a lot easier to kill them before they awakened from the darting. We agreed that his solution to the problem made sense.

After he left, we discussed what we had heard. Catching planted fish was commonplace. And game farms plant pheasants for hunting. But planting grizzly bears?

Smokejumpers of the '40s

Can a Cargo Chute Stop a Bus?

by Bus Bertram
(McCall '47)

Early in September of 1947 a Tri-Motor load of eight jumpers jumped a fire on Big Fiddler Creek on the Boise N.F. We worked the fire for two days before being relieved by a ground crew. After loading up our gear we started a five-mile hike to the airstrip at Smith's Prairie where we were to be picked up by the Ford. Instead of the Ford, there was a 1930s school bus that took us to Boise and up the road to McCall.

We asked the driver if he would mind stopping at the General Store in Banks so we could buy some beer. It was a slow, hot trip and we need something to drink. He said that it was against the rules and wouldn't make the stop. After a quick huddle, we decided that when we got close to the General Store, we would anchor a cargo chute to the metal seat anchor and stuff it out the rear side window. This should facilitate a stop. It worked perfectly as the chute swaying back and forth really slowed down the bus almost in front of the store. While two of us were working on the cargo chute, the others went into the store and came back with enough beer to make a very refreshing two-hour trip to McCall.

Entering McCall, we decided to help the driver on the downgrade toward Payette Lake and threw out another cargo chute. This was the last straw for the driver, but he did get us to the loft before reporting us to the overhead. Since this was the last jump of the season for us, it worked out OK.

One has to remember that the WWII vets hadn't settled down yet and that McCall was a very lively town with the gambling and resort atmosphere.

.....

Somewhere North of Powell R.S., 1943

by Asa Mundell
(Missoula '43)

Since the Camp Menard contingent of jumpers were so close to the airfield in Missoula, it seemed that we



often got calls for fires in Moose Creek and McCall when their jumpers were out on fires.

It was the end of the '43 season and four of us had been stationed at Moose Creek with the Ford. A call came out for two jumpers and **Loren Zimmerman** (Missoula '43) and I were selected to jump it.

The first night on the fire it started raining and we had to move from under the stars into our pup tent. The next day it continued to rain and that night it snowed. This was September! We worked the fire until it was dead out which took us three days. We let the rain do it's job and sometimes just huddled in the combined tents eating our three day's supply of Cracker Jacks and K's. On the morning of the third day, we took off to a lookout we could see in the distance. Leaving the tools and chutes on the trail, we slogged our way up and down the hills and canyons. At about four in the afternoon we got to the lookout only to discover that it was a hunter's camp and not a lookout. Their cook radioed the Powell Ranger Station to pick us up and then fed us venison stew and baked beans while we waited for our ride.

Arriving at Powell, we were again just in time for supper and, even though we had enough beans and stew, dug into more and better food there. And the part I will never forget. After a summer of dirty sleeping bags, three nights in the rain and snow, we went up to the loft and found a place to sleep. There I saw an ordinary camp cot with a pillow and clean white sheets. I guess I have never before or after appreciated a bed like that. I may have even been a bit homesick.

Note: After jumping the 1943 season, Asa transferred to Norwich CT, where he also took part in an Infectious Hepatitis guinea pig experiment program to help develop a preventative inoculation for the disease. He later graduated from Kansas Wesleyan and attended Iliff School of Theology and received a ThM degree.

Asa served churches in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, before coming to Oregon and retiring from the United Methodist Church in 1987.



MAKING HISTORY

After Smokejumping



Montana Bill

A Marine in Action at Tarawa

William F. Musgrove (Missoula '41) was born in Hecla, South Dakota, on May 27, 1917. Following high school graduation, Bill worked as a Forest Guard on the Lewis & Clark NF and began attending the University of Idaho. In 1941, at age 24, he rookieed as a smokejumper in Missoula, Montana, making three fire jumps. In September of that year, Bill and three other smokejumpers and a doctor, after weather prohibited them from jumping, hiked 20 miles from the Big Prairie Airstrip into a wilderness area to successfully rescue a young woman who had been shot in both knees in a hunting accident.

In January 1942, Bill entered the U.S. Marine Corps. After graduation from the Marine Corps Officers' Training School in San Diego, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in August 1942. In November 1943, Bill participated in an assault on the Tarawa Atoll in the Gilbert Islands in the WWII Pacific Theater of Operations. He manned a machine gun on his landing craft knocking out enemy entrenchments and after reaching the beach, "Montana Bill" relentlessly hunted snipers for two days and on the third day found TNT and blasted enemy pill boxes. Bill received a commendation by U.S. Pacific Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz for his services on Tarawa.

On May 21, 1944, Bill was on board a ship in Pearl Harbor when heavy blasts of exploding ammunition and intense heat occurred. Despite the explosions and heat, Bill remained on board making tours through all quarters aiding the injured to the main deck for evacuation. For his heroism in rescuing injured men on board, Bill was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, the highest non-combatant award for heroism in the Marine Corps and Navy. The Award cited Captain Bill Musgrove for continuing the rescue work with complete disregard for his own safety.

After smokejumping and military service, Bill returned to the University of Idaho, teaching science at Arco, Idaho, and earning a MS degree in science in 1953. In 1954 he relocated to Kingman, Arizona, and continued his career as a science teacher. While in Arizona, Bill was a Major in the Arizona National Guard. Bill died in Kingman, Arizona on December 25, 2006. He is buried at Mountain View Cemetery in Kingman.

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.)

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The Race to Survive

Smokejumpers in the Modern Attention Economy

by Conor Hogan (NCSB '21)

WHEN I HEARD two smokejumpers had appeared on a network TV series—**Ethan Greenberg** (WYS-21) and **Tyrie Merrill** (WYS-22) on Peacock's *Race to Survive*—I admit I felt a little torn. On the one hand, I believe the Forest Service needs to do a much better job of communicating with the American people, and so any enterprise that raises awareness about our mission is likely to be a good thing. On the other hand, land-management agencies and TV executives often have conflicting objectives. The first group prioritizes the health of ecosystems. The second prioritizes money. The first studies and monitors wildlands across decades. The second produces sensationalized products almost singularly designed to keep us tuned in for another round of advertisements. If, a century from now, it turns out that we failed at the slow, boring work of keeping America's trees alive, historians will likely point to our appetite for endless stimulation as one of the central reasons why.

I'd experienced this kind of internal conflict before. Two years ago, some of the guys at NCSB decided to make an Instagram page for our base. They thought it would be a good tool for advertising job announcements, sharing information on the latest happenings, and generating awareness about the community services we provide.



Ethan Greenberg (WYS-21)



Tyrie Merrill (WYS-22)

The guys wrote up a proposal and brought it to our base manager, who gave the go-ahead. The page now has about 1,000 followers, a link to our rookie-outreach page, and a handful of posts documenting some of our suppression operations around Washington state.

I didn't speak up against starting the page, but privately, I felt slightly uncomfortable. In 2017, I experienced a mental health crisis that was profoundly exacerbated by my relationship to social media. I ended up deleting my Instagram and Facebook accounts altogether, as I felt they were fracturing my ability to concentrate; unless I was engaged in some form of digital distraction, just waiting in line at the supermarket or sitting on a park bench made me anxious.

I currently spend my off-seasons teaching college freshmen, and I see my old inability to endure boredom magnified tenfold. Whenever I walk into a lecture hall, each student's head is tilted at the same 30-degree angle, everyone's thumb rhythmically swiping up an image-filled timeline. Their comments in class often revolve around whatever happens to be trending on Twitter or the latest controversy dominating TikTok. The power of social media over our information landscape have grown so dominant that for something to hold the public's interest, it must be delivered in the form of entertaining spectacle.

For those of us who work for the federal government, this poses a serious challenge. In an ideal world, the government would be all but invisible, a high-functioning bureaucracy quietly humming in the deep background of its citizens' lives, building trains, administering schools, and serving as a bulwark against disaster. Thoughtful experts would helm various departments and agencies and make decisions based on the well-being of average Americans. Anyone who decided to go digging into the IRS or the Defense Department or the Forest Service would find nothing but monotony—reams of documents outlining good-faith, technocratic discussions about how best to serve their constituents. Every four years, the public would listen to a slate of ideas from congenial but philosophically distinct candidates, vote for the party that seemed likeliest to further national flourishing, then return to their lives as private citizens, only thinking of the government with a vague appreciation—if they thought of the government at all.

This vision is so far removed from our present reality that just writing it feels absurd. The last 25 years have been defined by the American government's mishandling of catastrophe: 9/11, the Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, the subprime mortgage crisis, the opioid epidemic. Meanwhile, confronted with the problem of generating enough content to fill the 24-hour news cycle, news outlets now cover politics like an endless episode of reality TV, framing senators and cabinet members as heroes and (mostly) villains within the interminable drama of governance. It is extremely difficult for civil servants to draft reasonable legislation and reach necessary compromises if they are also battling to be the most popular cast member on what may as well be *The Real World: Capitol Hill*. In a 2020 *Harper's* essay titled "Vicious Cycles," author Greg Jackson asks: "Is it a problem that our mental representation of the world is the product of a for-profit entertainment industry? Yes. Our government . . . cannot be dully competent if what we demand of it is that it isn't boring."

*

Problematic or not, however, this is the reality we now face. In November, I flew to Arizona for an annual staff ride centered around the Dude and Yarnell fires. In attendance were high-ranking members of the USFS's Fire and Aviation Management team, including the former director and several assistant deputies. One topic dominated all their lectures: the urgent need

to cultivate a positive relationship between wildland firefighting agencies and the American people. At a moment when every federal program is at risk of having its budget slashed, the Forest Service must generate a broad base of support if we hope to survive.

But talking to the public can be risky, and many of us are reluctant to engage with the media. How many of us have hidden in the saw shack when a local anchor came to film a practice jump? Or politely declined the opportunity to appear on some podcast or be interviewed online? Our worry is not without warrant: stories abound of firefighters who have found themselves in hot water after speaking carelessly to the press. In their competition for clicks, today's journalists know few stories generate buzz like a government employee making a fool of himself, and who wants to take that chance?

Our concern goes deeper than a simple, pragmatic concern about bad press, however. We all feel a certain sense of protectiveness regarding the smokejumper image and rightly bristle if someone seems to be using it to advance their own interest or tarnishing it with braggadocio. The easiest way to avoid inviting the ire of our community is by eschewing the spotlight altogether.

But whether we like it or not, smokejumpers are some of the best ambassadors for the Forest Service, and our agency's ability to protect America's land will depend on how compelling of a narrative we present to the American people. It will depend on how adept we become at controlling and expanding our public presence. Within this context, smokejumpers have a certain responsibility: the inherent drama of our work lends itself much more naturally to the modern media environment than, say, a trails or timber crew.

Right now, the Forest Service's media strategy is a clunky hodgepodge: websites that look as though they were designed in the early aughts, an Instagram page that has about 1/18th as many followers as the National Park Service's page, the same canned quotes from Public Information Officers appearing again and again in low-distribution newspapers. Even as the crisis of megafires has moved to the center of national discourse, the Forest Service has done little to leverage its position as a core agency charged with responding to this ongoing catastrophe. We have yet to present our own version of what fire and land management should look like in the 21st century. So instead of receiving the funds needed to ensure that our national forests are as healthy as possible, the Forest Service announced last September

that it is cutting 2,400 jobs. That's nearly ten percent of our workforce. Clearly, business as usual is not working.

The first step toward securing the resources necessary to keep the West from resembling a pile of matchsticks in 2050 will be a multilateral, dynamic PR campaign. Especially in an era when the police and military have become freighted with polarizing political baggage, firefighters are one of the few remaining archetypes who can fulfill America's appetite for everyday heroes, and (despite any cringe factor), we should lean into that image—not in self-aggrandizing attempts to inflate our own egos, but in a calculated, collective effort to generate as much goodwill as possible among both voters and those who control the purse strings.

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As it turns out, Ethan Greenberg and Tyrie Merrill's appearance on season two of *Race to Survive* is an excellent model for how to shape public sentiment in our modern attention economy. *Race to Survive* is a cross between *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race*: nine teams of two engage in various competitions across New Zealand, with one pair getting eliminated each episode. They spend 39 days navigating the backcountry, foraging for food, and demonstrating proficiency in a whole host of adventure sports like rafting, abseiling, and canyoneering. Spliced in between footage of the contestants groaning with hunger and bushwhacking through thick brush are personal interviews designed to generate pathos with the audience.

From the beginning, it's clear that Ethan and Tyrie are going to be the stars. The other teams comprise ultra-marathoners, river guides, mountaineers, and weekend warriors whose relationship to the wilderness is solely recreational. Even for an audience unfamiliar with smokejumpers, the few seconds of firefighting

footage we see are enough to indicate the advantage Ethan and Tyrie have over everyone else. As Ethan says a few minutes into the first episode, "We're gonna win this race because we have a unique ability to work together in tough situations."

Over the next nine episodes, Team Smokejumper places in the top three of nearly every race, before (spoiler alert) eventually winning the \$500,000 grand prize. While the other contestants bicker and moan about the unforgiving nature of the terrain, Ethan and Tyrie are constantly encouraging one another, whooping with excitement at each new challenge, and reveling in the opportunity to test their mettle. They embody

the good-natured grit required of every smokejumper, demonstrate resourcefulness, and, most importantly, come across as eminently likable. They are funny, charming, and vulnerable. In fact, some of the most compelling moments of the entire show are when Ethan chokes up while talking about the death of his father and how this tragedy continues to motivate him today. Their natural charisma, coupled with their frank discussions about how little wildland firefighters get paid and the hardship



Ethan Greenberg (WYS-21) and Tyrie Merrill (WYS-22)

of spending so much time away from their families, did more to humanize the current crisis facing the Forest Service than any agency-outreach campaign yet.

*

From the opening credits, *Race to Survive* oozes melodrama. In the first episode, a faceless narrator announces that this is the "most harrowing adventure race ever conceived" and "the toughest competition ever imagined." The other contestants are constantly overacting, hamming up campy micro-dramas and silly feuds with all the subtlety of a middle-school musical. (One team, a recently divorced couple, became so

annoying so quickly that I started fast-forwarding every time either of their faces appeared on my screen.) Everyone involved was risking embarrassment, including Ethan and Tyrie. While they were by far the most charismatic of the nine teams, I'm sure they will endure some good-natured ribbing back at West Yellowstone: on an early episode, they misread their compass, and nearly lost one of the races; they repeatedly came in second to a pair of smarmy raft guides from Jackson Hole; and there were some cheesy one-liners here and there about digging hotline and humping chainsaws.

But risking embarrassment is inherent part of entering the public eye, and Ethan and Tyrie emerge relatively unscathed. Their stiffest competition, on the other hand—the aforementioned Wyoming raft guides—ended up getting disqualified for cheating. In his final interview, one of the cheaters appears in a “Jackson Hole Whitewater” hat, and as he tries to justify why he broke a race rule, I couldn't help but think about how bad it would have looked if Ethan or Tyrie had been the one who'd cut corners and then been forced to give an awkward apology in a “West Yellowstone” hat. In fact, I felt a tug of anxiety watching the entire series, just waiting for Ethan or Tyrie to slip up and say something that might reflect poorly on the smokejumper program.

Instead, Ethan and Tyrie did us all very proud. Yes, they emerged victorious, but they also accomplished something much more important: they gave viewers real and sympathetic faces to associate with wildland firefighters. The next time one of these viewers reads

a headline about more massive budget cuts to the Forest Service, they won't imagine some anonymous governmental entity. They will instead remember these two Westies talking about how hard it's become to make ends meet as a wildland firefighter. And who knows? Perhaps some of them will pick up a phone and call their local representative.

Ethan and Tyrie's appearance on *Race to Survive* won't suddenly catalyze an apathetic public into caring about their national forests and the people who protect them, but their success is certainly a start. Upon finishing the final episode, I found myself thinking about how we can no longer afford to view the media—traditional or social—as something to be avoided, and should instead embrace any opportunity to get our message out to the American people.

In the closing minutes of the show, after winning the final competition, Tyrie tells the camera: “We represent more than just ourselves. We represent a community of hardworking men and women who put their lives on the line and aren't paid enough. They still show up every single day to that fireline, and they do the best job they can. We represent that. . . . We showed how tough a wildland firefighter can be.” The camera pulls out to reveal Ethan sitting a few feet away. He grabs Tyrie's shoulder and says, “F*** yeah, brother. That pumped me up.”

It was great television. And despite my lingering misgivings about where our country's insatiable appetite for entertainment might lead us, I couldn't help but agree with Ethan.



CPS-103 Reunion 2006 North Manchester, Indiana

Front L-R: Russell Palmer, Joe Eigsti, Wallace Littell, Lee Hebel, Norman Moody, Luke Birky, Lowell Sharpes Jr.

Middle L-R: Dick Flaharty, Bob Painter, Hubert Rohrer, Jim Brunk, Eldon Eash, Donald Hostetler.

Back L-R: Clarence Quay, Dale Landis, William Weber, Earl Schmidt, Al Inglis, Harvey Weinrich, Willard Krabill.

To Tell the Truth:

Did Stan Tate Help Save Two Brothers From the Electric Chair?

by Jill Louise Léger (Associate)

Editor's Note: Just over 10 years ago, we lost Stan Tate (MYC-53) to illness. Many may remember Stan from the worship services he led at jumper reunions over the years. What follows is a fascinating story from Stan's past, one that delves into murder, faith, and what it means to "tell the truth."

.....

Over his long life, Stanton Davis Tate wore many hats—husband, father, smokejumper, priest, youth advocate, and medical ethicist. In the latter role, he lectured widely, helping his students grapple with even the most elusive truths to determine the fairest courses of action.

Tate's lifelong quest for truth—manifested in both his faith and his teachings—was still beginning in the late 1950s, when, as a young seminary student in New Jersey, he heard a disturbing prison confession that ran counter to a very public record. What he did next spoke volumes about the kind of man he was turning out to be.

It just so happened that during this same period, Stan also appeared on a national game show dedicated to the very concept of "truth." It was a coincidence to be sure—but one that hit home, casting Tate as a truth teller for all of America to see.

Our story begins in the early-morning hours of July 20, 1956. A fire has broken out at a coke factory in Woodbridge, NJ, a small city located just across the water from Staten Island. The officers dispatched to the scene discover the dead and brutalized body of James Quackenbush, the factory's relief engineer. Nearby, a blown-open office safe has been dragged outdoors, its meager contents—\$10 and some checks—untouched.

Three men are eventually tried for first-degree murder—William Butler, who worked at the factory, and a pair of brothers in their twenties named Bland and Eugene Williams. They plead not guilty, but by trial's end, all three are destined for the electric chair.

This is around the time Tate enters the picture. He is all of 26 years old and a student at nearby Princeton Theological Seminary. As part of his studies, he is



Firefighting smokejumping-minister Stanton Tate on To Tell the Truth, December 9, 1958.

serving as an assistant chaplain at Trenton State Prison, where Butler and the Williams brothers are awaiting their fate. During his rounds one day in February 1958, Tate meets an inmate named Victor J. Beatty, who, as a key witness for the prosecution in the Quackenbush trial, had fingered Butler and the Williams brothers. But when Tate speaks with him, the inmate lets on that he falsely implicated the brothers. When Tate follows up with Eugene and Bland Williams, he becomes convinced that they did not kill Quackenbush.

"I really do think they're innocent," he tells a local newspaper. "I just have a feeling."

Three months after Beatty spilled his secret to the visiting clergyman, the New Jersey Supreme Court reverses the first verdict on appeal, basing its decision on a string of legal errors that had occurred during the trial. The court grants second trials to all three defendants. According to Tate, Beatty has prepared a new statement, and Tate himself is ready to testify if needed. But Bland and Eugene each choose to plead no contest to second-degree murder, negating the need for new trials. The court accepts the new pleas, and both are sentenced to 10-15 years. (*Note: Things get a little*

muddier later, when Bland Williams asks to change his plea. The request leads to two more trials and a new sentence of life imprisonment for the younger Williams brother.)

Tate's involvement in this turn of events is not in any official record online, but we know that he played an active advisory role, writing to both brothers and maintaining his belief in their innocence. The Boise State University Library houses the "Stan Tate Papers," which, according to the library's archival website, contains "correspondence and interviews with Bland and Eugene Williams, two prisoners in New Jersey he believed were wrongfully convicted." The site also claims that Tate helped save the brothers from death row.

As fate would have it, just as Tate must have been parsing the details of what transpired on that July night in 1956, he was invited to New York City to appear on a popular game show called *To Tell the Truth*. In an episode you can check out on YouTube (dated December 9, 1958), Tate appears as "number three." He is dressed in full USFS gear as he takes his place beside two imposters, each also claiming to be "smokejumper-firefighting-minister" Stanton Tate.

The camera pans across the faces of the three contestants as the host reads the following:

"I, Stanton Tate, am an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church. I am a graduate of Princeton

Theological Seminary, and while a student there, I acted as assistant chaplain in a New Jersey state prison. My home is in Montana, and since 1953, I have served as a smokejumper with the United States Forest Service. Smokejumpers are called upon to parachute out of airplanes into inaccessible areas to fight forest fires. So far, I have made 26 such jumps. Signed, Stanton Tate."

The high-wattage panel—which includes Kitty Carlisle in a strapless evening gown and Polly Bergen in a double strand of pearls—asks mostly inane questions, which all three contestants answer gamely (with number one firing off a couple of terrific one-liners). But there is something about number three... an unmissable earnestness that even the silliest panelist must have recognized, because when it comes time to vote, all four celebrities choose "number three," the lanky and grinning guy on the end who all but exudes honesty and good faith.

But just because you're a truth teller doesn't mean that the truth itself is always easy to pin down, something Tate was learning early on. When a local reporter asked him in 1959 if the Williams brothers might be fooling him, he conceded that this might be the case.

"After all," he said. "I'm a minister. I do look for the good in people."



Fire Economics

by Dan Green (McCall '67)

Economists are often known for complicating simple issues with jargon and obfuscation. Let's keep this simple. When it comes to fire spending and economics, two key questions arise:

1. How much money will you spend? (Economic impact)
2. How will that money be spent? (Economic efficiency)

Economic Impact

Most of my professional work has focused on the first question, while my business partner has concentrated on the second. Both are critical public policy considerations, especially as we face an era of mega-fires and "out-of-control wildfire spending."

Legislators and local elected officials want to know how wildfire funds are allocated and their impact on local economies. The reality is that most wildfire spending today does not benefit local communities. Instead, it flows to regional and national contractors, providing little economic relief to the rural areas most affected by fires—communities that suffer from lost tourism, disrupted businesses, and destroyed housing.

This wasn't always the case. Historically, District Rangers and Fire Management Officers (FMOs) hired local crews, purchased meals at local restaurants, and sourced supplies from nearby businesses. Local crews spent their paychecks in their communities, creating a positive economic multiplier effect.

However, as district operations were consolidated into larger regional or national organizations—such as the National Interagency Fire Center—and with the rise of competitive bidding, wildfire spending shifted away from local economies. Today, support services are largely outsourced, significantly reducing the economic benefits to rural communities.

From my experience modeling forest restoration and fire spending across the West, this contract-based approach results in minimal local spending and significantly higher costs. As someone who has contracted with the Forest Service, BLM, and state Departments of Natural Resources, I've seen firsthand how "competitive bidding" often inflates costs rather than reducing them. In some cases, my hourly rate as a subcontractor has increased by 400%, with additional layers of markup before final reimbursement.

We need to return fire and forestry operations to the local level, empowering communities and restoring local management where it has the greatest economic impact.

Economic Efficiency

Economic efficiency is about maximizing the "bang for your buck." While my business partner has conducted in-depth studies on this—particularly for the National Interagency Fire Center—I'll simplify the issue.

We spend too much on aerial operations and structure protection, which now account for over half of all wildfire spending. On many fires, especially in the wildland-urban interface, aerial operations alone account for more than 50% of fire expenditures. Originally, retardant drops were meant to supplement ground crews, helping to build containment lines. Pumper trucks were rare, primarily used for mop-up after ground crews had completed containment. Today, fleets of pumper trucks arrive to protect structures, drastically shifting spending priorities.

As a crewboss, I've called in retardant drops many times. When accurate, they're highly effective. I recall one incident during a fast-moving railroad fire in grass and brush. With just two rookie crew members, we were able to contain the fire thanks to a perfectly placed retardant drop. Aerial teams provide crucial support in such cases—but they are expensive and should be a last resort.

On a recent fire near our Montana ranch, helicopters arrived a week before ground crews—a completely backward approach. It wasn't until two dedicated

hotshot crews arrived that effective fire lines were built and held.

In reality, boots on the ground, supported by heavy equipment like bulldozers, are what ultimately put out most fires—whether it's a small wilderness spot fire or a raging California inferno. Ground crews and line construction equipment are far more cost-effective. A full day of work from a hotshot crew cost about the same as a single water bucket drop from a large helicopter. While bucket drops are useful for extinguishing small wilderness fires or saving homes, they were never intended to suppress large timber or brush fires.

A Path Forward

There are challenges in recruiting enough ground crews, but this problem can be solved with better wages and local hiring authority. I remember stories from a smokejumper buddy and lifelong friend who hired Inuit pick-up crews in Alaska. Those wages were a critical component of annual income for those remote Inuit families.

Investing in local crews would not only improve wildfire response but also boost local economies. Local crews are familiar with the terrain and fire behavior unique to their region. Most importantly, they are already there stationed in bunkhouses and available for immediate response. Fast, local initial attack can prevent fires from escalating into costly, multi-agency operations requiring national-level intervention. Local fire crews are also available for fire hazard abatement work around communities and along roads that could be effective fire breaks and do provide egress routes for residents of the urban interface.

By prioritizing cost-effective, locally driven solutions, we can improve both the economic impact and efficiency of wildfire management—ensuring that funding is spent wisely while strengthening the communities most affected by fire.

.....

Dan is a Forest Economist who contracts with the Forest Service, BLM, and State agencies. He conducts regional economic analysis of forest restoration, wildfire mitigation/prevention, endangered species listing, EIS, forest plans, and state forest management plan, and dams and related water resource management projects. "I've been at it for forty years and it has taken me all over the west and as far east as Wisconsin." His college credentials included a BS in History, a Master's in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, and a Ph.D. in Forest and Fisheries Economics



Notes from the Ranks



Pat McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

So, *WHAT WAS ALL THAT?*

On February 14, several thousand USFS and NPS probationary employees were terminated for so-called “poor performance.” Across all disciplines—recreation, trails, botany, weeds, wildlife, range, timber, hydrology, customer service, archaeology—employees who’d worked less than a year got fired. They were told that their abilities, knowledge, and skills didn’t “fit the current needs,” and that their performances were not “adequate to justify further employment.”

It was a cruel blow. In some states, being fired for “poor performance” means not qualifying for unemployment benefits. There’s also the matter of trying to get another federal job after being fired for “poor performance.” Good luck with that.

The subsequent weeks were filled with questions—for the agencies, for government leadership, even for us as federal employees. What was this “public service” we thought we provided, especially when in so many rural places (in Idaho, for instance), the population seemed excited to hear that federal workers were fired?

Most of the terminated employees returned to work in March, with backpay to boot. But they came back with healthy doses of suspicion and diminished trust. As of this writing in early April, they may be able to work until Sept 30, or they may be fired again on April 18.

Fire was supposedly immune from mass terminations. After all, our new Secretary of Agriculture said twice in her statement on the terminations that “no firefighters will be fired.” But I guess she doesn’t know about the militia—all the non-fire positions (such as mine; I’ve been a forestry technician for 11 seasons) that assist all summer on incident-management teams. There’s a lot of learning she’s gonna have to do really quick before fire season.

Working on public lands has, to me, always felt win-win. I can’t believe a person can get paid to work in these incredible places alongside others who also appreciate the mandate of protection and conservation. For many of us, our jobs are a privilege—even when doing so is dangerous or frustrating.

But not everyone thinks the way we do. And there’s something about public lands that people in Washington don’t understand—people, that is, who don’t sleep outside, who prioritize balance sheets, who commodify experiences, who understand the natural world as a static entity you enter and exit only while on vacation, who don’t know that stardust is real and that mountains are alive and that deserts don’t sleep and that trees, pesky trees, have ideas and ruminations and will share them with you if you pay attention closely enough. And what

these people don’t get is this: public lands are our precious heritage and our legacy, irreplaceable resources to be safeguarded. In Washington, too many people think of nature as nothing more than a golf course.

I don’t know what February’s brutal mass-termination event signified, but to me it shows how bereft the nation has become, how a lack of national reflection and identity can lead to a lack of understanding of public spaces, and how the idolatry of budgets can lead to neglect and destruction.

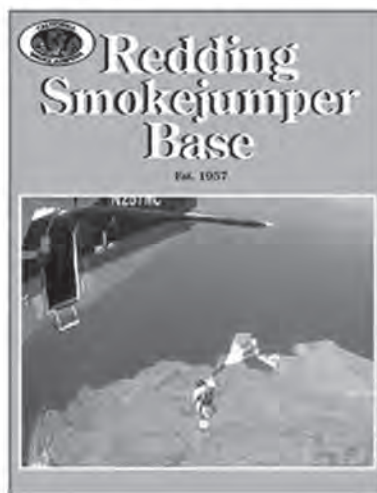
Wildfire often signifies a critical consolidation of decades or centuries of policy, of good management or neglect. Fighting a wildfire is chaotic and reactionary, and I think it’s sometimes good to question whether fighting a given fire is even necessary. By the same token, we might also ask ourselves that: *Is every federal land-management position necessary?* Maybe not. But I believe that culling and developing a workforce should be a rigorous and introspective process. Unilateral termination events like what happened in February trivialize the importance of the public lands and may even put those lands in a precarious position come fire season. Will there be public servants and the public mindset to defend those lands? Or will the recklessness give way to more cuts or, worse, the handing over of public lands to private interests?

Lots of questions remain. Will the employees be fired again? And what about pay? Wildland firefighter pay was included in the last continuing resolution and budget. A multi-year battle to include such things as incident premium pay, increased basic pay, and other ele-

ments culminated in a big victory for wildland firefighters. This is a great start, but will it hold?

But what's not in question is whether the days are longer and the temperatures higher and the fuels drier; those are certainties. We'll see how staffing, pay, administrative backing, and the cuts to "needless" workers play out over what's bound to be an interesting fire season.

Please pay attention to the places you love. We don't know what we've got until it's gone.



8.5"x11" format
135 pages
\$25, plus postage
Available on the NSA Website

History of the Redding Smokejumper Base

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.

NEW

NEW ITEMS IN STOCK!

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New challenge coins honor 85th anniversary

They're back! These challenge coins have always been a favorite among jumpers as well as collectors! This new design features images of the "round" and "square" parachutes on one side, with a commemoration of the 85th anniversary reunion on the back. Measures 1¾ inches. Why not buy some for friends? **\$7**



You asked – and we listened! Classic Smokejumper Trail Crew cap is back after an extended absence. Ultra-lightweight nylon features micro venting for comfort. Velcro strap. Choose from blue or black. **\$20**



If hooded sweatshirts aren't your thing, try one of these new crewneck sweatshirts – providing you with the same warmth and durability, wash after wash, but without the extra material in back. **\$45**

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2024 Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Awards

The Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award is presented annually to one BLM and one USFS smokejumper who goes beyond the job requirements and demonstrates excellence in leadership in the Wildland Fire Leadership Principles. Candidates are nominated by individual jumpers at their base, and winners are selected from the nominations by a committee of a BLM and USFS base manager and a member of the National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors. Unique wooden plaques are engraved with the names and displayed at the bases of the Award winners.



Dakota "Bo" Brooks, USFS (GAC-16), currently based in Grangeville, ID, was selected for the USFS Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award. His outstanding performance was recognized for the excellence he showed in all phases of

smokejumper training, spotting, and leadership under duress. Bo started smokejumping in 2016 at Grangeville, the last rookie class to jump the FS-14 round canopy. He completed Ram-Air Transition Training two years later and has since become the Lead Rookie Trainer in Ram Air transitions.

Bo developed training programs that have helped bridge gaps in training between the USFS and BLM. He is known for his communication skills, team building, supervisory rigging duties in the loft, and proficiency in Operations. Bo is a self-starter and jumps into projects without being told, taking charge and using his experience to lead and teach subordinates. He is known and respected as a "Bro's bro...", noted for communicating and taking a strong interest in the welfare of his troops.

Bo was raised in Orofino and attended the University of Idaho. He is the proud father of James Lee and a loving husband to Samantha Jo in Grangeville. Bo's confidence, work ethic, positive attitude, and ultimate professionalism led to his selection for the 2024 USFA Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award.



Jacob "Jake" Budd, BLM (FBX-17), currently based in Fairbanks, was selected for the BLM Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award for his exceptional work ethic and overall dedication to smokejumping. Jake was also commended

for his strong decision-making skills under duress and for his work in training and developing new jumpers.

As Lead Rookie Trainer for the Alaska Smokejumper base, he played a pivotal role in developing rookies while providing guidance and leadership to veteran jumpers. He was recognized for his willingness to take on new challenges and leading by example, both in the field and in the training environment. Jake's career in wildland firefighting began with a degree in Range Management at the University of Wyoming and gaining firefighting experience with the Tatanka Hotshots (Custer, SD) before signing on with the Alaska Smokejumpers in 2017. After two years as Lead Rookie Trainer, he was promoted to Assistant Training Coordinator, where he continues to influence and shape the next generation of smokejumpers. The NSA recognizes his outstanding performance in 2024 for the Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award.

2025 National Reunion Banquet/BBQ

!! REGISTER EARLY !!

Banquet and/or BBQ seating may be limited.

Registration deadline is June 12



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

Little Hope to Change the System

In the April 2025 issue of *Smoke-jumper*, I dealt with the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) and how our injured wildland firefighters are left hanging in many cases. I mentioned the problems that Michelle Hart, wife of **Tim Hart** (GAC-16), was having with OWCP after Tim was fatally injured on a fire jump in 2021.

From that issue: "Our wildland firefighters are suffering in many areas. Low wages are the highest concern. But couldn't the USFS/BLM show more concern for their injured firefighters? Why not assign a human resource person to help each firefighter through the maze of bureaucracy that they have with OWCP? Reduce the obstacles thrown in their paths. Put them in contact with people who can solve a problem. Advocate for their employees"

Larry Longley (NCSB-72) put together an excellent book titled *Spittin' in the Wind*, for the North Cascades reunion in September 2007. As part of that effort, Larry asked three different individuals involved in the horrible accident involving Gene Hobbs to recount their remembrances of that July 1973 day. The first story is by assistant spotter **Ashley Court** (NCSB-63), who took over the plane after Gene was pulled out. The second is by **Gary "Pops" Johnson** (FBX-74), who was on the rescue helicopter. The third is by Gene himself and that is the one we will reprint here.

What happened? There was a fire call for jumpers out of McGrath for two fires in July 1973. While getting ready to drop on the fire things went wrong. From Ash Court:

As Gene passed in front of the door, his spotter's pack deployed. Gene's deployed chute was instantly sucked out the plane's open door. In a split second the lines came tight, and Gene was jerked down onto the floor and towards the back corner of the door. His head crashed into the side of the plane, and he landed heavily on his right shoulder. Gene was wedged around the door with the parachute on the outside. The door began to crumple under the weight and pressure and finally folded back. His feet and legs violently crashed through the side of the front door and this narrow section of the door was ripped from its mountings and left trailing outside the aircraft.

Within minutes Gene lay on the Alaska tundra severely injured.

Go to the NSA website, click on magazine, go to the April 2008 issue to read all three accounts. To show that little has changed over the past 48 years, I want to deal with how Gene Hobbs was treated after his near-fatal accident in 1973.

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If You're Here, I Must Be About Dead

by **Gene Hobbs** (Idaho City '61)

As with most trauma accidents, July 2, 1973, has been entirely erased from my mind. As hard as I try, I cannot remember anything from that day. When my wife, Lois, stepped off the elevator at the hospital and met with the neurosurgeon for the first time, he told her not to be surprised if I didn't know her, and that he was almost certain I would never have any recall of the accident itself.

The first call my wife received was from **Ron Berkey** (MYC-65), who asked if she had heard from anyone about the accident. He then told her that they were flying me to a hospital in Anchorage. He explained a little about the accident and said she should be getting official word about my condition very soon. He said he knew I was in pretty bad shape, and she should get up there as soon as possible. Shortly after receiving the government call, she received a call from **Dick Hughes** (MSO-64) telling her that he had arranged for a small Forest Service plane to fly from Missoula to Orofino to pick her up and fly her to Seattle. From there she would fly commercially to Anchorage.



Gene Hobbs (NSA files)

We soon began to learn the extent of most of my injuries. I was immediately placed on a circular electric bed because I had a broken neck (C-2 hangman's vertebrae that should kill you instantly). The doctor commented that the fact that I had been coaching high school wrestling for several years and "bridged" with the wrestlers may well have saved my life. I also had a broken right leg at the knee, damage to the sixth nerve causing double vision in my left eye, 18 stitches to the back of my head, a dislocated right shoulder, and many other lacerations and bruises. Initially, they were sure I probably had some internal injuries, as well, but, thankfully, that wasn't so. Later I did learn of other damages to my spinal column, which caused both of my hands to stay asleep and be very weak. This was caused by muscle deterioration.

After arriving in Anchorage, Lois was very well taken care of for the entire time she was there. Many of the jumpers from all the bases pooled their money to help with lodging, food and a rental car. As the different jumpers came to visit over the next few weeks, they always seemed to have taken up a collection and would hand Lois an

envelope full of cash. We couldn't have felt more loved and taken care of and truly appreciated with all the generosity shown to both of us.

I spent a total of nine weeks at Elmendorf Air Force Hospital with my neck in traction. I lost 30 lbs., mainly muscle, and could not even sit up by myself when I was finally taken out of traction. I also had to learn to walk again using two hand-rails.

Definitely, one of the saddest days of my life was when the doctors told me I would never jump again. I was told I would never have more than 70% use of my right leg or the use of my hands. Up until that time, I felt I had dream occupations – teaching in the winter and smokejumping in the summer. I knew I still had a few good years left in me for smokejumping because I could still easily fulfill the physical requirements. Coaching wrestling and working out in the weight room at school kept me in good shape.

When I was finally able to fly, a BLM jet flew us back to Boise where I began rehab at the Elks Rehabilitation Center there. Because the doctors had been more concerned about my neck, they had never done much with my leg, so there were lots of strengthening and bending exercises needed before I could go home on crutches. When I finally returned home to Orofino, I still had to use crutches, wore an eye patch, and sported a partially shaven head with many "orange highlights" resulting from the "halo" holes left in my skull.

After a few weeks I still wore the patch on my eye but had now moved up to a cane instead of crutches and was anxious to get back and coach the school wrestling team. It was excellent therapy, and we had a great season.

I am thankful that at age 66 I am still able to walk a lot. Even though I have shied away from a complete knee replacement and my knee has felt like I'm walking on a sprained knee ever since the accident, I get along quite well. I can no longer pack an elk out, but I do pretty well just walking and also do some hiking and hunting. **Hank Carpenter (MSO-65)** and I still hunt, and we got our lifetime Idaho moose three and four years ago.

After returning from Alaska, I had to take the rest of the school year off in order to rehabilitate. **That is really when our nightmare began with the Federal Office of Workman's Compensation (OWC).** We were told from the beginning that we would receive three-fourths of my GS-7 rating pay and were very shocked when **our first check came and was under \$5.00 monthly.** Lucky for us, we had a savings ac-



Door damage when Gene was sucked out of the aircraft.

(courtesy Joel Cannon (RAC-71))

count, and I had not taken any sick leave at the high school, where I had taught for eight years. None of my prescriptions or doctors were paid for months and even years. The pharmacies, doctors and I were all worried that nothing would ever be paid. After writing numerous letters and sending many bills without any responses, we finally wrote to Idaho Senator Frank Church and his aide, Larry Larocco. They got right on the case and found that my file was lost in Washington D.C. with the word "HOLD" written in red ink. The Seattle OWC finally received my file, but we continued to have problems, with no real help offered.

The next step was to hire a lawyer. According to him, we had to sue Pioneer Parachute Co. in order to receive any compensation. Being at our wits end and not wanting to do this, we went ahead and filed the

suit. After another year of litigation and more problems with the OWC, we finally settled out of court with the lawyer taking 40% off the top and, after repaying the government for the hospital, doctor and prescription drug costs, we came out with very little. It was definitely not worth all the hassles we endured. We feel there should have been some sort of compensation already set up for temporary employees.

Since teaching in Idaho is not very lucrative, I decided to go back to school to get a degree in school administration. I attended the University of Idaho on the G.I. Bill, taking some night classes and attending summer school. In 1977, I received my master's degree and became a secondary principal in Orofino, ID. I stayed in this position for 18 years, retiring in 1996 with 30 years in education.

I try to make it to all the National Smokejumper reunions and stay informed on what's going on. Smokejumpers are a truly a unique group of people. The comradery and friendships I made while working with various teams from all the jumper bases will always mean the world to me. I can never thank everyone enough for all the support they have shown both me and my wife through some very trying times.

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The USFS/BLM could make changes to help injured employees. Forty-eight years later, we see that the problems for our injured workers are still there. Someone at the higher levels needs to care and change the system. I have little hope that it will be done. (Ed.)



Eagles, Fords, and Smokejumpers, 1942 (20x29 painting by Greg Whipple (MSO-59)

If interested in a print, contact Greg at glwhipple@hotmail.com



ODDS AND ENDS



Congratulations and thanks to **Lee Bender** (GAC-57), **Jack Sisco** (MSO-60), **Lynn Sprague** (MYC-59), **Rod Little** (NCSB-95), **Del Hessel** (MYC-59), **Mike Henbest** (LGD-74), **Mark Youmans** (RDD-81), **Sarah Altemus-Pope** (MSO-01), and **Jeff Kinderman** (MSO-75) who are our latest Life Members.

Dick Rath (MSO-73): Correcting Jan McLaren article from the April 2025 issue of *Smokeyjumper*: the article mentioned that Jan had served one year in the Marine Corps when he served 1965-68.

“Wild Bill” Yensen (MYC-53) was recently honored by the Wildland Firefighter Foundation for his long career as a Smokejumper. Bill jumped at McCall 1953, 55, 57, 58, and 1961-86. “That’s just an appreciation of and in recognition of his service — 30 years of service in the wildland [firefighting] community,” says Eric Brocksome, with the Wildland Firefighter Foundation.

Bob Reid (MSO-57): Alan Weltzien’s haunting account of Frank Fowler’s passing (“A Soft Landing”) is the most emotion-stimulating article I’ve read in many years. I did not know Frank as a jumper, but did meet him at a reunion in 2006 just after his book *High-mountain Two-Manner* was published. I remember him as quiet but friendly. Frank evidently lived his life to the fullest, and Professor Weltzien’s simple straightforward narrative has captured its ending most evocatively. (while no one likes to acknowledge the inevitability of life’s termination, this article does gently slap us awake!)

Montana Smokejumper Association Receives Beautification Award

A Montana-based community-improvement organization has awarded a local chapter of the National Smokejumper Association its yearly Community Star Award.

Bright n’ Beautiful, a local affiliate of the national group Keep America Beautiful, presented the prize to the Yellowstone Area National Smokejumper Association “in recognition of countless contributions to the health and beauty of Yellowstone County.”

Bright n’ Beautiful singled out the year-round work smokejumpers have done “identifying and hefting tons of metal waste from our waters, ridding our natural areas

of noxious weeds and invasive trees, removing litter from ditches, resurfacing trails, [and] doing away with barbed wire and other hazards to Montana wildlife.”

Bright n’ Beautiful also praised the smokejumper association for its collaboration with other local environmental-improvement groups, including the Yellowstone River Research Center, Our Montana, and the Yellowstone River Parks Association.

“Rarely have we had a group as driven as the Billings-area retired smokejumper crew,” said Carolyn Sevier, executive director of the Yellowstone River Parks Association. “They pile together their abundant energy and lifetimes of experience with plenty of camaraderie and willingness to share their knowledge with others.”

And Yellowstone River Research Center director Kayhan Ostovar noted, “I can’t imagine a more generous and dedicated group of individuals who live each day in service to their community. They have made it a healthier place to live and have set an example of service that should be applauded and appreciated.”

In announcing the award on February 12, 2025, Bright n’ Beautiful stressed that “groups like the smokejumpers inspire us to get outside, enjoy fellowship with our neighbors, and get involved in caring for our precious Montana home. Thank you, Members of the Yellowstone Area National Smokejumper Association, for your outstanding contribution to the health and well-being of Yellowstone County.”





THE JUMP LIST

1961 Rookies



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



David W. "Dave" Bennett (Missoula '61)

Dave was born in Ogden, UT, in 1942 and moved to Chemult, OR, right after World War Two. In 1948, the family moved to DeBorgia, MT, where he attended grade school in a one-room, one-teacher school. He graduated from high school in St. Regis, MT, in 1960.

In 1966, Dave graduated from the Montana School of Mines with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He worked at the Hanford Atomic Products site in Richland, WA, and then returned to the Montana School of Mines, where he received a master's in mechanical engineering in 1970. He later earned a master's in electrical engineering from the University of Washington.

Dave worked at Hanford until 1984 and then went to work at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. After leaving the laboratory in 1995, he was a partner in several small-business startup companies in the robotics industry within the US and the UK. In 1999, he returned to Richland and worked as a robotics consultant in the nuclear, subsea oil

production, and manufacturing industries. He retired in 2012.

Dave jumped at Missoula (1961-63 and 1965-66) and Grangeville (1964).

Robert H. "Bob" Bryant (Missoula '61)

Bob was born March 3, 1939, in Beach, ND, and grew up in Helena, MT, and graduated from Helena HS in 1957. He graduated from Montana State with a degree in mechanical engineering in 1963 and earned his master's and Ph.D. from the University of Washington in 1967 and 1970. Bob served in the Army Reserves, 1956-63.

He started his work with the USFS in 1960 in Helena on a survey crew. He rookieed at Missoula in 1961 and also jumped at West Yellowstone in 1962.

Bob's career began at the Naval Air Weapons Center in China Lake, CA. He later worked at Boeing in Seattle on design and development.

Writes Bob, "As a child, I lived on a farm in the Helena Valley and was witness to the Mann Gulch Fire. Late one afternoon, I saw a large volume of smoke rising from the mountains north of our home. The next day, we saw the ambulances passing our home.

"My 7th grade teacher brought jump gear to class and suited up for the class. I remembered this, and it inspired me, in part, to sign up with the jumpers."

Thomas E. Butler (Missoula '61)

"I was born August 28, 1940, in Amarillo, TX. My father drilled water wells for ranches in the Texas

panhandle, so we moved every few years.

"I started school in Wellington, TX. When I was nine years old, we moved eight miles outside the small town of Chelsea, OK. We walked a half mile to the mailbox and a mile to a one-room school, where I started fifth grade and saw my first basketball game. Back then, I wished that I could have gone with Lewis and Clark. The USFS and smoke-jumping were as close as I could get.

"My dad had a heart attack when I was 16, and we moved to Vinita, OK, where we'd already been attending Sacred Heart Academy Catholic School. After high school, I attended Northeastern Oklahoma State University and later taught math and science in Missouri.

"Teaching lasted about one year and a third, when I was able to go to Laos and work for Air America. I worked for Air America from early November 1965 to June 1974—minus the two years I was drafted out of the war in Laos to repair pop-up targets in Korea. With Air America, I worked as a kicker (loadmaster) on C-123s, Caribous, C-130s, C46s, and Twin Otters. **Barry Reed** (MSO-61) and I practiced the 'skyhook' method of flying over an individual (dummy) on the ground and pulling the person into the back of a Caribou. Night drops to teams watching traffic along the Ho Chi Minh Trail were interesting, as was counting vehicles coming down the trail.

"I met my Vietnamese wife at the American Embassy in Vientiane,

Laos, where she worked. We've been married 51 years.

"After coming back to the States, I welded for a while and then went back to school for a master's degree. I worked 20-plus years as a licensed professional counselor in the Claremore, OK, school system and later as a school counselor in Dallas, TX. I retired in 2004."

David R. Callum (Missoula '61)

David was born December 11, 1938, in Newport, NH, and grew up on the woodsy, mountain family farm in nearby rural Unity.

Writes David, "After graduating from Towle HS in Newport, NH, in 1958, I enrolled in forestry at the University of Montana (Missoula). To get more experience, I worked a summer for the USFS and in the Swan Valley for Montana State Forestry before joining the USFS Missoula Smokejumper crew (1961-1964).

"What I remember most about our training was struggling through spring quarter to get in condition—marching, running, and more running for jump training. Then discovering I had to go on a gain-weight program to be able to reach the 130-lb weight minimum. Then there was the last 'practice' jump with visitors. Just before landing I noticed someone under me, twisted to avoid her, and got sidelined to St. Pat's hospital with a dislocated hip.

"A memorable incident I had that first summer: My first fire jump. A load of jumpers was called to California that July 13. Temperature as we left Missoula: 78 degrees. On landing at Redding, CA: 110 degrees. Jumped on a two-manner near Mt. Shasta—a large field with one pine tree in the center burning at the top. Jumped, did an Allen roll

on top of poison oak and Manzanita bush, then crashed 20 feet to the ground. Fire-gear drop took two hours to find. By the time we completed the job, it was a 20-man fire, and a chainsaw was needed. There were a number of sick boys in the Missoula smokejumper crew—all from poison oak.

"I earned a bachelor's in education in biological science at MSU (1964) and taught sciences in Vermont and New Hampshire before returning to work in natural resources. In 1967, I began a 30-year career as a fisheries biologist for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

"In 'retirement' I purchased a portable sawmill and with my wife, did custom sawing and managed our 120-acre New Hampshire woodland, where our younger daughter, Sharon, now lives and works."

Romie J. Deschamps (Missoula '61)

Romie graduated from the University of Montana Pharmacy School in 1966 and moved to Helena, where he and his wife, Pat, raised two sons and four daughters. He moved to Tacoma, WA, and then to Alaska in 1973. Romie has lived in Palmer since 1977.

He jumped at Missoula in 1961 and 1963 and at Grangeville in 1962 and 1964.

Michael D. Fort (Winthrop '61)

"I was born September 24, 1941, in Phoenix, AZ. I moved to Guam in 1949 and to Oxnard, CA, in 1951. I ended up in Bethesda, MD, as a ward to a naval officer named Dr. Edward W. Bird. I was with him until I graduated from the University of Maryland. I cannot thank him enough.

"In 1960, I graduated from Walter Johnson HS in Bethesda and worked on a TSI crew in Joseph, OR, that summer. For much of the 1960s, I spent my summers smoke-jumping out of NCSB. In 1967, I graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in civil engineering.

"In 1967, I spent my final summer jumping and started working for Ingram Contractors in New Orleans. My work involved offshore oil field construction using derrick barges with 500-ton cranes. Boats, barges, helicopters, company airplanes; it was smokejumping 24/7, 365 days a year. In 1969, I worked as a project engineer on a construction barge in Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro.

"In 1971 I rejoined Ingram Contractors, this time out of London, where I was involved with construction in the North Sea, the only place I know where the ocean can go from flat to 30-foot standing diamonds in the blink of an eye. I had the responsibility for managing four derrick barges.

"In 1972, I moved to Brussels, the result of a corporate restructuring stemming from the war in Lebanon. In 1974, at Frigg Field in the North Sea, I helped launch one of the largest offshore platforms in the world.

"In 1989, I decided it was time for a change. For 20 years, I'd been on a plane, train, boat, or construction barge at least three times a week. During my Singapore posting, I managed to have enough time and money to purchase 240 acres in the Methow Valley in Washington state. I came full circle: I started in the Methow, jumping out of NCSB, and I ultimately chose to move back there.

"In the years that followed, I farmed livestock, took pack trips into the Cascades, and purchased a cold-molded 49-foot cutter. I took it on a trip from Puget Sound to Mexico and Hawaii that lasted five years.

"I finished my last engineering job in 2021. Since then, I've spent summers in the Methow, winters at the house in Hawaii Kai."

Charles A. "Chuck" Fricke
(Grangeville '61)

Chuck jumped at Grangeville (1961-63) and Missoula (1964-66).

Writes Chuck, "In 1964, I gave up going to Silver City to take a squad-leader position, which allowed me to help train new jumpers, work out of the dispatching office, and work year-round.

"I married the love of my life, Laura, in June 1966.

"After jumping, my career had many facets, including real estate sales, land development, property management, and home construction. I also put together a commercial cow herd that our family ran for 28 years in the Bitterroot Valley."

Chuck served on the local school board, Ravalli County Planning Board, Ravalli County Fair Board, and Bitterroot Valley Bank Board. He was also president of the Ravalli County Realtors.

He writes, "My favorite summers are [spent on] the NSA trail projects. In 1999, **Art Jukkala** (MSO-56) and Jon McBride, started the trail projects. I have been on a project each year from 1999 through 2022. Sometimes two projects a year."

Roy E. Korkalo (Missoula '61)

Roy was born July 23, 1942, in Missoula, MT. He grew up in Mis-

soula and graduated from Missoula Country HS in 1960. Roy graduated from the University of Montana with his bachelor's in biological science in 1966. This was followed by a master's degree from the University of Utah in meteorology.

In 1966, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in Army Field Artillery. He served 22 years, was made Colonel, and retired. Service included airborne, ranger, battalion commander in Korea, and aviator. Roy logged over 1,200 hours as a pilot in Vietnam. His Pentagon duty included inspecting Army units worldwide out of the Department of The Army Inspector General Office.

After the Army, Roy had a 15-year career in the railroad industry at the Livingston Rebuild Center in Montana, which rebuilt locomotives and rail cars for railroads throughout North America. Not done, he worked for FEMA (2004-2018) as a Congressional Liaison Officer on disasters throughout the US.

Roy jumped at Missoula (1961-63, 1966) and Grangeville (1964-65). He is an NSA Life Member.

Thomas J. "Tom" Kovalicky
(Missoula '61)

Tom was born September 13, 1935, in Passaic, NJ. He grew up in Clifton, NJ, graduating from high school there in 1953. Tom went to the University of Montana, graduating in 1961 with a degree in forestry. He spent two years in the Army, 1958-60.

Tom worked seasonally with the USFS, 1954-58, before jumping at Missoula during the 1961 season. He got 10 fire jumps.

He then started his career with the USFS. He worked in a number of national forests including the Bridger, Challis, Sawtooth, Flathead

(deputy forest supervisor), and Nez Perce (supervisor).

Tom retired in 1991 and is living in Grangeville, ID.

Perry H. Rahn (Missoula '61)

Perry was born on October 27, 1936, in Allentown, PA. In 1954, he graduated from Allentown HS. He attended Lafayette College in Easton, PA, graduating in 1959 with degrees in civil engineering and geology.

While in college, Perry worked five summers on the Blister Rust Control program for the USFS, hitchhiking from Easton to Coeur d'Alene, ID, every summer. From 1959 to 1961, he was employed as an engineering geologist for the California Department of Water Resources in Oroville, CA.

He was drafted in 1961 and did his basic training in the Army at Fort Ord, CA.

During the summer of 1961, Perry was a smokejumper at Missoula. His experience as a smokejumper—the adventure, camaraderie, and hard work—greatly influenced his life.

He attended graduate school at Pennsylvania State University and in 1965 received a Ph.D. in geology.

From 1965 to 1968, he was an assistant professor at the University of Connecticut. From 1968 to 1997, he taught engineering geology and hydrogeology courses at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City. During his career as a geology professor, he authored the textbook *Engineering Geology, an Environmental Approach*, and guided the development of theses for 60 graduate students.

Perry is a professor emeritus and is currently living in a log cabin in the Black Hills.

Dave L. Rosgen (McCall '61)

Dave was born February 26, 1942, in Moscow, ID, and was ranch-raised. He attended Rancho HS in Las Vegas, graduating in 1960.

He obtained a bachelor's degree in forestry and watershed science at Humboldt State University. Dave later earned a Ph.D. in geomorphology at the University of East Anglia in England.

He jumped at McCall during the 1961 season. A football knee injury ended his jumping career.

Dave spent 20 years with the USFS in several national forests, including the Clearwater, Beaverhead, Lolo, Kaniksu, and Arapaho/Roosevelt.

In 1985, he started Wildland Hydrology Consultants. Since then, he developed a stream classification system, sediment transport and streambank erosion prediction models, and a procedural method for river restoration. He published more than 76 research documents related to watershed studies, stream classification, sediment relations, and channel stability and restoration.

His projects were highlighted in *National Geographic* magazine and the *New York Times*, and he was selected as the innovator of the year for science in *Time* magazine. He continues to conduct training courses in fluvial geomorphology and river restoration throughout the US, Canada, and Australia. Over the years, he's trained more than 20,000 students, 40 students at a time. He has conducted river restoration projects and post fire restoration projects. He has authored two books and is currently finishing his third textbook.

Neil Rylander (Missoula '61)

Neil was born June 11, 1940, in Rochester, NY, and grew up in nearby Irondequoit. He graduated from Benjamin Franklin HS in Rochester. Later education included degrees in forestry and business.

Neil spent six years in the National Guard. He jumped at Missoula (1961-62), Fairbanks (1964 and 1966), and West Yellowstone (1968).

Neil moved to Vancouver, WA, and went into the home-building business. When he retired, Neil got into road biking and took part in numerous bicycling events.

Normente M. "Jack" Saunders (Missoula '61)

Jack was born May 1, 1941, in Jefferson, TX, the state where he's spent most of his life. He graduated from Waskom HS in 1959 and Texas Tech in 1964 with a degree in agriculture economics.

He jumped at Missoula, 1961-63.

Jack farmed cotton, milo, and cattle for ten years in Gaines before ranching 30 years in Presidio. He moved to Red River in 2006 and later to Pines.

Roland S. Trenouth (Missoula '61)

Roland was born June 26, 1941, in Missoula, Montana, where he grew up and graduated from Missoula County H.S. in 1959. He graduated from Columbia College in 1963 and the University of Colorado Medical School in 1968. Roland took his Internship and Residency at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Indiana followed by a Cardiology Fellowship at the University of Oregon 1975

He served in the Army 1970-72 with a tour in Vietnam 1970-71. Roland's medical career was in Bellingham Washington where he worked in a Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery program and the Cardiovascular Center.

He retired 2005 and is living in Bellingham, Washington. Roland jumped at Missoula 1961-65.

Dan Tomich (Missoula '61)

Dan was born on December 13, 1941, in Glens Ferry, ID. The eighth of 11 children, he grew up on a farm and graduated from Glens Ferry HS in 1960.

After graduation, he worked for the Mountain Home Ranger District of the Boise NF on a slash disposal crew and on several fires.

Dan trained at Missoula in 1961 and jumped 14 fires during one of the biggest fire seasons at the time. He jumped at Missoula (1961-64), Grangeville (1965), and Anchorage (1967).

During those years, he also attended the University of Idaho, graduating with a civil engineering degree in 1966.

After college, he took a job with the Colorado Highway Department. However, his draft board was able to run him down there, so he enlisted in the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps.

He graduated from Officer Candidate School at Newport, RI, in February 1968 and was commissioned as a Civil Engineer Corps Officer. After additional training at Port Hueneme, CA, he was assigned to the Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba for two years. Then he received orders to serve on a Navy Seabee battalion in Vietnam, first in the Mekong Delta, then with the Vietnamese Marines in III Corps.

After completing his military obligation, he took a job with Anaconda Forest Products in Bonner, MT. Then he worked for the Oregon Highway Department in LaGrande as a field bridge engineer. His next job was with the US Bureau of Reclamation on the Teton Dam in Idaho.

After 28 years of federal service, he shifted gears to work for the Idaho Department of Water Resources. He worked there for nine years.

He retired in 2005 and since then has spent much time in the great outdoors. He's enjoyed many backpacking trips into wilderness areas but says the best times were rafting trips in Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Utah, Colorado, and Alaska.

Dan's final word: "Jumping was the best job ever, along with rafting the rivers!"

Charles H. "Chuck" Underwood (Missoula '61)

Chuck was born in Missoula and attended high school in Miles City, Montana. He earned a degree in Interpersonal Communications from the University of Montana in 1965. He jumped the 1961-64 seasons. Chuck spent 33 years in the property and casualty insurance business and was an insurance agency partner in Kalispell for 27 years.

Larry Waldron (North Cascades '61)

Larry was born January 16, 1942, in New Rockford, North Dakota, and grew up in Eastern Oregon in Jay Day and Lakeview. He graduated from Grant Union H.S. in 1960. Larry earned his bachelor's in biology from Willamette University in 1966 and his J.D. from the University of Houston Law School in 1998.

Larry worked as a Forestry Aide in the Malheur N.F. in 1960 before jumper at NCSB during the 1961 season. He did free-lance Tree Service and contract fence building 1961-62 and was a Forestry Tech 1962-63 for the Santa Fe N.F. In 1967 Larry started his career with the National Park Service that lasted until his retirement in 1995. He was a Park Ranger in Big Bend N.P., Lake Meredith National Recreation area, and Whitman Mission National Monument. He was Chief Naturalist for the Indiana Dunes N.P. and the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in California. He is retired (2022) and living in the Houston, Texas, area.

Orville "Orv" Varner (NCSB-61)

Orv was born February 23, 1943, in a farmhouse four miles north of Winthrop, Washington. When he was eight, the family moved to a new farm south of Winthrop and about a mile northwest of the NCSB base, where he could hear the Noorduyn and Twin Beeches warming up every morning during the summer. He graduated from Winthrop H.S. in May 1961 and started smokejumper training the week after graduation. Orv made his first practice jump after six days of training. He jumped out of NCSB from 1961-65 and loved every minute of it. Orv attended Washington State University, graduating in January 1966. Following college, he entered USAF navigator training and shipped to Vietnam the following year as a C-130 navigator. Upon returning from Vietnam, he entered USAF pilot training and flew first-line fighters for the next 23 years, including tours in Italy and Tunisia. Orv married while in pilot training and is the proud father of two won-

derful daughters and one son. He retired as a Colonel from the USAF in 1992.

Following his USAF service, Orv was recruited by the Riverside County Office of Education to serve as a manager in the financial services department. After a year as manager, he was promoted to Director of Financial Services and two years later to Assistant Superintendent of the Information Technology Services Division.

Orv retired from the County Office of Education in late 1999 and started an information technology consulting business guiding large companies seeking to update their technology systems. After four years of consulting, he joined two friends in creating a new company to provide electronic document recording services to county recorders and real estate companies generating recordable documents. After 11 years as CFO and Chief of Training for this company, he finally retired in 2015.

Larry Welch (CJ-61)

"I was born in San Angelo, TX, the youngest son of a no-nonsense

West Texas rancher and electrician. I was born on the 15th day of April 1941. Tax Day.

"As an infant, I immediately got whooping cough, which I blame for my slow maturity rate as a child. I weighed less at two months than I did at birth. As a ninth grader, I was the smallest boy on the football team.

"A few years later, however, I graduated as next to the largest. Part of this was just a natural growth spurt, but part of it had to do with a broken neck I suffered as a junior in high school; afterwards, my dominant right arm dwindled to half an inch smaller than my left. My oldest

brother, Bernie, started me on lifting weights, which helped me recuperate and come back stronger.

"My family was very work oriented. My mom had a message board in her kitchen, and tacked to it was an article that said, "A child that doesn't know hard work is not educated." For my sixth birthday, I received a gift of a long-handled hoe, and all us kids—my brothers, sister, and I—sharecropped with my parents. I had to give a portion of my profit to pay for seed, tractor fuel, etc. I also had to pay my older brother for driving the tractor until I was big enough to do so on my own. For the jobs requiring less precision, I learned to drive very quickly. People would pull off the highway and take a picture of the little blonde boy diving a tractor with a seat bigger than he was. We had a good crop that year, and I opened my first bank account. At night, after we were in bed, I would hear my parents talking about how the day went. On a day that we got a lot of work done, my dad would say, "The boys made a good showing today."

"We moved to Post, TX, where my dad and his brother had a five-section ranch. Post was an oilfield town, and I always was able to find work there. Both of my brothers had preceded me, and it was just naturally assumed I'd be an excellent worker. I strived not to tarnish the Welch brothers' reputation.

"I was raised in Post, where I attended elementary, junior high, and high schools. Upon graduating from high school, I kissed my mother on the forehead, walked across the pasture to the highway, and stuck out my thumb, headed to the Northwest. I ended up in Blue River, OR, where I worked for the forest service on a fire-suppression

crew. I was made foreman of the crew. Although I was the youngest, I had worked in the oilfield and had some experience with valves, motors, maintenance, and so on.

"My brother Gary had become a smokejumper that year. Jumping was on my bucket list of things to do, along with a bunch of other adventurous jobs. My oldest brother and I started jumping the next year. The other jobs on my Boyhood Bucket List of Adventurous Jobs never seemed to pan out. I found jumping to be exciting, so I stuck with jumping.

"One jumper, **Dave Towers** (CJ-1960), who had trained with my brother, was going to be a teacher. That would leave summers free to jump, he said. That sounded good to me, so I started on the path to becoming a teacher/coach. I remember applying for a teaching job and an interviewer asking why I'd wanted to go into teaching. I did not answer that question very truthfully. After all, "So I could have my summers off to jump" was probably not the answer they were looking for.

"After high school, I went to Texas Tech for two or three semesters before deciding I wanted to be a teacher. I graduated from West Texas State University. Later, I went back to Tech for my Master's. I taught school and coached in Pampa, TX, 1965-1968; Lubbock, 1968-1972; and San Antonio, 1972-1997.

"I got out of teaching and worked for myself until I was 80. Now I pretty much just take care of my own stuff when I am able. I live on Lake Palestine in East Texas in a house I built when I was 72.

"I would not change my years of jumping for anything, since that is what I still think I am—and will be until I am no more."

Richard B. Wildman (Winthrop '61)

Dick was born August 31, 1936, in Monticello, MN. Part of a big family of 17, he attended schools in Seattle and Kirkland, WA. Though family difficulties made it impossible for him to finish high school, in later years he was able to complete his GED.

Dick enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1953 as a medical specialist. His Air Force assignments required him to spend two years in San Antonio, TX; one year in Cheyenne, WY; and one year in Narsarsuaq, Greenland, where he was named Airman of the Month in February 1956. Dick worked up the ranks and achieved Airman 1st Class prior to his honorable discharge.

After his military service, Dick worked on the Winthrop Ranger District as a fire guard. Four years later, in 1961, it was off to the NCSB, working his way from smokejumper to squadleader to loft foreman.

After 212 jumps and 14 years at NCSB, Dick was ready for a change. He took a position as a fire zone manager in Burns, OR. Four years later, he moved to the fire management office in the Malheur NF in Oregon. Dick worked his way up the fire-training ladder to qualify as an air-operations branch director on a Type 1 incident command team. In 1986, he "retired," only to continue working on Type 1 incident command teams for another ten years.

Dick and his wife, Sylvia, live in Boise, ID. Married in 1953, they have been sweethearts since junior high school. They raised three wonderful children and, in the fall of 2024, celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary.



Off The List

Remember and honor fellow jumpers with a gift to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund in their name. Hard times can fall on many of us at any time. The NSA is here to support our fellow jumpers and their families through the Good Samaritan Fund. Mail your contribution to: Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Lane, Chico, CA 95926.

Robert Eugene “Bob” Curtis (North Cascades ’70)

Bob, 76, died January 13, 2025. He was born October 11, 1949, in Omak, Washington, where he grew up and graduated from Okanogan H.S. in 1968. Bob worked for the USFS during summers and rookied at NCSB in 1970 where he jumped until 1975 ending with 108 jumps. After leaving smokejumping, Bob started a career shoeing racehorses at major racetracks in the western states. A vehicle accident in 1975 damaged both knees and ended his work as a certified Journeyman Farrier.

A close friend taught Bob the skills necessary to build all types of cabinets and he opened Curtis Custom Cabinets in 1998. The business was closed in 2017 due to illness. Bob loved to fish, hunt, ride his Harley, and ski. His sense of humor was unmatched. “Of course I’m right, I’m, Bob.”

Bernard Edward “Pat” McCauley (North Cascades ’63)

Pat died November 29, 2024. He was born on March 5, 1943, in Twisp, Washington, the sixth of eight children. Pat went to school in Twisp, lettering in sports and receiving a Certificate of Recognition for his work with the Future Farmers of America. Upon graduation, he moved to Seattle and worked for Boeing for a short time before returning to Twisp in 1963 where he was trained as a smokejumper at the NCSB.

In 1964, Pat transferred to Redmond, Oregon, and helped open the Redmond Air Center/Smokejumper Base. During his years at Redmond, Pat made notable contributions to the design of jump gear and parachutes being used at the time. On Aug. 16, 1973, he made his landmark 200th jump, joining an elite group of only three other men to reach this pinnacle at that time. After his 13-year career in Redmond, Pat moved to Bend, Oregon, in 1976 to become the Fire Control Officer in the Fort Rock District. He was later promoted to Fire Management Officer, a title he held with distinction until retirement.

Pat was raised and worked on the family ranches and continued to love that lifestyle throughout his life. He loved packing into the wilderness and was an avid hunter, teaching and encouraging many others. He jumped at NCSB 1963 and at RAC 1964-77.

Wes Langley (Missoula ’68)

Wes died March 18, 2023. He was born April 4, 1944, in Hamilton, Montana, where he grew up and graduated from Hamilton H.S. in 1962. Wes then went to Northern Montana College in Havre and graduated with a degree in education. He also served in the Navy for four years. Wes taught electronics in Havre for four years, had a Service Master franchise for three years and was a State Farm Insurance agent in Missoula for 25 years. Wes jumped at Missoula 1969-70.

William “Bill” Judson Weaver (McCall ’58)

Bill died August 24, 2024, in Vancouver, WA, at the age of 88.

He was born May 7, 1936, in Twin Falls, ID. Raised in Idaho, he grew up spending summers in Sun Valley and later attended the College of Idaho. He jumped at McCall 1966-70 and Anchorage 1972.

Bill was drafted into the Army in 1959 and served two years in Germany.

Later, he attended Oregon Health Sciences University, where he earned his PhD in pathophysiology. OHSU was also where he met his future wife, Kathleen. They would be married for some 60 years and have two daughters, Margaret and Mary.

Bill and Kathleen settled in Lake Oswego, OR, where Bill loved his job teaching at Linfield School of Nursing. He helped shape generations of nurses and health care professionals. Bill was also an instrument-rated private pilot and spent many hours flying his Cessna 182.

Robert John Lindsay (Redmond ’70)

Rob, 73, of Paisley, Oregon, died March 7, 2024. He was born March 5, 1951, in Redmond, Oregon. Rob

earned two bachelor's degrees from the University of Oregon in Psychology and Biology with a minor in Chemistry. He also achieved a Master of Science in Education from Eastern Oregon University, along with an Oregon Teacher Certificate and pursued his PhD at the Univ. Oregon. He was on a Hotshot crew in 1969 and rookied at Redmond in 1970 where he jumped one year.

Rob became a research fellow at the University of Nevada before going back to the Univ. Oregon studying ancient China and Japan. Possibly his most treasured career was as a science teacher at Paisley High school from 1979-1998. When he left teaching, he started a new adventure as an Ecologist for The Nature Conservancy. Rob retired in 2014.

Outside of work, Rob enjoyed hunting, fishing, and simply being with nature. Where sports were concerned, he loved playing basketball. Picking up games at the Paisely gym, playing 3 on 3 with family, or coaching. Animals were also prominent in his life, he cared for iguanas, snakes, tarantulas, dogs, cats, and many other creatures. He was also a licensed wild bird rehabilitator.

John Manley (Cave Junction '62)

John, 83, died February 8, 2025, due to complications of Alzheimer's. He was born on Aug. 13, 1941, at St. Joseph Hospital in Tacoma, Washington. John grew up in Tacoma and went to college at the University of Portland. In the summers of 1962-65 he worked his way through college as a smokejumper. He jumped at Cave Junction 1962-63, 65, at Redmond 1964, and Fairbanks 1969.

John was hired by Air America, where he worked as a loadmaster on multiple aircraft from 1965 to 1968 flying missions in Southeast Asia.

After the war, John arrived in Fairbanks in 1969 to continue smokejumping, back when the jumper base was located near the Fairbanks International Airport.

John loved life in Alaska and was involved with numerous businesses and enjoyed real estate developing. He started his company, JM Construction, in Fairbanks in the 1970s. In 1980 he married Lucy Manley, and they raised two children, Chuck and Yolanda Manley. John was an NSA Life Member.

Richard Kenneth "Ken" Travis (McCall '55)

Ken, 94, died February 28, 2025, in Helena, Montana. He was born on February 15, 1931, in Wasco,

Illinois, and graduated from Elgin H.S. (Illinois) in 1950. Ken was active in athletics playing on the football, basketball and track teams. After graduation he briefly worked for McGraw Electric in Elgin until he joined the Marine Corps where he served in the Korean War.

Like many other future jumpers of that time, he saw "Red Skies of Montana." Within months, Ken was on the road west and he landed a job with the USFS and eventually rookied at McCall in 1955. He also jumped out of Missoula in 1962-63. Ken never returned to live in Illinois. He loved the outdoor adventure and scenery of Montana and chose to make Montana his lifelong home state.

Taking advantage of the GI Bill, Ken graduated from Montana State (now U of MT) with a degree in teaching in 1958. He taught PE and history and coached basketball, track, cross country, gymnastics and golf teams in several high schools in western Montana, two in Washington and one in Alaska. In one of his last years of coaching his Helena High golf team won state championship in the early 1970s.

Ken loved working for himself and left the teaching profession in the mid 1970s and owned and operated an employment agency in downtown Helena. In the late 1970's Ken was asked to represent Montana small business interests working with the state Legislature. Later he started a tree pruning business, which became known as "Ken's Tree Service." As a certified Arborist, Ken worked into his 80s, still strong, climbing and lugging a saw up a big tree.

Earl F. Dodds (McCall '49)

Earl, 97, died January 28, 2025, at his home in McCall, Idaho. He was born on August 31, 1927, in Cincinnati, Ohio, and grew up in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, where his dad worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Earl was a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and came west to get a forestry degree at Utah State University on the G.I. Bill.

While in college, he worked as a McCall smoke-jumper in the summers of 1949 and 1950. Earl went on to a career with the U.S. Forest Service where he spent 26 years as the District Ranger on the Big Creek-Chamberlain Ranger District, Payette National Forest retiring from that position in April of 1984. In 1958, the Chamberlain District, Payette N.F., was combined with the Big Creek District, and Earl headed up an area of almost 800,000 acres as District Ranger. If you want in interesting read try Earl's book *Tales From The Last Of The Big Creek Rangers*.

Earl stayed in McCall after retirement to pursue his passion for the outdoor sports of skiing, hiking, backpacking and hunting. In the late 1950s and early 1960's, he had helped locate and develop the Brundage Mountain Ski Area and participated in the volunteer National Ski Patrol until his early 80's.

John Hebron Lively Jr. (Redding '57)

John, 88, died January 19, 2025. He was born in Asheville, NC, on September 4, 1936, and grew up in Tampa, FL. John graduated from NC State University in 1959 with a degree in Forest Management. He and Lucy were married on May 30, 1958, and they then moved California where John worked for the US Forest Service.

John was a member of the first smokejumper crew in Region-5 at the Redding Smokejumper Base established in 1957. He jumped the 1957-58 seasons.

The family relocated to North Carolina in 1966 where John worked as a forester across the state and lastly as Assistant Regional Forester for the NC Forest Service until his retirement in 1996. He continued his forestry work as a consultant to private forest owners for several years following.

John was Scoutmaster for BSA Troup 914 in Cullowhee for 12 years while living in Sylva. He was a member of the American Chestnut Society and a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters.

G. George Ostrom (Missoula '50)

Glenn George Ostrom was born in Missoula, MT, on July 24, 1928. He grew up in Montana's Sanders County during the heart of the Great Depression. He started a newspaper in the sixth grade and lied about his age to get a job fighting fires at the age of 15. George left Flathead County High School at the age of 17 to join the Army and served in the Signal Corps in Germany during the occupation.

George trained with the Missoula smokejumpers in 1950, eventually rising to squadleader and trainer. He jumped five years before a broken leg ended his jumping career. His passion for hiking never subsided. George hiked some 25,000 miles in and around Glacier National Park and wrote three books about his beloved mountains.

George had an illustrious journalism career. Known as "the voice of the Flathead Valley," he joined the announcing staff at KOFI radio in Kalispell, MT, in 1956. Over the next 60 years, he would also serve as the

station's co-owner, general manager, and news director. In 1974, he bought the Kalispell Weekly News and turned it into the most widely read weekly in Montana. His column for the Hungry Horse News, "Trailwatcher," won state and national awards. George was inducted into the Montana Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame in 2004.

His legacy also includes helping write portions of the Wilderness Act of 1964 with U.S. Senator Lee Metcalf, serving as Richard Widmark's stand-in on the adventure film *Red Skies of Montana*, writing a children's book when he was 90, and mastering the piano, trumpet, guitar, ukulele, accordion, and trombone.

George married Iris Ann Wilhelm in Kalispell in 1957. Together they had four children. He considered his family his greatest accomplishment.

"What I'm proudest of is my family," Ostrom once said. "That's the thing that means the most to me."

He passed away on January 1, 2025, at the age of 96.

Francis Michael "Frank" Guilfoyle (Missoula '54)

Dr. Frank Guilfoyle, 90, died January 7, 2025. He was born October 7, 1934. Frank was a proud alumnus of Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx, New York, where he excelled in track. He continued his education at Fordham University, spending his summers working as a smokejumper for the USFS. After earning his degree from Fordham, Frank attended New York University Medical School, where he obtained his medical doctorate. Following his graduation, he served in the United States Army, stationed in New York, El Paso, and Valley Forge, and was honorably discharged at the rank of Captain.

After his military service, Frank settled in Roanoke, VA, where he became a founding partner at Physicians to Children. His dedication to medicine was unwavering; even after retiring from the practice, he returned to work as the sole pediatrician at New Horizons Health. Frank served his community for over 60 years as a pediatrician.

While medicine was his true passion, Frank had a variety of interests outside of his profession. He loved sailing at Smith Mountain Lake and Chesapeake Bay, and he had an impressive collection of model trains. Frank also pursued flying, earning his pilot's license, and enjoyed road biking, participating in numerous charity rides. His time as a smoke jumper fostered a

deep appreciation for the outdoors, leading him to hike sections of the Appalachian Trail. Frank jumped at Missoula 1954-56

Phillip D. Baiamonte (Missoula '50)

Phil, 93, died January 5, 2025, in Albuquerque, NM. He was born October 1, 1931, in Monticello, New Mexico. His father was a teacher in a one-room school at the time. He graduated from Albuquerque H.S. in 1949, the University of New Mexico in 1953 and the University of Colorado Law School in 1956. While at the University of New Mexico, Phil jumped two seasons getting two fire jumps in 1950 and seven during the 1951 season.

Phil entered the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant and served with the 3rd Armored Division in Germany until his discharge in 1959. He was admitted to practice law in Colorado and New Mexico and was appointed State District Judge for the State of New Mexico where he served 1974-84. Phil was married for 57 years until the death of his wife, Pat, and they had four sons.

Statement from five years ago: "I'm presently 88 years old and my hobby is to drive my Harley Davidson Road King all over North America and Canada." Phil finally gave up his Harley at 90 years of age and he had cover 926,000 miles at that time.

Kenton Dean Wohl (Missoula '67)

Kent died November 16, 2024, at the age of 79. He was born in Emmetsburg, IA, where he learned small-town values and made lifelong friends. He received a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Montana and a master's degree from the University of Alaska in Anchorage. During his college years, he jumped out of Missoula (1967-69), executing 52 jumps overall.

Kent first worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District. It was this post that first brought him to Alaska, where he would spend the rest of his 38-year federal career. He spent the bulk of that time working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As a FWS official, Kent was involved in management programs for marine birds and mammals. He served as supervisory wildlife biologist and regional nongame migratory bird coordinator, directing a complex statewide program focused on marine and coastal birds. During the Exxon-Valdez oil spill event in 1989, Kent directed the FWS's involvement in shorebird and seabird restoration studies. In later years, he directed the FWS's

involvement in several international migratory bird programs and initiatives. He traveled throughout the circumpolar north and to numerous other international destinations as part of his work.

Over the years, Kent mentored many young biologists, grad students and volunteers and was always generous with his knowledge and advice.

Kent's other interests included a passion for boating, especially in Prince William Sound, AK. He achieved his Coast Guard "captain's license"

and owned and/or operated several vessels including: a 32-foot FV Woolly Bare to harvest shrimp and halibut; a 42-foot MV Mutineer, used for sightseeing, scuba-diving, fishing, and hunting charters; and a 45-foot MV Privateer, a 45-foot pilothouse trawler. Kent met his wife of 48 years, Priscilla, at a scuba diving lesson in Anchorage.

Joe Nicol (Missoula '80)

Joe passed away January 5, 2025, at his home in Hamilton, MT, after losing his battle with cancer. He was born August 4, 1957, in Hamilton, the son of Bob (MSO-52) and Arlene Nicol. Joe graduated from Marana High School in Tucson, AZ.

He married Lynda Smith, and together they had four children. Later, Joe married Deb Chambers. They had one child.

Joe jumped at Missoula (1980-81) and McCall (1982-83). No stranger to the smokejumper world, he grew up with a father who was a jumper and a pilot. Whenever possible, he would hang out at the "standby shacks" in Silver City and McCall. He was there at plenty of after-work social activities where the guys would have a beer or three and tell those "and by God, fellas, THAT'S THE TRUTH!" stories.

After his jumping years, Joe worked as an industrial painter and then as a welder for more than 30 years. He was a jack-of-all-trades and a master of mischief.

Robert M. Ruiz (Missoula '60)

Bob died October 14, 2024. He jumped at Missoula 1960-61, 64-66 and at Grangeville 1962-63. Bob was a proud native of Silver City, New Mexico, deeply influenced by its rich heritage, including Hispanic culture, cowboys, ranching, and mining. He was an All-American athlete, and a beloved teacher and coach in football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, and gymnastics. As an athletic director and official, he was highly regarded in baseball, fast-pitch softball, basketball,

football, and wrestling. Most importantly, Bob was an inspiration and mentor to hundreds of young people.

After being named a High School All-American in football, he was personally recruited by Marv Levy (later head coach of the Super Bowl Buffalo Bills,) to play at the University of New Mexico. He attended UNM for two years before finishing his degree at Western New Mexico University.

Bob taught and coached at Silver City High School and Moriarty High School in New Mexico, racking up a remarkable number of records while leading his football teams to the state championship every year and winning several times.

In 1978, he moved to Priest River to teach at Priest River Lamanna High School, where he successfully taught business courses, and coached football.

Bob was always eager to help in any way possible. He bought athletic shoes for those who couldn't afford them, drove students to medical appointments, and arranged free skiing and swimming for them. He inspired thousands of people, young and old, by counseling them in life skills, consoling them through their tragedies and disappointments, and celebrating their successes.

After retiring as a coach, Bob redirected his athletic passions to officiating in basketball, baseball, and football. He eventually focused his efforts on women's fast-pitch softball, umpiring seven World Series in the East Coast, Midwest, and Southwest. Along the way, he won several Umpire of the Year awards and was inducted into the Umpires' Hall of Fame.

Following his retirement from teaching, coaching, and officiating, Bob was further honored by being inducted into the Western New Mexico University Hall of Fame.

Joseph Allan Biesbrock (Missoula '62)

Joe, 88, died December 4, 2024, in Maineville, Ohio. He was born May 12, 1936, in Chicago, Illinois. Joe was the first in his family to graduate from high school, college, and graduate school. He attended Sioux City Central High School in Iowa, earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from Utah State, and completed a PhD in Plant Pathology at the University of Georgia.

Joe served as a Professor in the Biology Department at the University of North Georgia in Dahlonega from 1973 until his retirement in 2000. His passion for the outdoors was evident in his work as a forest ranger, smokejumper, and park ranger in the North Cascades

National Park. He cherished hiking the Appalachian Trail and canoeing the rivers of North Georgia. Joe jumped at Missoula during the 1962 season.

Some comments from personal friend Art Mindlin: "Joe was a bit of a recluse/hermit and was known amongst those that worked with him as the "Phantom" of Ross Lake where he held seasonal National Park Service positions at North Cascades for many years. He lived a good number of his NPS seasons on a log float built one-room ranger cabin 10 miles from all other personnel on Ross Lake that was only accessible by boat or a 20-mile hike.

"Joe was a hard worker who keeping up with kept anyone around him at his fast pace. He loved hiking and river running along with doing trail work and was heavily involved with the local area trail and Appalachian Trail communities. Joe lived for many years about 1/2 mile from the hostel that many utilize when starting off for their AT through hikes to Maine. Very long legged, lanky tall, he also had a walking pace, even with a full pack, that was roughly 4 MPH + and would leave most of us in the dust. And did so even into his early 80's."

George Russell Lodge (Missoula '47)

George died December 1, 1977, in Chico, California, at just 52 from lung cancer. He was born January 5, 1925, and raised in Columbiana County, Ohio. He started college at Purdue in ROTC, before joining the US Army Signal Corps and later transferring to the US Army Air Corps. Upon discharge, George enrolled in Forestry School at the University of Michigan and jumped the summer of 1947 in Missoula. His first career was as a Farm Forester in Missouri and Ohio. George then spent the majority of his professional life in the chain saw industry, much of that in the Northwest which he deeply loved. His later relationship with the Forest Service included supplying chain saws for firefighting efforts.

George married Ethel Gray from Detroit in 1948. Before his untimely death they raised four children together. (see A Smokejumper's Western Legacy in Issue No. 128, January 2025)

Clifford Lee Barnett Jr. (Missoula '65)

Cliff, 80, died July 19, 2023, in Wilsonville, Oregon. He was born August 22, 1942, in Oakland, CA. Cliff received his bachelor's and master's degrees from San Francisco State University. He served in the US Army with the 11th Infantry Brigade before serving

in Vietnam. Cliff's proudest accomplishments as a young man were his time as a Missoula Smokejumper in 1963 and winning the Army Pacific Basketball Championships with his post team in Hawaii.

Cliff spent his professional career in sales, most with Permacel/Nitto-Denko and, at the end of his career, in the Aerospace industry. After getting married, Cliff and his wife, Teena, settled in Seattle, Washington. They later moved to Portland, Oregon.

Leo Wolfe (Missoula '46)

Leo died October 28, 2018, two days after his 97th birthday. He was born October 26, 1921, in Montevideo, MN. Leo served in the Civilian Conservation Corps prior to enlisting in the U.S. Army in World War II. He served in the South Pacific in a small arms-repair unit.

After discharge from the Army, Leo attended the University of Montana, earning a bachelor's degree in forestry. While in college, he spent two summers as a smokejumper out of Missoula. Leo jumped the 1946-47 seasons.

While in college, he met Nola Kearney, whom he married June 15, 1948. The couple first lived in Glacier N.P., where Leo worked packing in supplies to lookouts. His career proper began at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, where he was engaged in land operations and economic development. The job would involve several relocations over the years. He and Nola lived in Montana and the Dakotas before moving in 1952 to Zuni, NM. His work then took them to Dulce, NM; Coulee Dam, WA; and Santa Fe, NM. Leo retired in 1977.

No one packed more activity into retirement than Leo, who was active in many clubs, teams, and groups, from archaeology to bicycling. He held an ardent interest in firearms and was an expert marksman. He was also a gifted woodworker and spent part of every day in his workshop for nearly three decades. He was an avid hiker, backpacker, and cross-country skier. Bicycling was just more than a hobby to Leo. He rode 50 or more miles per day, several days a week, for nearly 40 years. In 1974, he completed a bicycle ride over the Old Santa Fe Trail to Lawrence, KS, a seven-day ride of just over 700 miles. And in 1985, he rode 1,400 miles in 14 days from Santa Fe to Montevideo to attend his high school reunion.

Robert "Bob" Hensleigh (Missoula '67)

Bob died on December 21, 2019. He was born January 8, 1946, in Jordan, MT. Bob earned money for

school as a smokejumper during the 1967 season and in 1969 graduated from Carroll College in Helena, MT, with a degree in medical technology. After a stint in the Navy, he moved with his wife, Judyth, to Great Falls, MT. They had a daughter, Brenda, but later divorced.

Bob worked in the medical lab at Columbus Hospital in Great Falls for more than four decades, rising in the ranks and training countless other technicians.

Bob was a kind of Renaissance man. He was a voracious reader who was also an accomplished amateur nature photographer. He roasted his own coffee beans, raised his own tomatoes and other garden vegetables, and was also a practiced birdwatcher, woodworker, and skeet-shooter.

Willis "Bill" Rude (Missoula '49)

Bill died at the age of 98 on November 27, 2023. He was born on August 7, 1925, in East Jordan, MI, and served in World War II in the Army's 3rd Infantry Division. Bill attended the University of Michigan, graduating from its school of forestry and conservation. He jumped out of Missoula 1949-50. In 1949, he had seven training jumps and five fire jumps. In 1950, he had two practice jumps and one fire jump.

On February 11, 1953, he married Dolores "Dolly" Cayo. Over seven decades of marriage, they had two daughters, Dawn and Lynne, and two sons, Bruce and Douglas, and enjoyed many family activities. Bill was an avid skier (both on snow and water) and tennis player.

Bill worked at a pulp and paper company in Muskegon, MI, for 35 years, retiring in 1985. He was an active member of the Michigan Forest Association.

John Jacob Shoal (Missoula '55)

John died May 16, 2021, at the age of 90. He was born in Kenmare, ND, on July 21, 1930. The second of four children, he graduated from Plentywood High School in Montana in 1947.

He attended Montana State University-Northern before enlisting in the Air Force in 1951. He served in the 146th Supply Squadron in Valdosta, GA, and Victorville, CA. He was honorably discharged as Airman First Class in 1952, whereupon he resumed his studies—this time at Montana State University in Bozeman. He completed his studies at Kansas State University, earning a bachelor's degree in math in 1953.

John worked as a smokejumper at Missoula 1954-55, after which he moved back East, first to Hoboken, NJ, and then to various locations in New York City.

Later, he worked as a ranger in Glacier National Park (1964-66).

John met Marilyn Lou Armstrong in 1962 and married her five years later in Columbia Falls, MT, on January 14, 1967. They moved to Seattle after their marriage, where they both worked for Boeing as aerospace engineers. In later life, John worked as a surveyor and tax appraiser for Flathead County, MT.

John was a wonderful father, who challenged his kids with math problems at the dinner table and taught them how to build a campfire “with just one match.” Hobbies he enjoyed included chess, billiards, poker, and sailing on Flathead Lake in Montana. He also had a lifelong love of flying, having completed his civilian pilot training in 1952.

Glen “Rip” Smith Jr. (Idaho City ’54)

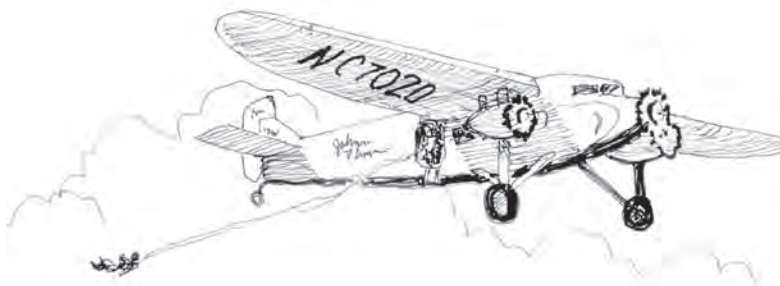
Rip died at his Kuna home on January 2, 2020. He was born September 3, 1935, in Jackson Hole, WY, where he lived until his early teens. As a child, he thrived on the outdoors, roaming the nearby mountains and developing a deep love for wild spaces.

After graduating from Boise High School, he briefly attended Boise Junior College before becoming a smokejumper (1954-55) at Idaho City.

Rip settled in Boise, marrying his high-school sweetheart, Lois, and taking a job as an entry-level land surveyor with the state highway department. He was soon offered a chance to join a private surveying firm called McCarter and Tuller. Rip worked as the firm’s chief surveyor for more than 40 years, retiring in 2002. During that time, he traveled and mapped remote areas across the entire state.

In 1966, Rip and Lois moved to Kuna, ID. They traveled extensively throughout the U.S.

After Lois’s passing in 2009, Glen remained at their home, spending time with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He also spent many hours updating and modifying boats and vehicles to accommodate the changing physical needs of aging friends. He led by example and passed on his love of the outdoors, devotion to family, and the belief that nothing is impossible if you have enough duct tape and baling wire.



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Mail your contributions to:
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PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO NSA. Put donation info on MEMO line.

NATIONAL REUNION

Commemorating 85 Years of Smokejumping

June 20-22, 2025, University of Montana, Missoula



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Pre Reunion

- Thursday, June 19: Saw certification (for NSA Trails Crew volunteers who need recertification)

Reunion

- Friday, June 20: Check in, Vendor Booths, Barbecue

- Saturday, June 21: Activities during the day, Bar & Banquet in the evening

- Sunday, June 22: Memorial, U.M.

Post Reunion

- Monday, June 23: Saw certification (for NSA Trails Crew volunteers who need recertification)

For detailed information about the program, go to
www.smokejumpers.com

!! IMPORTANT REGISTRATION ANNOUNCEMENT !!

REGISTRATION WILL BE ONLINE:

1. Go to the following link: **<https://www.xcdsystem.com/smokejumpers/attendee/index.cfm?ID=MhBiJhC>**
2. Create new profile, then update, continue to add registration items to your cart, and submit. If you are a smokejumper pilot and have not been given a registration code, contact **Bob McKean (mckeanbob@gmail.com)**.

FOR THOSE WHO MAY HAVE TROUBLE REGISTERING ONLINE:

Please consider working with a family member or someone you trust who will assist you. If you need assistance from the website registrar, call the following phone number and ask for **Jessica (406-243-4113)**.

Hotels

The NSA has obtained reduced rates at two hotels.
See the NSA website for more details.

www.smokejumpers.com