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SMOKEJUMPER

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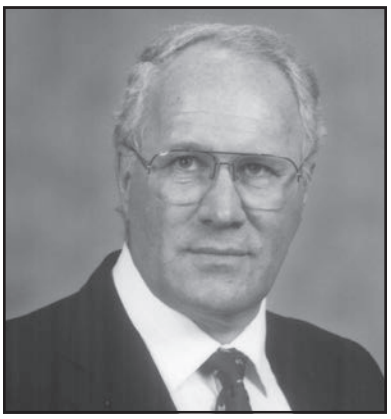
Message from the President



by Jim Cherry
(Missoula '57)
President

This is the quiet season, generally speaking. As I write this article in January we've just been through and withstood the "polar express" that brought much of the country the coldest weather seen in the past couple of decades.

The days are lengthening and spring is on the way. By the time you read this in April we will no longer be in the quiet time. Gardens will be underway with preparation and planting, bees will be flying, bird migration will be mostly completed … and a lot of the snowpack will be melting down.

There has been a strong trend in the past several decades for spring to arrive earlier, and with it comes an earlier start to the fire season. Not only is the fire season earlier – it is running longer into the fall as well. If you live in that urban/wildland interface, I hope that you're taking some time to fire-wise your home and surrounding area and educating your friends and neighbors about the importance of doing so.

It's too late if you can already see the smoke and the wind is blowing your direction. It's just a word to the wise to "make hay while the sun shines."

I've spoken by phone with base managers **Bobby Sutton** (MSO-91) and **Bill Cramer** (NIFC-90), who are responsible for selecting candidates from the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to receive the 2013 **Al Dunton** (FBX-67) Smokejumper Leadership Award. The selection committee for the Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership award is proud to announce selections for the 2013 season:

- **Hans Ohme** (MYC-01), McCall Smokejumpers, was selected from the USFS on the basis of his accomplishments as a spotter and with the chainsaw and medical programs in McCall. Hans' nomination noted strong achievements in both programs due to his focus on safety, teamwork, innovation, work ethic and commitment to the programs.

- **Mark Urban** (NIFC-03), Great Basin Smokejumpers, was selected to receive the award posthumously on the BLM side. Mark's accomplishments as a spotter, lead rookie trainer, IMT member, and duty officer were cited in his nomination in conjunction with his continual pursuit of perfection, earned respect from subordinates, mentoring abilities, and the motivation he provided at all levels through his actions.

Watch for more complete write-ups on the NSA web page and in the next Smokejumper Magazine. In the meantime, you should be aware of the criteria and the

nomination process as we look forward to nominations for 2014:

The Al Dunton SMJ Leadership Award is presented annually to one BLM and one USFS smokejumper who each goes beyond the requirements of the job and demonstrate excellence in leadership in one or more of the Wildland Fire Leadership Principles:

- *Proficient in his/her job, both technically and as a leader;*
- *Makes sound and timely decisions;*
- *Ensures tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished;*
- *Develops subordinates for the future;*
- *Knows his/her subordinates and looks out for their well-being;*
- *Keeps his/her subordinates informed;*
- *Builds the team;*
- *Employs his/her subordinates in accordance with their capabilities;*
- *Knows him/herself and seeks improvement;*
- *Seeks responsibility and accepts responsibility for all actions; and*
- *Sets the example.*

Nominations can be made by any current or former smokejumper and should include a narrative not to exceed two pages, describing how the individual went beyond duty and exemplified excellence in one or more of the Wildland Fire Leadership Principles during the preceding fire season. Nominations are due by Nov. 30 and can be submitted electronically through any of the smokejumper base managers.

We were recently surprised when a grant of $5,000 came to the NSA from Vanguard Charitable. The requirement of the grant is that it be used for NSA scholarships and for the Good Samaritan Fund.

The grant was recommended by an account advisor who has chosen to remain anonymous. We thank you, whoever you are, for remembering the NSA, our mission and our work in this manner.

In making reference to the NSA scholarship fund, it has continued to grow so that we now have a total of seven scholarships that will be available this year. Information about the various scholarships and the procedure for making application can be found on the NSA webpage at *www.smokejumpers.com.*

As you are checking that out, take the time to look at the continuing improvements that have come to the site. You will once again find a complete listing of all those who have been killed in the line of service.

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***Smokejumper** base abbreviations:*

Anchorage ANC	**Grangeville** GAC	**Redding** RDD
Boise NIFC	**Idaho City** IDC	**Redmond** RAC
Cave Junction CJ	**La Grande** LGD	**West Yellowstone** WYS
Fairbanks FBX	**McCall** MYC	**Whitehorse Yukon** YXY
Fort St. John YXJ	**Missoula** MSO	**Winthrop** NCSB

Are You Going to Be "Temporarily Away"?

As more of our membership moves with the weather, we are getting an ever-increasing number of *Smokejumper* magazines returned by the post office marked "Temporarily Away." Since we mail the magazine via bulk mail, it is not forwarded, and we are charged first class postage for its return.

If you are leaving your mailing address during the months of March, June, September and/or December, please let Chuck Sheley know. He can hold your magazine and mail it upon your return OR mail it to your seasonal address. Please help us save this triple mailing expense. Chuck's contact information is in the information box on this page.

Another option is join our electronic mailing list.

Is The Smokejumper Physical Fitness Test Eliminating Good Women Firefighters from Smokejumping?

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

There are conclusions that a person can come to by using everyday life experiences. No lab experiments or scientific documentation needed. This is called a common sense conclusion. The current pull-up requirement for women smokejumpers is, in my opinion, not based on common sense.

There is no question that in this day and age women should be part of the workforce, including smokejumping. In July 1936 Russian Zoya Trukhina became the first woman smokejumper years before we had smokejumpers in the U.S. (Smokejumper Oct. 2009).

During the last 17 years of my 32-year firefighting career, I ran the Type II Crew Program on the Mendocino N.F. We put out 10-13 crews a summer and trained over 3,500 rookie wildland firefighters during that time. We drew heavily on Chico State and University of California, Davis students, as well as some of the best graduating seniors in the Chico area.

At a time when the USFS was strapped with the Consent Decree, we had 33 percent women and minorities in the program and produced some outstanding firefighters. Twenty-three went on to become smokejumpers and some are still at it today. One became a Smokejumper Base Manager. I mention this to emphasize the quality of people we were able to put into the field.

I found out that, as in teaching, if you raise the bar the students will respond accordingly. We emphasized physical conditioning and increased the amount of field training. Many said that their weekend of field training was as hard as any fire they went on. It was just shorter.

There was no way that I could put people into the field with experience that would match a Hotshot crew. But, I could put people into the field that could compete with a Hotshot crew physically.

Two of the women from the Type II program went on to smokejumping and one is still on the job 21 years later. I had hoped to have one of them become the first woman smokejumper but I missed that by a few years.

Looking at the number of female firefighters that I have trained, I have always felt that smokejumpers are missing the boat with their physical fitness requirements. It is almost physically impossible for an extremely-fit female over 160 pounds to become a smokejumper.

Now, you're going to wonder where I'm coming from. Many of my best females, out of the hundreds that I trained, were over 160 pounds. They could swing a wicked Pulaski, which, I've always felt, is the #1 firefighting tool on the line. They could also work the chain saw or swamp for the sawyer.

What specific item would be the one that would keep them from becoming smokejumpers had they wanted to pursue that job? It is the seven pull-up requirement.

With my background in Physical Education (36 years) and coaching (52 years), I've worked with many elite female athletes. One teacher I worked with was the *National High School record holder* in the javelin and was on many teams representing the U.S. in international competition. She was very strong but could only do three pull-ups. Why? We'll get to that later.

Pull-up vs Chin-ups

It is time that I make sure you understand that there is a difference between pull-ups and chin-ups. Most people don't realize that pull ups and chin-ups are not the same thing.

Pull-ups have the palms facing away from the person and chin-ups have the palms facing the person. Chin-ups use the biceps in a stronger line of pull so most people can do more chin-ups than pull-ups. For the lower number range individuals, I've found that a person who can do three-five pull-ups can do six-eight chin-ups.

I've seen various film clips of smokejumper rookie testing and have noticed that, in some cases, they are doing chin-ups and not pull-ups. Yet the fitness standard calls for pull-ups. There is a big difference.

The next time you are in the gym, try the pull-up grip and the chin-up grip on the lat pull-down machine and see the difference.

Proper starting pull-up position (left) with arms in full extension. Proper crossed-leg position (right) for pull-ups. (Courtesy CanStockPhoto)

If the tester does not know the difference between the two items or does not care or intentionally modifies the requirement, how important is the pull-up requirement for smokejumpers? Do they make the rookie stop with complete arm extension after each pull-up or do they let them "bounce" into the next repetition?

In testing middle school girls, we knew that a single pull-up put them in the 99th percentile. Boys who did five pull-ups were at that same level. Yes, there is a large difference between the *potential* physical strength and performance between male and female.

Upper Body Strength in Men vs Women

Women's *lower body* strength tends to be more closely matched to men's, while their *upper body* strength is often just half that of men's upper body strength. Various studies have shown female upper body strength at 52% of that of a male.

Do men really have more upper body strength than women? Read from an article by Cristen Conger (internet):

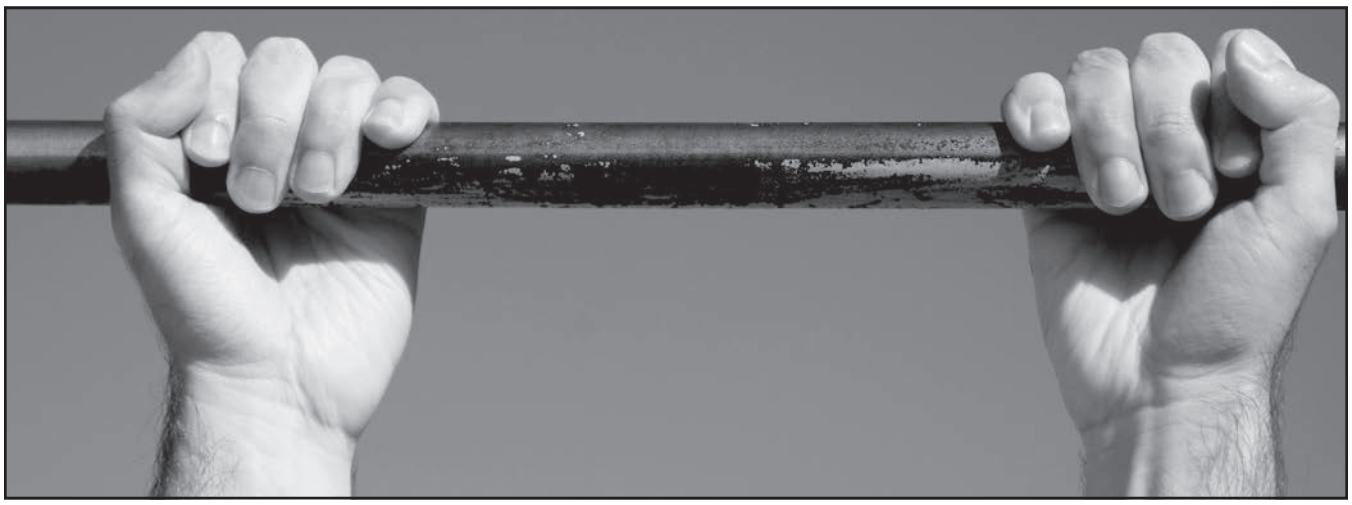
"For a glaring manifestation of biological sex differences in strength, look no farther than the pull-up. The process of hoisting oneself eye-level with an overhead bar is no big deal to plenty of men. Not so, however, for women. In fact, the Marine Corps require male recruits to complete at least three chin-ups in order to pass their physical entrance exam, while female hopefuls aren't asked to execute a single one [source: Parker-Pope]. That isn't letting military women off the hook easily; the female body simply isn't optimally built—what with weight distribution and less testosterone-fueled muscle mass—for that exercise."

Why the Difference in Upper Body Strength Between The Sexes?

Hormones play a role in the development of muscle and strength. Women have a tenth of the testosterone of men. Men, naturally average more lean body mass and less fat than women, and typically have a wider shoulder frame which helps provide a *leverage advantage.*

Studies have shown what we know from common every day living: the female does not possess the amount or *even the potential* to have the amount of muscle as a male.

I took one of the most fit women at our local gym



Chin-up grip—this is not a pull-up. (Courtesy CanStockPhoto)

and tested her pull-ups. She could bench 250 pounds but could only do two pull-ups. She was extremely well muscled, but a lot of that muscle was in the hips and legs. I'm sure she was squatting a tremendous amount of weight during her workouts.

Two Elite World-Class Women Athletes

Jennifer LaBaw

Recently I was talking to **Wes Brown** (CJ-66). He mentioned that his niece, Jennifer LaBaw, was one of the top CrossFit athletes in the nation, placing 6th in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

CrossFit

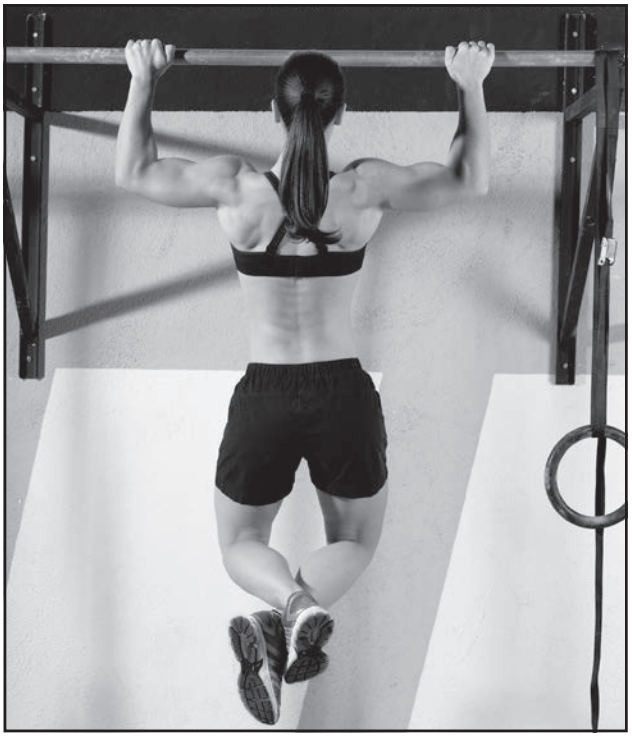
CrossFit is a strength and conditioning program that has become very popular in the last ten years. Many law enforcement agencies, military special operations units, fire departments and elite athletes are using the program. It is a high intensity fitness program that constantly changes the mix of exercises between aerobic, body weight and weight lifting. One of its key goals is improving fitness across broad time periods. The program uses similar routines for the elite athlete and grandparents, the difference being load and intensity.

I sat down for 20 minutes with Jenny at the gym where she is a professional trainer. At age 32 and 150 pounds, she can do 12 pull-ups. And, yes, she knew the difference between pull-ups and chin-ups. As we talked, Jenny said she knew many women who could do seven pull-ups. However, as we talked and I threw in 160 pounds and the age factor (five years of fire experience even before applying to smokejumpers), it became evident that we were talking about two different things. She was talking about elite, highly-trained athletes and I'm talking about experienced, female firefighters.

Emily Azevedo

A few years back, I was fortunate enough to coach Emily Azevedo in the hurdles at Chico High School. She later went on to U.C. Davis where she set the school women's hurdle record.

Since then she has become one of the top bobsledders in the world, winning a silver and a bronze in the *World Championships*. Recently, she and her pilot won the silver medal at the World Cup. I use these accomplishments to show that we're talking about a very elite athlete who trains year round under the auspices of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Emily is the brakeman,



Proper pull-up grip with legs-crossed position. (Courtesy CanStockPhoto)

which requires a tremendous amount of speed and leg strength. Size also helps, as she is 5'8", 175 pounds.

During her collegiate years, she could do five pull-ups. Training as an Olympic athlete, she is up to 10 pull-ups. However, please realize that she is training year-round and competing at world-class levels.

Conclusion

Are pull-ups so important to the job of smokejumping that large pools of good women firefighters are eliminated? Is the ability to carry a heavy pack just as important or more important than pull-ups in doing the job of smokejumping/firefighting? What is the basis for determining that seven pull-ups is a correct measurement for being a smokejumper?

I would say that being able to pack 110 pounds of gear off a fire is a very important part of the job. Packouts might not be as big a part of the job today as in the past but, in my opinion, lower body strength (hip and leg) is key to doing the job on the fireline. Women are able to get a lot closer to men in lower body strength than upper body strength.

With all the changes in strength and conditioning in the last 20 years, is the smokejumper physical fitness test *outdated and in need of revamping*? Would we get a better evaluation of a rookie's fitness level by incorporating a measurement of weight to strength ratio (Repetition Max divided by body weight) into the test? Would the smokejumper program benefit if the train-

ers at the bases were educated to run a CrossFit type program?

An investment in a program where there is an emphasis on "core fitness" and increasing strength from the core out, in my opinion, would reap dividends in fewer injuries and more strength and endurance on the job.

That said, I think we should put more emphasis on lower body and core strength in the smokejumper physical fitness test. Allow the woman over 150 pounds to do three pull-ups and see how she does packing 110 pounds or operating a chain saw. The smokejumper organization will not get women who are less qualified if they change the pull-up requirement. By allowing bigger women into the program, they will actually open the door for stronger female firefighters to get into the game.

Mark T. Urban: BLM Smokejumper's Legacy Will Live On

BLM Daily

On a cloudless, crisp, Friday autumn afternoon, almost 800 people gathered on a lawn at the National Interagency Fire Center and bid good-bye to one of BLM's best.

A DeHaviland Twin Otter banked to the west and flew over the assembly, dropping a dozen pink, white, blue and yellow crepe streamers. In the world of smokejumpers, streamers are tossed from an aircraft to help determine wind drift and the best place to land.

On that October afternoon, the streamers signaled the beginning of a memorial service for **Mark T. Urban** (NIFC-03), 40, a BLM smokejumper who died September 27, 2013, when his parachute did not properly deploy near the small community of Prairie, about 45 miles east of Boise.

Urban was described by friends and colleagues as a man of many passions and talents – an avid bicyclist, river runner, world traveler, skier, surfer, musician and devoted husband, who was well liked and highly respected by other smokejumpers. He was also remembered as a quiet person who "simply got things done," said **Phil Lind** (NIFC-01), a fellow smokejumper who was the master of ceremony for the service. "Mark exemplified what it means to be a good man."

Urban was in his eleventh season as a BLM Boise smokejumper. He was recognized within the BLM smokejumper community as an expert parachutist, a skill that led him to train and mentor new smokejumpers. He was instrumental in establishing the BLM Boise smokejumper rookie training.

Eric Walker (NIFC-95), BLM's Boise smokejumper operations manager, described him as an "incredibly bright, extremely fit" smokejumper who helped to establish the BLM rookie smokejumper training program. "He was generally quiet, but when he spoke, we all listened," Walker said. "He set a standard for all smokejumpers."

Derrek Hartman (RDD-98) was Urban's supervisor. He said, "Mark Urban is that employee who is a rare find. You have to look for them, seek them out, they don't care for the spotlight, and they don't want credit, recognition or even the pay. You want that person. We need that person."

Hartman, the father of three sons, paid Urban what may be the ultimate tribute: "As a parent, like most other parents, I hope and wish for a great many things for my children: simple things like doing nice things for Mom, being considerate and respectful of others, doing well in school … or, as they get older, having great success in education, medicine, athletics or business … But even more important than that, are the even grander ambitions I have for my sons, those of simply obtaining and exemplifying the qualities and traits of Mark Urban."

A serious accident investigation team was assembled soon after Urban's death and began the preliminary stages of determining what happened during the jump. The team's report will be released toward the end of the year or early in 2014.

His wife, Rebecca; his parents, Thomas and Pamela Urban; and a sister, Sara Quaglia, survive Urban.

The streamers falling from the Twin Otter not only marked the beginning of a solemn remembrance at NIFC, they also represented the start of a time to reflect on a joyful life lived well and the legacy that Mark Urban leaves to all smokejumpers.

"Mark Urban will be around the Great Basin smokejumper program for generations to come," Hartman said. "When I think of Mark's smile, I think of the quote, 'Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.' "

Smokejumper's Legacy To Last Years

by Rocky Barber

(Copyright 2013, the Idaho Statesman, Boise.)

Smokejumper **Mark T. Urban** (NIFC-03) was remembered Friday as a quiet mentor, someone who carried out his job efficiently without seeking credit.

More than 600 people attended a memorial service for Urban at the National Interagency Fire Center, where he was based. Urban, 40, died Sept. 27 near Prairie, Idaho, during an annual proficiency jump when his parachute did not open properly.

Fire trucks circled the lawn in front of the Jack Wilson Building, which was filled with Urban's family and friends and members of the wildland and urban firefighting community. Long-bearded men in flannel shirts and Carhartt pants stood next to Boise firefighters in crisp, navy blue uniforms.

Federal workers on furlough wiped their eyes as Urban's friends and co-workers told stories of him running rivers, skiing mountains, playing the mandolin and drinking beer.

Fellow smokejumper **Phil Lind** (NIFC-01), who served as master of ceremonies, described Urban as a man of "tremendous discipline" who "simply got things done." "Mark exemplified what it means to be a good man," Lind said. Urban was the second Idaho firefighter to die this year, and the 33rd nationwide, the most since 1994. He was one of 75 Bureau of Land Management Great Basin Smokejumpers who flew out of Boise to fires in Idaho, Utah, Nevada and beyond. He's survived by his wife, Rebecca, his parents, Thomas and Pamela Urban, and his sister, Sara Quaglia.

The ceremony began with a flyover by a de Havilland Canada DHC-3 Otter, one of the planes that drop smokejumpers. After it circled NIFC, the plane dropped pink, yellow and blue streamers that floated to the ground with the shushing sound of a parachute landing.

An interagency honor guard marched in to the bagpipes and drums of the Boise Fire Department, which played "America the Beautiful" and "God Bless America."

"Unlike many of the aggressive, type-A personalities that are attracted to firefighting, Urban was reserved," said his immediate supervisor **Derreck Hartman** (RDD-98). Urban trained rookie smokejumpers and also helped choose new crewmembers.

"In many ways, Mark Urban will be around the Great Basin Smokejumpers for years to come," Hartman said.

In his trainer role, and as a spotter for the crew when in the heat of a wildfire, Urban "made sure everyone was safe," said fellow smokejumper **Steve Baker** (NCSB-88).

Baker compared Urban to other American heroes who had died. And he told Urban's family that the firefighting community would be there for them like it was for his family when his brother, an emergency medical technician, died in a crash six years ago.

"Our family survived because of this family," he said, stretching his arms to include the crowd.

The Men That Don't Fit In

by Robert William Service

There's a race of men that don't fit in,
A race that can't stay still;
So they break the hearts of kith and kin,
And they roam the world at will.
They range the field and they rove the flood,
And they climb the mountain's crest;
Theirs is the curse of the gypsy blood,
And they don't know how to rest.

If they just went straight they might go far;
They are strong and brave and true;
But they're always tired of the things that are,
And they want the strange and new.
They say: "Could I find my proper groove,
What a deep mark I would make!"
So they chop and change, and each fresh move
is only a fresh mistake.

And each forgets, as he strips and runs
With a brilliant, fitful pace,
It's the stead, quiet, plodding ones
Who win the lifelong race.
And each forgets that his youth has fled,
Forgets that his prime is past,
Till he stands one day, with a hope that's dead,
In the glare of the truth at last.

He has failed, he has failed; he has missed his chance;
He has just done things by half.
Life's been a jolly good joke to him,
And now is the time to laugh.
Ha, ha! He is one of the Legion Lost;
He was never meant to win;
He's a rolling stone, and it's bred in the bone;
He's a man who won't fit in.

Fear

by Eric Hagen (McCall '83)

I was more than mildly nauseated, seeing things through a green tint and my equilibrium was screaming in my ears. Trees were sticking out of the ground at an odd angle. I wanted to turn around and look squarely out the window, almost directly behind me, but I just couldn't seem to do it.

My feet were leaden; my legs solid, immovable beams of steel. Concentrating all my strength of will, it was all I could do to lean forward enough to rest elbows on knees. Fighting against gravity, I finally cranked my head around enough to peripherally see the ground. The trees were still growing too close to the horizontal. My gut churned, but my throat did double-duty. Too tight to swallow the spit I couldn't find, it was also too tight to allow any bile to pass. My breath came in shallow, subconscious heaves.

Several men were gathered around the open door at the rear, pointing and shouting. The wind sucked their words away. They appeared as shadowy figures of little substance, like characters in a cheap science-fiction film.

I didn't care about them anyway since I was too concerned with myself. Now that the corner of my eye had engaged the ground, I couldn't tear it away; that same sort of morbid fascination that keeps you riveted to the screen towards the end of some bloody horror movie.

Hammering away at my dulled senses were a few salient facts, like through each circuit I was breathing smoke, virtually continually. And, at a certain point in each circuit (God alone knows where), I could see flames. Not just a few scattered ones, but many concentrated gouts, dancing quickly across the hill – ravine? Cliff? Meadow? I couldn't tell.

My sense of direction and orientation to the ground was so confused I really didn't know. But just as I was beginning to get a vague idea of just how large an area might be burning, it was whisked away, and again I saw the same twisted panorama of impossibly steep hills with trees growing out of the sides of them, sliding dizzily past … and then the flames again.

Suddenly there was an abrupt change in the routine. Now my body was only glued to the fuselage intermittently. I was describing a pattern shaped much like a long, oval racetrack. I wasn't sure whether we were actually speeding up on the corners, or whether it was just the force of gravity that made it feel that way.

Now, in the midst of these corners, I could briefly glimpse bits of colored paper sliding past. They seemed to be drifting straight down, at least in terms of trees which I hoped actually grew out of the ground at something approaching right angles. I could no longer see the flames on the straight segment of the track unless I cranked my head around to face the wing tip and looked down. There seemed to be more of them than before.

For the first time, I became aware of the men immediately around me. Some remained in their seats, nonchalantly checking their gear and tightening various straps. A few crouched on their knees, peering out their small windows. All appeared calm and secure in their surroundings, lending an element of the bizarre to my terror.

As I began to adjust to the flight pattern of the long oval racetrack, I became more attuned to the actual slope of the ground. The topography was very much up and down, but not nearly so fantastic as the better-than-vertical angles I had initially perceived.

I noticed more colored streams of paper falling toward the ground, and it began to penetrate my awareness that these might have something to do with us – with me. These seemed to be the third or maybe the fourth group of streamers.

Some seemed to more nearly approach the fire than others, but none got very close. Sometimes they seemed to hang in the air; at other times they seemed to shoot off horizontally, or even to rise above us. At other times they appeared to sink out of sight at a fantastic clip.

Finally I realized that there was a coincidence between their drastic movements and the bumps we seemed to hit, and the breath stopping lurches in our forward momentum when we, too, seemed to drop at a frantic rate.

The figures at the door seemed to have come to some accord, for as we went into the corner before the long, straight leg of the racetrack, two bulky shapes in white lined up in tandem before the door. As we straightened into level flight, they disappeared into the void.

For a moment it was very quiet, except for a loud, intermittent flapping near the tail of the airplane. A man at the door struggled, pulling in two lines from the emptiness, hand over hand. At the end of the lines,

two shapeless bags, nothing more.

As he finished, two men across from me, anonymous in their identical white suits and screen-fronted red helmets, arose and moved toward him. They, too, lined up in tandem, disappearing in their turn on the next straight leg of the voyage. As we banked around the corner, I saw their canopies blossom and fill with air.

Farther below, I saw the first two parachutes drifting down. They were widely spread, one far to the north, just over the ridge that separated us from the river. I was so engrossed, watching the surrealistic drift of colored nylon over the jagged pattern of rocks and trees below, that the first inkling I had of the departure of the next two nameless bodies was the flapping of their bags against the tail.

The man at the door pointed in my direction. The white-suited man beside me tapped my shoulder, stood, and made his cumbersome way aft. I wasn't thinking about doing it – in fact, I fought against it – but my body, seemingly of its own volition, rose and stretched. Eyes widening, teeth clenched, I slogged toward that beckoning door. Why was the man in front of me so big?

I could see nothing of the ground, only a narrow outline of blue silhouetted around his white form in the opening of the door. My mind, empty of all save stark fear, watched my right hand. Through some Pavlovian conditioning, it moved with a life of its own, hooking my static line to the steel cable running the length of the cabin.

The spotter's mouth moved. He was obviously speaking to me; I heard nothing but a buzzing monotone. As his eyes locked with mine, the corners of his mouth curled into a mocking grin. He was laughing. Not a quiet chuckle, but a hearty guffaw from way down deep.

I could briefly hear the echoes of that laugh as I tumbled out behind my partner, then a shriek of wind snatched it away.

A cacophony of howling wind, that brief but interminable I'm-falling-forever scream from the soul. Then silence. Total absence of sound.

Whisper of rustling nylon. Then, with a rag-doll snap, I open up. I'm alive again. The air is rising; soft, gentle, smooth. Like a tender caress.

I turn and the earth rolls out before me in all directions. The ridge is almost below me; to the north, the river. The trees are not individuals; they're a generic carpet of muted, intermingling greens. A far-off drone interrupts my reverie.

I search the sky above for the source, but can't find it – the plane is below me! I look for my partner and can't find him either! And the fire … the fire is far to the south.

I crank a hard turn, but can't seem to get south of the ridge. The warm afternoon air rising from the river drainage fights me, keeps me high. If I end up across the river, it will be a long, lonely hike out to anywhere. The plane still circles lazily below me. My ethereal mental state departs.

Still struggling to the south, a hot gust sears my face … and I'm falling, falling fast. I look up; my canopy is okay. And the plane is above me now. That carpet of green is taking shape and form as separate trees. Ground features are coming into focus – rock walls, stumps, and sharp ravines.

With an abruptness that slams my diaphragm in mid-breath, I'm rising again, very fast. I check my boots to be sure they're still with me and see the trees below rapidly losing their distinctness. The aircraft, a placid bumblebee, is below me once more.

Still running to the south, I'm almost over the area I want to land in, not far from the fire. But I'm still very high. This up-and-down business is new to me, probably rare for most - the devil's roller coaster. I must get down; I've never had a ride anywhere near this long. My benign float has turned ominous.

I try the old trick of pulling my front risers down – bleeding air. It works. I start dropping. Then my up air quits. I let up on the risers, but a downdraft has me, and I fall like a brick.

The ground rushes up, regaining solidity all too quickly. I don't like what I see. I frantically turn left, then right, then left, flailing at my toggles like a blind man in a cave of bats. The downdraft is still chasing me.

Over my shoulder I glimpse a rock face coming at me from behind, hard and fast. I crank a hard left, pull my feet up, and brace for a bone-crushing impact … but the heavy air lightens almost infinitesimally. Feet barely brushing the cliff, I'm over it and safe, momentarily.

I'm down to about a hundred feet now and searching for something relatively soft. I can't find it. The ground looks hard and steep, sparsely covered with trees and brush, lots of tumbled rocks and downfall.

A series of film clips run swiftly through my mind, each detailing a scenario of painful injuries brought about by impact with the unyielding, irregularly shaped objects that litter the slope. I hate pain.

Dwelling on pain, with me as the focal point, makes my stomach queasy. I can't land here; it's going to hurt. But if I don't pick a spot very soon, one will pick me. A tall Douglas fir beckons and I steer for it, hoping to apex the center of my canopy on its tip.

My last clear view is of that tree between my boots. A hot blast of air slams me down again, and all is a green blur. I tuck my head, pull my extremities in tight, and follow the trunk down, caroming off seemingly every branch. Spitting fir needles, I don't have time to breathe.

Branches thinning, I see my next whistle stop. It's a large, dead mountain mahogany, strong and brittle as glass. Reaching it, it explodes around me, peppering me with chips and splinters. And I touch the ground, hard, flat on my back, across an old log.

When I remember to breathe again, it hurts; I hurt everywhere. Eyes tearing, mouth full of dust, I lay still for a while just breathing, start sending those messages all over the body. Like the evening of Election Day, I am awaiting returns. Some precincts are a little slow reporting, but there seems to be consensus: Survival.

Getting untangled enough to arise seems to take hours. I work up a good sweat, thrashing around in the wreckage of my arrival. My suit feels heavier than usual. I've picked up quite a few extra pounds of debris. Fir needles and bits of wood, even inside the pockets of my pants.

Voices, coming closer.

"Hey!"

"Hey – are you okay?"

"Yeah, I – I guess so."

"Wow – that landing was painful to watch."

"Man, my ride scared me to death, but yours … I figured we'd be building a helispot and medivacking your ass out of here."

"Let me help you with that gear."

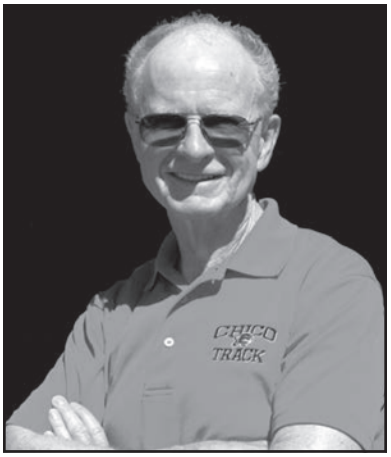
"When you're ready, let's get on over to the fire. Remember the fire?"

"Hey, I was talking to the plane on the radio. They were going to drop all twelve, but the crazy winds and the updrafts and downdrafts seemed to get worse with each pair. When they saw the wild ride the seventh and eighth jumpers had, they couldn't justify risking any more guys. They bagged it."

I was the eighth man.

Lloyd Johnson (MYC-43), the first McCall Base Manager, and John Patton (MYC-05) photographed at the McCall 2013 reunion. (Courtesy Mark Brondum)

SOUNDING OFF from the editor

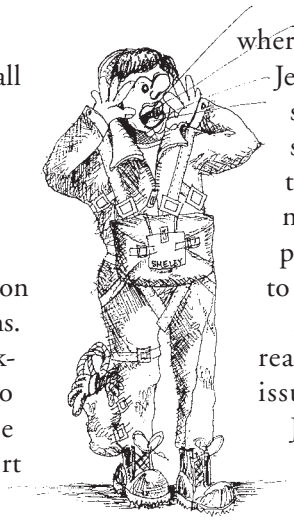


by Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)
Managing Editor

My wife and I have been taking part in the annual projects at the Wilderness Canoe Base in Minnesota for the last five years. The country is beautiful, and we have a lodge and cabins on an island at the edge of a million-acre wilderness area. That said, the main attraction is getting to visit with former smokejumpers and their wives. We have done some great trail and maintenance work, but the social aspect is the highlight of the project.

The downside for me has been the extreme ankle pain that I bring home which lasts for weeks after and recently turned into a full-time happening. My orthopedic doctor said it's down to bone-on-bone and the joint is just worn out. I never really had serious ankle injuries as a jumper but, after 32 seasons on the fireline, body parts tend to wear out if we live long enough. I spent my last 17 seasons working with my Type II crews, which meant that I was still taking crews out on the line at age 58. Never got enough rank to work in a camp or planning situation.

After going through all the possible scenarios, which included ankle fusion, I chose to get an ankle replacement. An ankle joint replacement is a very specific operation done by very few surgeons. I would have to go to Oakland, in the San Francisco Bay Area, to one of the "pros" who does that sort of thing.



Having done hernias, a shoulder and five knee operations, I thought I had a pretty good feel how long it would take to bounce back. Shoot, they had me walking the same day I got my right knee replaced. Well, I had this one pegged wrong. When I saw that I was to have absolutely no weight bearing on the ankle for four weeks, followed by partial weight bearing for two-three more weeks, I should have gotten the clue.

Bottom line, this one kicked my butt. Finally going on six weeks, I'm walking with a cane. If it were not for my wife, K.G., I would have starved to death or rolled up in a corner like a wounded dog. The cast came off after a month, and I wondered where my calf muscles went. Jeez, this getting old is the s——. Now I've got to start getting in shape for the Minnesota project next September. It will probably take me that long to do so.

Even though you will be reading this in April, this issue was put together in January and mostly completed in December. This magazine has been produced at about the same cost for the last ten years. Our biggest increase has been from the postal rate increases. Helping with our increased costs, the response to the annual letter has been great. I spend a good amount of time each day writing thank you letters acknowledging your generous donations. Thank you all for remembering the NSA at the end of the year.

If you have not done so, please check out our new website. **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63) has been working with Webmaster **Jon Robinson** to create a new image and a sharper product. I try to update smokejumper news items once a week. Go to the site, click on some of our links and see what you find. I think you will be pleased.

NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION

Interview With Wally Wasser, Who Traversed Entire Pacific Crest Trail

by Mike Overby (Missoula '67)

As an avid long-distance hiker myself, I had a chance to interview **Wally Wasser** (MYC-79) following his completion of hiking the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) in September 2013. We met at an NSA/Boise social function following a National Smokejumper Association board meeting there in February.

During that event, I learned Wally was planning a through-hike of the PCT starting in April. As I was planning my third-year section hike of the PCT – resuming my trip in Wildwood, California, (mile 350) in May, I never dreamed we would run across each other.

Stranger things happen. Just two days out of Wildwood, up comes Wally from behind me – surprise. He was going much faster than I was and we only hiked together a few hours before he was on his way. I never thought I would see him again.

As he took a couple days off the trail, the next day, amid a hellacious rain and sleet storm, he was behind me again. I had been stupid and just kept slogging away. As a result, we bumped into each other a couple more times until he left me in his dust at Agua Dulce (mile 450).

For those interested in considering a hike of the PCT – or just curious about Wally's trip, I offer this conversation I think you might find interesting.

MO: What was your background as a smokejumper?

WW: I jumped for 33 years, retiring in 2011. I rookied in McCall in '79 jumping there through the 1986 season (eight years) and in Boise 1987-2011 (25 years). I had 834 total jumps and 395 fire jumps; I hold the record for the most fire jumps among current and former jumpers.

MO: What motivated or inspired you to hike the PCT?

WW: I got inspired for long hikes after hiking the 210-mile John Muir Trail in 2012.

MO: What was your schedule/plan for the hike?

WW: I planned on hiking from mid-April to Sept. 20. I started the hike on April 13 and finished Sept. 15.

MO: What type of preparations did you make in advance of the hike?

WW: I tried not to send too many re-supply packages ahead. Your taste changes on what you like to eat. What sounded good in April might not seem too appealing in July. I sent five or six re-supply boxes but would cut back if I did it again. There are ways to re-supply at trail towns.

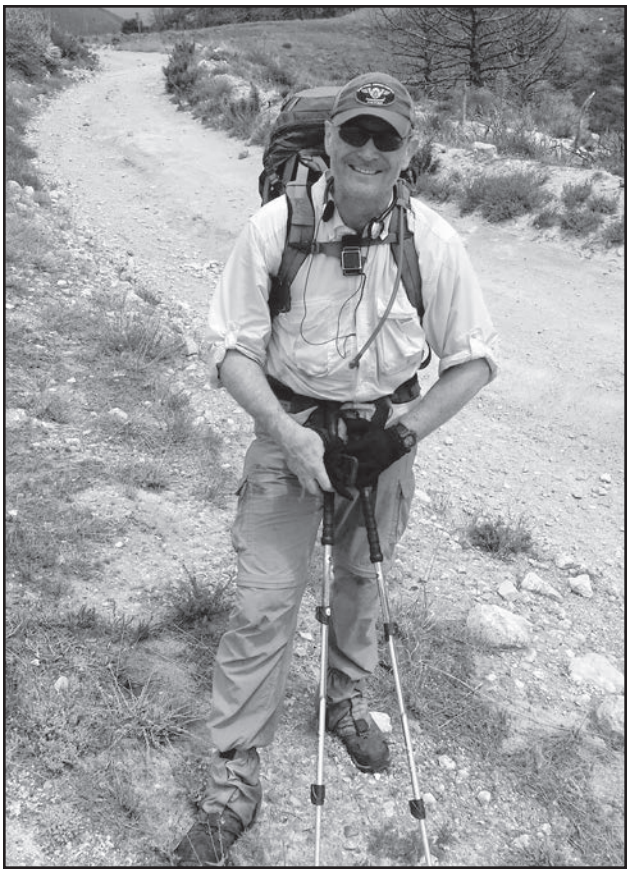
Wally Wasser (MYC-79) at Mexico/California Border (beginning of Pacific Crest Trail) April 13, 2013. (Courtesy M. Overby)

MO: What maps, reference books or other GPS device did you use?

WW: Halfmile maps are the only maps needed. They are the standard and most through-hikers use them. I used two apps on my smart phone, Halfmile's app and Guthook's PCT app. Along with Halfmile's maps, I used Yogi's PCT handbook and a copy of the current water report. Most of this information can be found at the Pacific Crest Trail Association website at *www.pcta.org*.

MO: Did you ever get lost? Where, how and why?

WW: While fording some rivers in Yosemite, I got off trail for about 45 minutes. I knew what direction the trail was, but it took me a while to find it. I missed the turn to the PCT near Big Bear and followed the wrong trail for two miles downhill, all the way to Big Bear Lake in Southern California. There were a few times I wasn't sure if I was on the right trail, but that was it for getting lost.



Mike Overby (MSO-67) in California around mile 400 PCT. (Courtesy M. Overby)

MO: What was the most difficult part of the hike?

WW: Tuolumne Meadows (Northern Yosemite) to Sonora Pass was a difficult section. It was steep, rocky and it rained for two days. Lots of river crossings.

MO: What was the most pleasurable or interesting part of the hike?

WW: I really liked the John Muir Wilderness in California. I liked the volcano peaks in Oregon and Washington. Snoqualmie Pass through northern Washington was stunning – especially the Glacier Peak Wilderness. My favorite waterfalls were Burney Falls in Northern California and Tunnel Falls in northern Oregon.

MO: What kind of interesting people did you meet along the way and why?

WW: Everyone has a story as to why they are there. I hiked on and off with a couple from Great Britain. This was his third time hiking the PCT. He has also hiked the Appalachian Trail three times and the Continental Divide Trail twice. But most remarkable to me was that they bicycled from Anchorage, Alaska, to the tip of Argentina – 4,000 miles in nine months. Wow! Then there was Rabbit Stix. He rowed from the Canary Islands to Miami across the Atlantic 4,800 miles in five months. Now at 70 years old, he was hiking the PCT.

MO: What was the most unexpected event or occurrence along the way?

WW: Trail Angels seem to come out of nowhere and are totally unexpected. This happens after hiking all day and coming into camp and finding a spaghetti dinner ready for you. Ice chests with beer and sodas appeared in places not expected on the trail.

MO: You did a complete through-hike 2,650 miles – a huge accomplishment. If you were going to do it again, would you do that or break it up into sections over multiple years?

WW: Doing a through-hike in one year is the ultimate. Not everyone can take five months off, so section hiking is the next best thing. I met 70-year-old Mel and 71-year-old Lorraine in Northern Washington, and these two ladies were finishing the last leg of the PCT that they started in 1989.

MO: What sections of the hike would you recommend others do – if they're not up to the complete 2,650-mile hike?

WW: This is a tough one. If you have three weeks, hike the 210-mile John Muir Trail. You can hike the 460 miles of Oregon in three weeks. If you only have five days, you could hike from Snoqualmie Pass to Stevens Pass in Washington. A nice three-day hike would be from Mammoth Mountain to Yosemite.

MO: Did you read any books about the trail you would recommend before going?

WW: There are books out there that are interesting to read about the PCT. Just be sure to get Yogi's handbook and town guide. The PCTA web page gives lots of information and where to find what you need.

MO: What was your base pack weight and what key supplies did you use (everything but food and water)?

WW: My base pack weight was just less than 20 pounds. I am not an ultra light backpacker. While many ultra lighters try to get their pack weight down to 10-15 pounds or less, I tend to carry a few extra comfort pounds. I use a Big Agnes tent at 2½ pounds; a 20-degree, two-pound, down sleeping bag; and a three-pound backpack. I carry a jet boil stove. My pack with six days of food and water weighed about 44 pounds. Many hikers would be appalled to hear of someone carrying that much weight, but for an ex-smokejumper, that was like carrying a large PG bag.

MO: What was your total water capacity carried in liters?

WW: I carried up to five liters of water in Southern California, where water was scarce and the desert was hot. After I hit the Sierras, I rarely carried more than

three liters, and most of the time I carried a lot less.

MO: What types and numbers of shoes or boots did you wear?

WW: The first 700 miles, I used a pair of New Balance running shoes. Then I switched to a pair of Salomon trail runners for the next 700 miles. I bought another pair of Salomon trail runners and made them last for the remaining 1,250 miles. I purchased the Salomon's at REI and would highly recommend them. I picked up a couple pairs of Darn Tough socks in Lake Tahoe and they worked great for the last 1,600 miles. I still have them and they are going strong.

MO: What type of exercise program did you do in advance, if any?

WW: I started out in pretty good condition from trail running and hiking with a pack. I started out trying to do 20 miles a day and, after a few hundred miles, I was doing 25-30 miles pretty comfortably. It is hard to average big miles every day because there are distractions on the trail. You might come into trail towns or a lodge and restaurant along the way. My goal was to hike 150 miles a week. Even if you can only do 15 miles a day to start, that is good enough for the first couple of weeks. Don't worry if you're a little bit overweight and not in tip-top shape. You have 5-6 months to get into great shape. A little extra weight is a plus because you will shed the pounds. I lost 25 pounds on this hike. I was in great shape after 1,000 miles. I was in even better shape after 2,000 miles. My longest day was 40 miles. My journey was 157 days with 118 days that were on the trail. I took a break in May to let the snow melt in the Sierras and to attend the McCall Smokejumper Reunion. I took seven days off in July to fly up to Alaska to attend a family reunion.

MO: Are you planning any other long-distance Hikes?

WW: I love the PCT and would like to do it again, either a through-hike or section it out. I know how to do it now so it would be easier the second time. There would be no pressure this time about finishing. When you tell a bunch of people you're hiking the PCT, they follow your journey and you don't want to let them down.

MO: Any other comments you'd like to provide?

WW: The PCT is 2,660 miles long. Close to 400 people will have hiked the trail this year. It winds through 48 different wildernesses along the way. The people who hike it are incredibly ordinary people. They are not your ultra-marathon runners, your iron man, or exceptionally athletic people. They are just people who like to hike. The youngest hiker I met was 18 and the oldest was 75. I hiked with one woman I met the first day on the trail. We hiked together for 200 miles. I met a retired Bureau of Land Management surveyor in Yosemite, and we hiked together for 400 miles. Sometimes I would hike and camp with other hikers and sometimes I hiked alone. I ran into one guy in Washington that I hadn't seen in three months. It can be very social, especially around trail towns. This summer I plan to do some volunteer trail work on the PCT and maybe get on a trail project with the NSA. But I am also looking forward to getting back on the trail.

Mike Overby

I will be resuming my PCT hike – returning to Walker Pass (mile 650) and going north through the "sweet spot" of the trial – from Mt. Whitney on the John Muir Trail through Yosemite. Most through-hikers will hit this area around early to mid-June – so they will have enough time to reach Canada before the snow flies. In my case, I want to enjoy the trail and avoid snow-packed passes and high water in creeks and rivers.

Most likely my trip this year will be sometime in mid to late August. Anyone interested in more information on the trip or planning details let me know.

You can also reach Wally at wowwasser@aol.com. Mention "PCT hiker" in the subject line.

Wally Wasser (MYC-79) in Canada at the end of the PCT, September 15, 2013 (Courtesy M. Overby)

Smokejumper/U.S. History - We Are The Keepers Of The Flame

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

Our Mission Statement opens with: "The National Smokejumper Association, through a cadre of volunteers and partnerships, is dedicated to *preserving the history and lore of smokejumping*,…."

This fact is a constant reminder as I am forwarded articles from magazines, newspapers and the internet concerning smokejumping.

Last summer, 2013, I was forwarded an article written for a national magazine's on-line publication. The crux of the article dealt with the influence of the military on current wildfire firefighting. One section of the article dealt with "Smoke Jumpers." When I see that term and not "Smokejumpers," I know the person does not have much of a background on the subject.

To quote from the article: "The military's influence can also be seen in the ranks of firefighters themselves. For instance, parachuting specialized firefighters, known as 'smoke jumpers,' into remote areas to combat wildfires shortly after they start has become a critical tool in mitigating damage."

Then came this quote: "*The idea of smoke jumping grew out of the World War II fighting experience*. 'After World War II, people who had parachuting experience out of the war started thinking how that could be adapted to firefighting.'" The last sentence came from a USFS employee who was one of the "expert" sources for this article.

I tried to convince the author that smokejumping existed before WWII and was in operation during the war years, mainly due to the participation of the Conscientious Objector's CPS-103 group. Even though I sent many book references, articles, and a copy of the NSA DVD "Firefighters From The Sky," he was unconvinced that I knew more about the origins of smokejumping than an USFS official.

The author finally settled on keeping the original statements from the USFS but added a paragraph to the effect that this information was disputed.

This is a lengthy lead-in to the following information supplied to me by **Roger Savage** (MSO-57). Roger sent me a 16-page document from the *Air Service Handbook* (a chronological record of USFS cooperation with military agencies in the advancement of aerial search and rescue, with special reference to the use of smokejumpers.) This is a historical record showing the primary role of Pioneer Smokejumpers **Frank Derry** (MSO-40), **Jim Waite** (MSO-40), **Wag Dodge** (MSO-41), **Bill Wood** (MSO-43), **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43) and **John Ferguson** (MYC-43) in the early development of search and rescue procedures that were the foundation of the programs of today. It is very important to note that the military and other agencies *came to the USFS Smokejumpers* for advice and training.

History of Aerial Search and Rescue

1936 News dispatch from USSR that the first parachute squad of physicians, surgeons and nurses had been formed. This dispatch came to the attention of Region 1 fire officials.

July 1940 In the first parachute rescue in the US, **Chet Derry** (MSO-40) jumped to a wreck of a Johnson Flying Service (JFS) Travelair. **Dr. Leo Martin**, Missoula, trained by the FS as the first "jumping doctor." Dr. Martin was killed in army plane crash in October 1942.

1943 Capt. Frank Wiley visits Missoula in interest of FS cooperation in development with Air Forces in search and rescue. US Coast Guard representative visits to determine best way to train and equip Coast Guard parachutists for air crash rescue work.

July 1943 CWO Hook and nine Coast Guardsman arrive at Missoula to take jumper training. They leave in September with FS smokejumper outfits.

August 1943 Two Canadian air-observer personnel arrive at Missoula for jump training. They leave with smokejumper outfits and plans to conduct similar training in Canada.

September 1943 Capt. Frank Wiley, former JFS pilot, visits Missoula with proposal to organize Search & Rescue (S&R) section within the Air Force. Major Boynton, surgeon Army AF, took two parachute jumps using smokejumper equipment.

October 1943 Cooperative agreement between USFS and Second Air Force signed to work on air rescue project.

November 1943 FS smokejumpers began parachute training for 13 military medical and rescue officers. All trainees were equipped with FS jumping outfits upon leaving. Four riggers were sent to Missoula for training in the conversion of Army parachutes to the steerable FS type.

Jan./Feb. 1944 Rescue training continued in Missoula and on Payette NF in Idaho.

March 1944 North Atlantic and Alaska wings of Air Transport Command negotiate procedures to obtain FS smokejumper equipment.

July 1944 Time magazine cites parachute rescue of four Air Force men by Capt. **Amos Little** (MSO-43) at 11,000-foot elevation. The article credited FS for training para-doctors and stated that 79 individual rescues had been affected to date.

Nov. 1944 Royal Canadian AF placed order for 26 smokejumper outfits for their rescue units in western Canada.

December 1944 Medical officers trained at Missoula in 1943 made demonstration jumps at Army air bases using FS equipment and techniques.

March 1945 Two officers and nine enlisted men from Alaska and Canada arrive at Missoula to begin parachute training. Training completed April 5.

April 1945 Rescue activities of the four US Air Forces were merged and the USFS will be asked to train 30-40 in near future.

June 1945 Flight surgeon from Fairbanks plus two arrived to begin training. Training completed July 3rd.

August 1945 Lt. Burks and Corporal Brown (Triple Nickles) jump to and give effective first aid to severely injured smokejumper.

Sept. 1945 Military notifies USFS that the end of the war has put a stop on the expansion and further training of Army personnel in the near future. It was stated that the foundations of search and rescue are firmer and better established than ever and there is no doubt that it is here to stay.

Since the 2004 National Reunion in Missoula, over 400 smokejumpers have gone "Off The List." These are only the ones that I know about and have written obits for the magazine. The "Keepers Of The Flame" and their knowledge are rapidly leaving us. In their places we have people providing "historical" knowledge who actually do not have that knowledge. One of my objectives with *Smokejumper* magazine is to record as much of the record as possible. My hope is that in the future anyone writing about smokejumping can reference the articles that were written from many first-hand sources.

Marine recruits are required to know the history of the Marine Corps as part of their proud tradition. I only wish rookie smokejumpers could take a two-hour class in the history of smokejumping. Someone needs to keep the flame 25 years from now.

Hosts Needed At Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum

Smokejumpers and friends have done a terrific job of restoring the historic buildings at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in Cave Junction, Oregon. Although it is still a work in progress, the museum has to be the best smokejumper museum in existence.

That said, we need your help. The museum is open from March 15 to November 15 and located on the busy Redwoods Highway leading from the coast to I-5. Hosts to help us keep the doors open are needed.

We have an apartment with kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom at the back of the Visitor's Center. An RV hookup is also available.

Duties would include welcoming visitors and guiding tours through the three buildings. As with campground hosts, we also need to keep the lawns mowed and the place clean.

Within driving distance, you could visit Crater Lake, Oregon Caves, Redwoods and the Oregon Coast. Coverage would be provided if you wanted to take time off to be a tourist.

You can host anywhere from a day to a week to a month. We will provide a tour outline with historical background. Although it helps to be a jumper, non-jumpers have done an excellent job of hosting.

Give us a hand in preserving smokejumper history. To get on the hosting calendar, contact: **Wes Brown** (CJ-66) at (541) 592-2250 or *alphaa@frontiernet.net*.

Walter Morris, First Black Paratrooper, Was A Smokejumper

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

If you trained as a smokejumper in the late 1940s or the '50s, chances are you weren't told about the Triple Nickles, the 555th Parachute Infantry, an all-black unit that was loaned to the Forest Service in 1945 to help fight fires caused by Japanese firebombs wafted to the States by balloons. It was top secret at the time, dubbed "Operation Firefly" by the Army.

I only learned about the outfit in the 1960s, the civil rights years, when some overhead who had been around in '45 told us about that silent segment of our smokejumper history.

Walter Morris (PNOR-45), who died at age 92 on Oct. 13, 2013, was the first black man accepted for the Army's airborne forces. He was also, quite possibly, the man responsible for the formation of his unit. Here's the story of smokejumper Walter Morris and his beloved Triple Nickles:

Early in 1944 Morris was the first sergeant of a dispirited all-black service unit assigned to guard the white paratroopers at Fort Bragg, N.C., and he was searching for a way to motivate his men. He decided to start them, after duty hours, on the same calisthenics regimen as the white paratroopers.

His men "were servants prior to that," Morris said. "Now they were imitating paratroopers. It showed in their uniforms, in their attitudes, how they addressed you."

The parachute school's commander, Brig. Gen. Ridgely Gaither, took notice of Morris and his men and invited the group to start actual parachute training. They were termed a "test platoon."

"We had our own separate tables where we ate," Morris recalled. "We had separate barracks where we slept. We had [white] enlisted men and officers betting – actually betting – that we could not stand the rigid four-week training course, and that we would not jump out of airplanes."

But jump they did, and after the test platoon proved its mettle, the floodgates opened to other black volunteers. And they continued to jump and maneuver as infantry. By January 1945 they'd grown to a strength of more than 400 battle-ready officers and men.

But then, as the war in Europe was winding down, they received orders to downsize to a reinforced company of eight officers and 160 men because the unit hadn't trained or maneuvered as a battalion.

Walter Morris (PNOR-45)

In late April 1945, the Triple Nickles received mysterious "highly classified" orders. It was to be a permanent change of station to Pendleton Air Base in Pendleton, Ore.

As they boarded a train for their six-day journey, some surmised that this was a cover story for an eventual deployment to the Pacific Theater, where war with the Japanese still raged.

The summer was hot, and the government feared that the balloon-borne firebombs, launched into the jet stream above Japan, would cause major fires as they landed in the forests of the Northwest. More firefighters were needed.

Most men in the Forest Service's smokejumper units at that time were conscientious objectors to the

war who had volunteered for the aerial fire project. As an aside, among them was a single black man, a boxer, **Wardell "Knuckles" Davis,** who jumped from Missoula in 1945. He was, apparently, the first black smokejumper.

When they arrived at Pendleton, the Triple Nickles were issued two-piece "jump suits" made of soft leather lined with sheepskin, similar to the outer gear worn by high-altitude bomber crews. Each jacket's high collar was stiffened with heavy, stitched duck and the trousers were reinforced with webbing. They also traded their GI helmets for football helmets with wire facemasks and were issued 50-foot letdown ropes.

Operation Firefly was about to begin. A battalion officer, the late Lt. Col. Bradley Briggs, recalls the mission in a unit history, *The Triple Nickles.*

"We knew how to jump from airplanes," Col. Briggs wrote. "But the heavily forested areas of the Northwest presented drop zones that were more difficult and dangerous than any we had faced before.

"We knew how to handle parachute lines, but here we would be using a new type of chute, ones with special shroud lines for circling maneuvers. [And] the Forest Service maps were something new. We were used to explosives, but we had little if any experience in the disarming of bombs.

"Firefighting was, of course, an entirely new experience."

The Forest Service and the Army put the paratroopers through three intensive weeks of training, and the colonel wrote of the troopers' association with the Forest Service: "They were a fine group of men. They could walk up the hills like a cat on a snake walk. They taught us how to climb, use an axe, and what vegetation to eat."

After three training jumps with their new gear, a group was dispatched to Chico, Calif., to provide coverage for nearby forests, and a larger contingent was retained at Pendleton for deployment to fires in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

From mid-July to early October 1945, the black smokejumpers participated in 36 fire missions, 17 from Chico, 19 from Pendleton. Individual jumps totaled more than 1,200. The first smokejumper killed in the line of duty was a Triple Nickle, **Malvin Brown** (PNOR-45), a medic who died Aug. 6 on the Lemon Butte Fire, Umpqua National Forest, Oregon, while attempting a letdown. More than 30 men suffered injuries.

And that was no wonder: On large fires the troopers were dropped Army-fashion, in long sticks that would leave them strung out for miles.

By late autumn Operation Firefly was ending. "More important, a rapid demobilization of the military was underway. Civilians would resume many operations that had been assigned to military units, including ours," Col. Briggs wrote.

The men of the Triple Nickles were merged into the 82nd Airborne Division, becoming the first black unit to integrate into the Army, and that was six months before President Harry Truman signed the executive order integrating all the services.

Morris, who had attended Officer Candidate School while assigned to the Triple Nickles, was discharged from the Army in 1946 as a second lieutenant. He resumed his pre-war trade as a bricklayer, eventually moving up through the ranks to supervisory roles during the next 30 years.

After his 1984 retirement, he moved from New York to Palm Coast, Fla. There he volunteered at a local hospital and played a major role in the charter of the African American Cultural Society, an education facility for children and adults. He was also an active member of the Triple Nickle Association.

An articulate and affable man to the end, he was a sought-after speaker and interviewee, including reportage by Tom Brokaw and CNN, and was the recipient of many awards. He was also very proud of his stint as a smokejumper.

On a personal note, I first met Walter at an early smokejumper reunion in Missoula, renewed our acquaintance during a later reunion in Redding, and saw him again in 1999 at the 50th anniversary ceremony in Helena that honored those who died in Mann Gulch.

He sent me Army orders related to the Triple Nickles, which listed those men who had been smokejumpers. Their names have been incorporated into the NSA database. And when I was asked to speak to a Midwest Rotary Club as the result of an article I had written for a Department of Agriculture publication about the Triple Nickles, I deferred to Walter, who traveled there at his own expense for the speaking engagement.

A widower but a devoted family man, he left two daughters, a pair of stepdaughters, two grandsons and two granddaughters, 10 great-grandchildren and a host of cousins, nieces, nephews and friends to cherish memories of this very bright, kind and gentle man.

One of his grandsons, Michael Fowles, an active-duty Army major, is also a paratrooper. When he graduated from jump school, Walter pinned his own original jump wings on Fowles' chest with the warning, "If you lose those, I'll kill you."

I, too, miss Walter Morris very much: handsome, articulate, sincere, an inspiring leader and always a gentleman. The Triple Nickles and the smokejumper organization have lost a great man.

NEW BIOGRAPHY EXAMINES LIFE, DEATH OF FORMER JUMPER WHO BECAME CIA OFFICER

Review by Jim Pollard
(Copyright 2013, The Nation newspaper, Bangkok, Thailand.)

The extraordinary life – and mysterious 1982 death in Bangkok – of a famous CIA officer from the "secret war" in Laos is the subject of a new book that has won high praise from military analysts and experts on the American spy agency.

Hog's Exit by American academic Gayle L. Morrison tells the story of **Jerry Daniels** (MSO-58) and the key role he played in the covert war in Laos. He was the agent assigned to Gen. Vang Pao, head of the Hmong force armed and encouraged to resist communist troops with the aid of massive air support.

Daniels was a rugged outdoorsman who formed a deep and enduring bond with the Hmong. They revered him for fighting at their side for months on end north of the Plain of Jars, and for his ability to speak their language. They admired his honesty and, after the war, his years of work to help resettle thousands of Hmong from Ban Vinai and other camps to the United States.

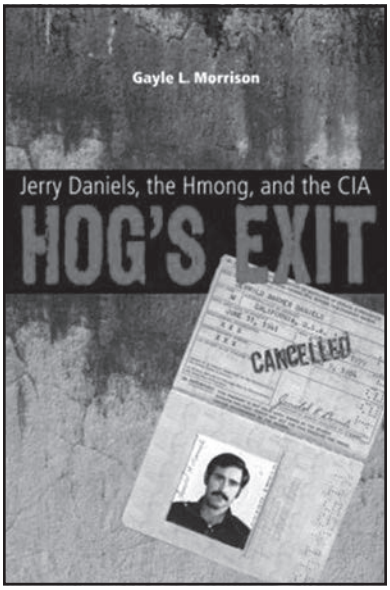
Daniels was initially a "smokejumper" in Montana, parachuting into forest fires. Joining the Central Intelligence Agency, his expertise in parachutes and air-cargo rigging made him perfect for a job as a "kicker," one who crewed the planes and helicopters, dropping weapons and supplies to CIA forces fighting the communists in the 1950s and '60s. The kickers were used to support U.S.-backed units in Korea, Taiwan, Tibet and then, in 1961, the hilltribe warriors in Laos.

"Hog" Daniels is hailed as one of the shining lights following the U.S. military's dramatic retreat from Indochina. He opened the door to a new life for faithful allies – mountain people with little formal education who'd been left to face the wrath of communist troops after the U.S. base at Long Cheng was abandoned.

He was a straight-talker, intelligent and respected by his peers, but the discipline and focus he summoned to support the Hmong were matched by wild excess in his private life. He had a passion for women and boozing, drowning the tension of the war and anguish over lost comrades in weeklong binges – on R&R in Bangkok and on his returns home, where he undertook long hunting trips with friends in the hills of Montana.

In *Hog's Exit,* friends and Hmong associates discuss the death of Daniels in Bangkok and his funeral back in Missoula in May 1982, which drew hundreds of Hmong, plus top government officials. It was a three-day traditional Hmong ceremony – a rare honor – enacted amid an undercurrent of speculation on whether the CIA man really was inside the sealed casket flown back from Thailand.

Doubt lingers over his death under unusual circumstances – carbon monoxide poisoning from a leaking gas outlet in his flat in Soi Lang Suan, after another big drinking session. The threats he received



in his final years when approving or rejecting refugees in the camps adds to the speculation.

Author Morrison was a counselor hired in the late '70s to help Hmong and Lao refugees who arrived in California learn English and adapt to their new life.

Her first book, *Sky is Falling,* was about the CIA's evacuation of the Hmong from Laos in 1975. This book is another oral history, told through the words of friends, family and colleagues, a style that lends great authenticity and closeness. But it was also a huge labor of love for the author, who spent more than a decade researching and editing the book.

In an e-mail exchange, Morrison said getting people to talk about Daniels required finesse. "Many Hmong and all CIA [operatives] had to be approached in the Asian way – indirectly, relying on personal introductions, recom-

mendations, and their own 'back channel' checks – before I could make contact."

She made three research trips, but was careful not to put people at risk in Laos, where the brutal treatment of political dissidents continues.

"I made up my mind that I wouldn't interview anyone still living in Laos," Morrison said. "[But] I have interviewed a number of American expats who worked in Laos during the war years and who live in Bangkok."

Morrison said the war stories she heard from the Hmong about Daniels were serious, while the tales from his friends in Montana were often hilarious. But his greatest legacy was his impact on the Hmong in the U.S. – who now number more than 250,000.

"I don't think the significance of what he did for the Hmong who left Laos can be overstated," Morrison said. "In 1975 there was no plan to resettle Hmong and Lao refugees to the U.S. The massive Hmong exodus out of Laos to Thailand took everyone by surprise, even Jerry.

"But what are you going to do? You can't pretend it's not happening. Someone has to deal with it. Jerry believed Hmong resettlement in Thailand was the least-traumatic solution, but when that wasn't an option, he stepped up to try to ensure the Hmong refugees were dealt with fairly by the U.S. government, not just ignored.

"The bottom line is, without Jerry Daniels there wouldn't be a Hmong-American community in the U.S. today – not without his personal commitment and effort. Now there are so many younger Hmong-Americans named Jerry! Jerry Yang, Jerry Moua, Jerry Vang, Jerry Thao – on and on. What a tribute to a man who changed the course of Hmong and U.S. history."

FOREST POWER ADVENTURES IN ECOLOGY AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

BY LARRY VINCENT (FAIRBANKS '62)

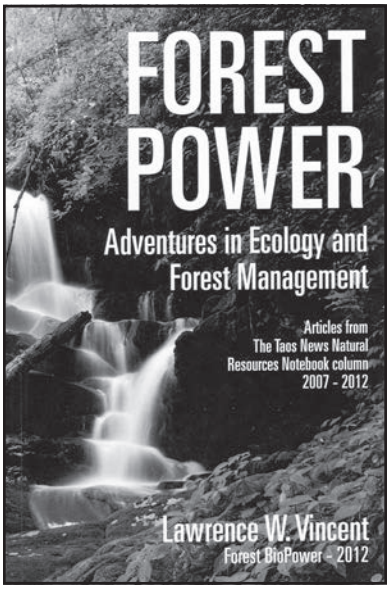
Review by Larry Vincent

"*Forest Power: Adventures in Ecology and Forest Management*" is a reading adventure into the dynamics of forest ecosystems written for the general public. Writing style, scope and degree of complexity are based on an effort to make ecological and forest management concepts accessible and easily understandable while at the same time undertaking the complexities of how forest ecosystems work and respond to natural and human alterations. Environmental activists and would-be ecology and forestry students will find this book helpful in becoming better-informed participants in society's quest for forest resource sustainability and in deciding on further studies

What is forest power? In a nutshell, it's the strength of resilience, the energy of photosynthesis, the vast renewable energy and wood products potential; it's the wonderful benefits of a wide range of environmental services, among them, atmospheric carbon balance, water and bio-diversity; it's the huge sustainable job and revenue potential; it's the power of forests to provide benefits for society forever. The adventure resides in understanding the complexity of forest ecosystems and their responses to natural events, such as insect infestations, disease and wildfire, and to forest management practices.

Readers can find out about smokejumping in Alaska, tropical forests in Venezuela and Bolivia; how sustainable productive forest management (SPFM) in balance with non-extractive management (preservation) can help in global warming mitigation through carbon management using the power of photosynthesis; how to improve forest health with thinning and sustainable timber harvesting to keep forest stands within limits of optimal stocking; how SPFM is good for the environment; how even logging is good for the environment with green renewable energy based on a proposed forest health and energy initiative; and much more.

Forest Power: Adventures in Ecology and Forest Management is a collection of articles from "The Taos News Natural Resources



Notebook," column 2007 – 2012, arranged by topics with connecting text and comments. Complex technical and scientific concepts are put into terms that will be useful for people without any forestry background and those who are interested in learning about basic ecology principles applied to forest management. It will help professional foresters and policy makers to communicate more effectively with the general public.

Ecology and forest management is a "place" where things are often not as they seem on the surface. Simple views are so often misleading when we fail to go into depth on the complex dynamics of forest ecosystems. Something that appears to be horrible can actually be beneficial over time and, conversely, a situation that appears good may be detrimental. And time is an essential element in the equation. It's implicit in the term "dynamics." Change over time is a key. Forest ecosystems are constantly changing. Nothing remains the same in the flow of time. Understanding the multiple and interacting relationships among plants and animals, large and small, is not easy. However, forming a viewpoint and actions without undertaking this adventure can lead to unintended consequences resulting from stances assumed with the best of intentions but lacking in an adequate understanding of ecology.

Larry's book can be ordered through the NSA merchandising brochure or off our website at www.smokejumpers.com (store).

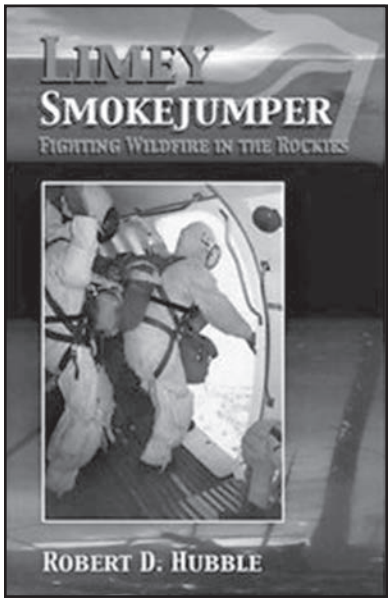
LIMEY SMOKEJUMPER – FIGHTING WILDFIRE IN THE ROCKIES

BY ROBERT HUBBLE

Review by Mike Overby
(Missoula '67)

This is the newest book by a smokejumper, about smokejumping. **Robert Hubble** (MSO-91) is the author; he jumped from Missoula 1991-97 and in 2002.

Having been a smokejumper in Missoula much earlier in my career – during the late '60s and early '70s – I found this book to be an excellent portrayal of the job a lot of us described as "the best job we ever had."



When I was jumping, it was during college years – only to support college expenses – and I never went back after graduating and getting a "real job." Today, most smokejumpers jump as a career/job – even though most are seasonal – working less than six months per year. Seasonal jumpers either live off their short seasonal income, or supplement with teaching school or other winter occupations.

This is a job that America should be thankful that these "very dedicated individuals" are out there who risk life and injury, but receive limited retirement and healthcare benefits from performing.

The author does an outstanding job describing the intense preparation and training needed to perform the very physical and mental aspects of the job. As he described, and I paraphrase: The job training is much like airborne training in the military – but on steroids.

A jumper spends an enormous amount of time preparing for a short parachute jump into usually remote and rugged wilderness areas, but one that could cause him/her to land in a 200-foot Douglas fir or pine tree, the middle of a lake, or crashing down on hard rock or logs in a strong wind – but what a way to "get to the job"!

The author also describes, unfortunately, the many bureaucracies – the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management – that have crept into a very fine organization, like any big government agencies. If true, and I don't doubt it a bit, decisions being made by non-jumper bureaucrats are causing great harm to the great camaraderie and teamwork that existed in the past.

I hope that has changed since Mr. Hubble left jumping in 2002. If not, maybe some of those bureaucrats need to read this book – to find out what it is really like performing the job.

Overall, Mr. Hubble is an excellent writer, I hope to read his other books – and future ones as well.

Fire, An Important Tool For Management

by Stephen Arno

In the early 1970s, while part of a U.S. Forest Service research team, I examined the disturbance history of old, unlogged forests throughout Montana. We surveyed a diverse array of several hundred forests and found that about 90 percent of them showed clear evidence of burning in the distant past, before the policy of fire suppression was implemented in the early 1900s.

Forests dominated by ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and western larch had often survived multiple surface fires, while forests of lodgepole pine, spruce, and subalpine fir commonly experienced more severe, stand-replacing fires. By the 1980s, studies of charcoal layers and other clues, found in sediments beneath several northwestern ponds and bogs, revealed that fires had shaped our forests continuously over thousands of years.

A century ago, some prominent forest landowners in Northern California urged the Forest Service to test controlled burning as a method for managing forests to keep fuel from building up to hazardous levels. However, at the time, forestry was new to the United States, having been developed in humid regions of Europe where fire was not a prominent force of nature. Also, the science of ecology was scarcely known at that time, and thus the importance of natural processes in managing native forests was not recognized.

For these and other reasons, forestry agencies decided to attempt to virtually eliminate fire in the forest – a policy known as "fire exclusion."

Fire exclusion seemed to work reasonably well during the middle of the 20th century, as less than 1 million acres burned each year in the 11 contiguous western states. Then in the late 1970s, an alarming new trend emerged – a steady increase in large, severe wildfires – which continues today.

Fire analysts attribute this trend to a prolonged absence of fire, leading to fuel buildup and increasingly warm, dry conditions in Western forests. Another contributing factor is the explosive growth in the number of homes, cabins and other developments embedded in fuel-rich Western forests. As a result, the limited firefighting resources are diverted to protecting homes rather than attempting to control the growth of the fire perimeter.

Thousands of dollars of public funding is often expended to protect an individual home, even if the homeowner has done nothing to make his forest property or buildings fire-resistant. Fire managers are reluctant to refrain from pouring resources into even undeserved protection, fearing the political repercussions.

Also, many firefighters get caught up in the heroics of their mission, despite clear guidelines that order them not to risk life and limb. Recent testimonies of firefighters in the wake of 19 deaths in the Yarnell, Ariz., fire confirm this misguided sense of mission.

Westerners will continue to be plagued by increasing peril and costs of wildfires until we adopt a saner attitude about the role of fire in our forests. For some inspiration we could look to the Southeastern U.S., where states have "right-to-burn" laws (limiting liability to reasonable levels) and provide extension-forestry help to foster responsible prescribed burning by private landowners.

We could do likewise by accepting that fire will continue to be a fact of life in our forests, but that we can influence the way fire affects our forest by managing its structure and its fuel using mechanical treatments, fuel removal, pile burning and prescribed fire. Even in the most severe conflagrations of recent years, forest properties and home sites that were thinned and made fire-resistant experienced far less damage. It is high time to heed the advice that California timberman George Hoxie published in 1910: "We had best adopt fire as our servant; otherwise it will be our master."

Forest landowners who wish to learn about the role of fire and what they can do to make their forests and home sites fire-resistant can find helpful information and guidance at *firesafemt.org*.

Stephen F. Arno is a retired research forester at the Rocky Mountain Research Station.

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Western Wildfire Fatalities: Human Factors Key 20 Years After South Canyon

by Billie Stanton

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. – Flames crackling mere millimeters behind him, **Eric Hipke** (NCSB-90) clambered up the last steep stretch of a rugged mountainside engulfed by roiling fire. Hipke was panting hard when he screamed and hurled himself over the ridge. He made it with five seconds to spare, investigators concluded later.

The blaze seared the back of Hipke's neck, arms, legs and the hands cupped over his ears. The worst agony, though, was learning that 14 fellow firefighters perished behind him on Storm King Mountain on July 6, 1994, in Colorado's South Canyon Fire. Nearly 20 years later, Hipke's burns have healed. His sorrow, however, persists.

Wildfire deaths of this magnitude had not occurred for 45 years, not since Montana's Mann Gulch Fire killed 12 smokejumpers and a forest ranger (*fire guard-Ed.*) on Aug. 5, 1949.

The Colorado catastrophe signaled the need for critical changes, and many have been made. The mountain today is studded with marble crosses, each laden with personal mementos, on the spots where the four women and 10 men died.

The Granite Mountain Hotshots of Prescott, Ariz., made the pilgrimage there two years ago to pay their respects, recalled Darrell Willis, wildland division chief for the Prescott Fire Department.

"We hiked Storm King Mountain with this crew, and we all said, 'This will never happen to us.'"

All but one of those hotshots died this past June 30 on the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona, where shifting winds, canyon topography and an apparent lack of situational awareness eerily echoed the South Canyon tragedy. The 19 deaths in Arizona shocked firefighters and civilians alike. They occurred 19 years after South Canyon.

"I never thought we'd wipe out a whole crew," said Randy Skelton, deputy fire staff officer on the Payette National Forest.

In all, 34 people died this year while fighting wildfires; the worst count in almost 20 years. Despite all the refinements to wildfire fighting, the death toll is up.

Two factors are spiking the dangers exponentially:

- Climate change is producing abundant lightning storms and severe droughts resulting in landscapes of dried cheat grass, brush, beetle-killed trees and other highly flammable fuels. Fire seasons now last up to 10 months rather than five or six.

"I was seeing fire behavior this year that I hadn't seen in a while," Josh Brinkley said in September while standing on Storm King Mountain, where his brother Levi was killed. "Everything was so dry. The PIG (probability of ignition) in a normal year is 80 percent. This year, as early as 9 a.m., it was 100 percent all season long. I talked to old-timers who had never seen it that dry for years."

- Simultaneously, more and more homes are being erected in the wildland-urban interface – most without fire-retardant materials much less any fire-defensible space.

The trend underscores a lack of responsibility by local governments and property owners, said **Larry Edwards** (MSO-02), a 1970s hotshot in California, Oregon and New Mexico who landed in Helena in 1989 as a superintendent and retired in 2004.

"Personal rights come with responsibilities. In Australia, homes are built to be defensible. They don't put firefighters in there to save homes. They understand that they're living with wildfire, and we don't have that understanding here," Edwards said.

While none of this bodes well for people fighting wildfires, some deaths may be inevitable in a volatile environment where Mother Nature rules in random fashion, fire managers acknowledge.

"You can't apply an OSHA model to what we do. It's not a factory floor," said Jim Cook, who recently retired after 37 years in fire service, including 18 years as a hotshot crew superintendent and 14 years as training projects coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

Still, with dozens killed in one year and global warming and wilderness construction ramping up, Cook and his colleagues across the West know something must be done.

Experts interviewed over the past six months cited one primary key to wildfire deaths: human factors.

Psychologist **Ted Putnam** (MSO-66) is the "father of human factors," said Hipke, who makes safety training videos in Boise for the Wildfire Safety Training Annual Renewal.

Putnam was on the investigative review team for the South Canyon Fire, but refused to sign the official report because he found it inaccurate and incomplete, ignoring too many pertinent human factors.

"I think it was honorable that Ted Putnam didn't sign that report. I don't think it told the whole story," said **Joe Brinkley** (MYC-98), manager of the McCall Smokejumper Base, brother of Josh Brinkley and a triplet brother of Levi, who died in the fire.

"God bless (Putnam)," said John MacLean, author of *Fire on the Mountain* and three other nonfiction books on wildfires. "He's done a great, great service on human factors."

Putnam joined the U.S. Forest Service in 1963 and was a smokejumper from 1966 to 1976, with three years as a squadleader.

On July 17, 1976, he fought the Battlement Creek Fire, which killed three. A fourth man survived; he had lain facedown, and the fire passed over him.

Putnam warned other bosses 15 minutes and again three minutes before the fire roared up the hill. One victim's clothes were undamaged, another's were burnt off, and the third victim and the survivor's clothes were burned across the back only.

The discrepancies intrigued Putnam, who moved to the Missoula Technology and Development Center at once to help research and design better protective fire gear. He studied statistics and mathematics for six years while working on his doctorate in research psychology.

A workshop he held on human factors on the South Canyon Fire led to deeper scrutiny of human factors inherent in decision-making, situational awareness and leadership and a push by Putnam for a national study on firefighter safety, launched a month later.

While earlier investigative reports cited the facts of people's actions on wildfires, Putnam consistently pursues the "why" behind those actions. In the chaos, confusion and frenzy that arise when battling a wildfire, people develop tunnel vision. They need to step back, coolly gaze across the landscape and mindfully note all the changes occurring. Instead, they cling to whatever idea or plan they already made, shutting out new developments, said Putnam, a Missoula resident who winters in Prescott.

"Stress, fear and panic predictably lead to the collapse of clear thinking and organizational structure," Putnam wrote in a 1995 paper for the MTDC.

"While these psychological and social processes have been well-studied by the military and the aircraft industry, the wildland fire community has not supported similar research for the fire line. The fatal wildland fire entrapments of recent memory have a tragic common denominator: human error."

One such error was a dispatcher's failure to transmit to firefighters a red-flag warning of a cold front bringing high winds to Storm King Mountain.

Chris Cuoco, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Grand Junction, Colo., had worked nonstop to ensure that the latest weather updates got to the fire crews. He wept when he learned that they never received that news.

The military trains its people in mindfulness and situational awareness, said Cuoco, an Air Force veteran. "They teach pilots this, airline pilots in particular. They have to take in a great deal of information very fast. They put them through hell in training. It reinforces ... how stress and exhaustion can affect the brain," Cuoco said.

Putnam is "pretty academic, but human factors are a huge part of what's going on out there," said Winslow Robertson, who held the No. 2 position for the BLM in Grand Junction when the South Canyon Fire erupted.

"I'm a survivor, too, and I rehash this thing over and over and over. We use the word 'mindfulness' out there; I'm a big believer in that," he said during a Sept. 27 interview in Palisade, Colo. "We want everybody to come home at night; we want everybody to stay safe. We want mindfulness, a hard word to describe."

"Mindfulness," said Hipke, "in whatever terms, is just being aware, being in the now. You get on autopilot."

The question is how to inject mindfulness and situational awareness into a culture of tough, brave, can-do workaholics – the wildfire crews and their leaders.

Putnam's approach draws some skepticism. The longtime student of eastern Zen meditation swears by that practice to gain control of one's mind. Putnam held meditation workshops with wildland firefighters and, by all reports, many found it useful. The psychologist himself tries to meditate twice a day. When he doesn't, his wife, Gay, gently remonstrates him: "Ted,

you've gone off your meditation."

Edwards, the old-school hotshot, took some Putnam workshops and modified the approach for his hotshot crews.

"We would do a breathing exercise to clear all the clutter out of your head and have a blank slate so, when you get the briefing, you could get it in (your head)," he said. "No questions were to be asked. Just be there and listen. Then we would go into a visualization period – put yourself in the situation described, the weather, what to expect. Then we would open it up to questions."

On the fire front, "whenever we had a change of plan, the protocol was to go through the whole process again and recognize things had changed."

"We had a really good safety record, and we had a really good crew, too," Edwards said. "I think people felt they were part of something. ... Smart people on the crew gave me feedback. I'd ask, 'Did it help?' 'Yeah, it helped a lot.' "

Meditation won't work "for some ex-cowboy who becomes a firefighter in Montana," Cuoco said. "This is physiological; this is science; this is how the body reacts. They're now realizing they need to give people training. The only way to learn to react under stress is to put them under stress and show them how that thinking changes. It's not conscious. It has nothing to do with Eastern meditation."

Many fire leaders endorse Putnam's concept but recommend it be pitched with more emphasis on visualization and mindfulness to make it palatable to the fire community.

"I think Ted's onto something," Cook said. "There are all different ways mindfulness could be integrated (into training)."

It already is a central focus in much wildfire leadership training. And that training has come a long way since South Canyon.

MEMBER PROFILE

GREGG MARTIN

(FAIRBANKS'81)

In November 2013, **Tom Kovalicky** (MSO-61) forwarded an article from the "Allen FlyFishing" website. The Photo Contest Grand Prize Winner was Gregg Martin. The description of the winner was as follows:

"Way too much awesome going on in this photo! Gregg, once in the Airborne Infantry and a smokejumper, gets to the water in his modified manual wheelchair. We chose Gregg with this carp as our grand prizewinner for the photo contest. All of us here at Allen independently voted on this photo and all agreed it encompassed what we see our photo contests to be all about.

"This photo didn't win for being the best, biggest, or most exotic catch. It didn't win because it's the highest quality, most well-shot photo. It wins because the story behind it put it above the rest in memorability for us."

Gregg Martin Grand Prize Winner Photo (Courtesy Zach Amelia)

Gregg, an NSA member living in Boise, jumped in Alaska 1981-85 and was injured in an accident resulting in paralysis. We did run some info on Gregg in the July 2013 "Jump List," and I wanted to review that a bit.

He was injured in Fairbanks, August 22, 1985, while hanging

chutes to dry. He survived as a T7/T8 paraplegic and attended Boise State University getting a teaching certificate. Gregg and his wife, Vera, have three grown children and three grandkids. He said, "Smokejumping was the most wonderful and exciting time of a young life and the personalities I had the privilege of meeting and serving with will stay with me forever."

I contacted Gregg and asked him for an update for the "Jump List" as I felt that his story needed more exposure to our membership.

Greg replied: "I was asked by Chuck to update my status after a photo in a fly fishing photo contest by the Allen Fly Company in which I won the Grand Prize. The photo showed me with a large carp, my overwhelming angling passion since 2005. I used their (Allen) products and simply sent the picture in for kicks.

"Along with a substantial store credit, I met people via email who were interested in my effort. In any case I should explain that fly fishing became a great part of my life post injury and this also was a credit to the hundreds of trips with my children and, recently, my oldest grandchild, William.

"I also add that I tie far nicer that I used to and became a fly designer for Catchfly of Billings, Montana.

"As I mentioned in my last Jump List, there are many people who guided my life and helped for the ethos I live by to this day. I would give much thanks to **Jeff Bass** (MYC-77), **Bob Quillin** (FBX-71), **Tommy Hilliard** (MYC-67), **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69), **Mike Clarkson** (RAC-65), **Troop Emonds** (CJ-66), **Gary Granquist** (RAC-65), **Tony Beltran** (IDC-69) and others I know I missed."

Saving The Life Of An Injured Smokejumper

by Dick Good (Air Idaho Rescue Pilot)

On August 26, 1999, two loads of jumpers were dropped on the Mill Creek Fire near Jackson, Wyoming. While working the fire, a jumper was hit by a burning snag and received life-threatening injuries. A difficult night, air rescue was needed. Air Rescue Pilot Dick Good recounts the events of that evening.

Air Idaho Rescue (AIR) is based at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls. The AIR crew consisted of a pilot, an Idaho Falls Fire Department paramedic and a trauma flight nurse.

On August of 1999, we received a night dispatch to evacuate a severely injured firefighter on a fire southwest of Jackson, Wyoming. We departed Idaho Falls on a clear night with light winds and a very helpful moon, which stayed with us for the entire night. I think we began this mission around 2100 and finished around 0200 the next morning.

We were briefed that the firefighters on the ground were smokejumpers and also that a team from Teton County Search and Rescue was hiking into the fire. The lC on the fire felt the patient's condition was grave due to a back injury and probable severe internal injuries. The Teton County Search and Rescue team that was enroute indicated that, due to darkness and difficult terrain, they were making slow progress.

As we circled the fire, we contacted the lC. He asked whether or not we could attempt a night landing if they cut us a helispot in the forest at the edge of the fire. The proposed helispot was on a very narrow ridge which would allow a straight-in approach and leave the tail rotor hanging over the steep drop off of the ridge.

I had fourteen seasons of helicopter firefighting experience and the good fortune to work with smokejumpers on countless occasions. I was very familiar with the rigorous and comprehensive training they undergo. If they said they could build a safe workable helispot, I had every confidence they would. They estimated it would take an hour or so to complete the job, so we made the short flight to Jackson to wait at the hospital

A bit over an hour later, we were contacted by Teton Dispatch and told that the smokejumpers were ready for us. As we approached the scene, the lC let us know that the four corners of the touchdown zone each had a headlamp on it. Very clever and helpful. We made a nice, slow approach to a smooth landing on a flat, clear touchdown zone with the tail rotor

hanging out in space. Sweet!

Margaret, the flight nurse, leaned into my open door, gave me a big kiss and said, "thanks for not killing us!" Although the crew agreed with me that we could land safely, I think there was more than a little concern on their part. There was a lot of trust that night, and the jumpers did a Herculean job preparing a safe, usable helispot in such a short time!

Our crew took the med kits, backboard and we all hiked in about a quarter mile to the injured jumper's (**Mike Hill**/WYS-95) location. The fire was lying down at the time, but during the hike a burning snag literally exploded blowing the top half straight up in the air and then crashing to the ground. I seem to recall that we were told that that was what happened when Mike was injured.

Upon reaching Mike, my impression was that he was in shock and needed to be transported immediately. Margaret administered some meds right away. You could hear the urgency in her voice, and in very short order Mike was packaged on the backboard and we were hiking back to the helicopter.

We were in the air quickly and off to the hospital while Margaret and Todd, the paramedic, administered critical care to Mike. We were later told that if we had not gotten Mike to the hospital that night, he would not have made it to the morning.

There were many factors that contributed to the successful completion of this rescue: good weather, light winds, a moon, the excellent help of Teton Dispatch, my crew feeling safe enough to attempt such a landing, and, most of all, the tremendous efforts of USFS smokejumpers on the ground. lf a life is on the line, you know you can trust and count on them.

I am proud to have been a part of this life-saving team effort.

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE

by Chris Sorensen
(Associate)

There was a very good series of articles on a variety of wildland topics written by the Magic Valley Times-News in Twin Falls, Idaho, late last year. The subject of one of the articles is fire shelters.

In the article, **Ted Putnam** (MSO-66) advocates two firefighters getting under one shelter with a second fire shelter layered over the top of the first one. It's an interesting concept. I would like to see someone draw the thermodynamics out on paper in non-engineering terms for me.

In the same series it was reported that Putnam has been stonewalled and denied access to the Yarnell Hill deployment site. Ted winters in Prescott, Ariz. Dozens of people have been allowed on the deployment site, ranging from family members to members of the media. It makes my blood boil that a recognized expert on burn overs (who is a private citizen with no agenda) is being kept from the site.

Ted did manage to hike to a ridge that overlooks the site with the two hikers who were in the area the day of the entrapment. It is Arizona so my expectations about transparency are very low. Gratefully and rightfully a number of hotshot superintendents and smokejumper overhead have been allowed to visit the site.

The Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum in McMinnville, Ore., is in serious financial trouble and the future of the museum is in doubt. The museum is tied financially to multiple corporations controlled by Delford Smith, owner of Evergreen International Airlines, Inc.

The museum is trying to sell its Ford Trimotor for $1.75 million. A good source told me this particular Trimotor is worth $750,000. A pristine Ford Trimotor in original condition is worth about $1.3 million. The museum also reportedly still owes $50,000 on the Spruce Goose. The NSA placed a smokejumper display at the museum several years ago.

In Montana, the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners passed a resolution on Nov. 5, 2013, stating that the county's volunteer firefighters are not obligated to protect any structure in the Wildland-Urban Interface and the location of homes will not dictate tactics or the placement of fire lines.

The resolution also directs volunteer firefighters in the county to receive wildfire behavior training. Helena, the state capital, is in Lewis and Clark County as is Mann Gulch. There have been several Type 1 fires in Lewis and Clark County since 1999, including a WUI fire last year in the north end of the valley.

I am surprised the county commissioners had the political will to draft this resolution and sign it. We'll see how they respond when there is another Type 1 fire. Citizens are already complaining about the resolution. There is extensive beetle kill in Lewis and Clark County.

Louise Rankin Galt passed away at age 90 in Montana in November 2013. Louise is the attorney who unsuccessfully sued the federal government in an attempt to get the surviving family members of the men killed in the Mann Gulch Fire more than the $225 federal burial allowance.

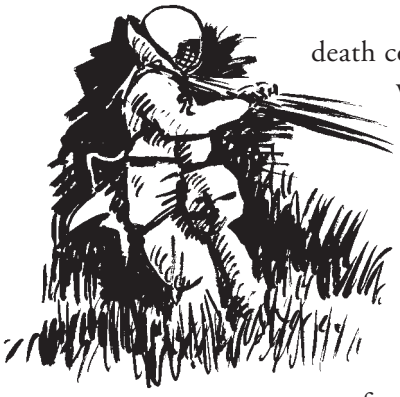
Among the smokejumpers retiring this year is **Brian Kvisler** (RDD-03), who is moving on to greener (organic) pastures. Brian has been very helpful to the NSA the past few years, and we wish him well in his new endeavors.

This column is dedicated to 1st Sgt. **Walter Morris** (PNOR-45) who passed away on October 13, 2013, at age 92. Sgt. Morris was one of the last three surviving original Triple Nickles – the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, made up entirely of paratroopers who were black.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Rescue Squad To Inaugurate Chute Training

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)
The "Daily Missoulian," July 30, 1943



The Coast Guard rescue squad which found the bodies of Harold Gillam, veteran Alaska aviator, and Miss Susan Batzer, Camas, Washington, in the midst of the Alaska winter last February, is set to train at Seeley Lake as parachute jumpers under the U.S. Forest Service.

Chief Warrant Officer S.H. Hook and nine young Coast Guardsmen, six of whom were with him on the crash rescue trip after the Gillam party mishap, have arrived here to serve as a crew of smokejumpers while in training as a U.S. Coast Guard paratroop rescue squad, the first of its kind.

"Survival of four of the six in the crash was among the most unbelievable happenings in Alaska Aviation crash history," said Chief Hook. "Gilliam froze to death and Miss Batzer's arm was cut off, death coming soon after the crash." The others were injured but were rescued a month later after living through exceptional hardships.

Chief Hook also figured in the Woodley plane crash investigation, when he dove into 114 feet of water to bring out the body. Hook has been a deep-sea diver for 24 years.

The Coast Guard rescue squad was forced to wade up to their armpits searching for the Gillam party in Alaska. Now they are training under the Forest Service as parachute jumpers, to permit more effective variations of the rescue work in which they engage.

It is Mr. Hook's third visit here, as he has twice lectured at Missoula County High School, first of "Wonders of the Deep," and again on "Alaska" last March.

Hook is an aviator and a deep-sea diver of long experience, having enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1942. He is a First World War veteran in the airplane service in the latter part of 1918. His father was among the first white men to winter inside the Artic Circle.

Today's Smokejumper – A Seasonal Round's Ruminations

by Jon Marshall (Missoula '04)

Bill Gabbert's "Wildfire Today" website (12/14/13) picked up an article from a blog by Missoula Smokejumper Jon Marshall dealing with various issues in the smokejumper program.

These are interesting times for the USFS smokejumper program and its employees. This piece reflects a few of my personal opinions and addresses some of the challenges and obstacles that I feel we face today. I am in no way speaking for others and I don't necessarily share the views of anyone within the program or otherwise.

I'm not one for exact statistics, figures or percentages, and I'm going to limit this piece to generalities, perspectives and conjecture. I believe that one can gain a lot of insight on an issue by simply looking at trends and by using a more heuristic and humanistic approach to an analysis.

Personal background

I began working for the Forest Service in the summer of 2000 with the Bitterroot National Forest on the Darby Ranger District. It was a busy season, and I was exposed to the myriad of components that make up wildland fire.

Over the next three years, I worked on two different hotshot crews – Sawtooth and Bonneville. My primary role on both crews was as a sawyer. By the time I left Bonneville in '03, I was a fairly competent C faller and had a good understanding of fire behavior and suppression strategies.

I rookied for the Missoula Smokejumpers in 2004 and have remained there until today, with the exception of two 120-day details: one to the Redmond Smokejumpers and the other to West Yellowstone.

At this point I have roughly 150 total jumps and just shy of 60 operational fire jumps. I've pursued my overhead qualifications aggressively and am currently an ICT3 trainee, division trainee and helibase manager trainee. I have a handful of single-resource qualifications, including ICT4, task force leader and helicopter manager.

Over the past several years, I've averaged in the neighborhood of 40-60 days working outside of the smokejumper program on overhead assignments, helicopter details or on miscellaneous details.

During the winter, I've complimented my fire skills by working in the ski industry. I worked for the Snowbird Ski Patrol for six years before moving on to Snowcat and Heli-Ski, guiding in both Utah and Nevada for another four years. I was employed as a lead guide, avalanche forecaster, and assistant operations manager.

In my free time I am a freelance photographer specializing in commercial and editorial portraiture and fashion. My degree from the University of Montana is in Financial Management with an emphasis in Investment Banking.

I give you my background simply to illustrate that I have a fairly well-rounded and somewhat unusual perspective on some of the current issues we face as smokejumpers. I run a small business, I work in technical environments outside of fire, I've had significant medical training and experience, and I've done a lot of risk management.

Smokejumpers

While most reading this will have a firm grasp of the modern and traditional fire environments, I think a brief overview is in order to adequately understand the challenges we face today as jumpers.

Things have changed quite a bit in the last 10 years, more so since the program's inception. The "bread-and-butter" fires of smokejumping's past – primarily wilderness fires and remote initial-attack fires requiring 2-10 people – are less common today. For these remote and isolated fires of days past, there were few alternatives for land managers other than using jumpers.

Smokejumper bases were staffed heavily. Missoula employed close to 200 jumpers at times during the 1960s and '70s. It wasn't rare for jumpers to get 20 or more operational jumps in a year.

Most jumpers were employed seasonally, and the core group was primarily young, single men. Many were students and very few stayed on for more than the operational season. Many of those only jumped for a handful of years before moving on to other careers.

Now, contrast that with today's smokejumper, our current staffing levels, and the broad range of missions for which jumpers are used today, including all risk-incident command, initial-attack fire suppression,

district project and fuels work, prescribed fire, fireline leadership, supervision and mentorship, teaching, training and more. Many wilderness areas across the country now employ fire-use management principles; often forest helitack crews tackle many of the local "remote" fires.

Many jumpers today average only 6-12 operational jumps a year, and base staffing across the program is at an all-time low while retention remains very high. For the first time ever the Redmond base employs fewer jumpers than the NCSB. Missoula currently staffs in the neighborhood of 60 jumpers.

The vast majority of the national program comprises career-appointed men and women with children. Many of those folks, if not funded for year-round work, are either actively or passively looking for year-round work. Many, if not the majority, have college degrees, many with post-grad degrees.

The Missoula program, with which I'm the most familiar, is a strong and successful program. Dozens of well-rounded recruits with multiple years of hotshot, helitack, and engine experience apply annually for a few sought-after positions. Attrition during rookie training is low, and new jumpers typically stay for years or longer after their first seasons.

The base itself retains a modern *esprit de corps,* with strong work ethic, drive, humility and dedication.

Current fire behavior and initial attack

Approximately half of the fires to which I've responded as a jumper have been large, aggressive, emerging fires. The days of the "two-manner" are, more or less, gone. Today, we often jump fires as a crew, ordering additional jumpers from surrounding bases to support the effort, if needed.

I won't get into forest management or beetle kill or fuel densities on our national forests; it suffices to say that today's fires require early detection, early prioritization of both fires and responding resources, and manpower for an initial attack to be successful.

An enormous change and challenge is the amount of urban interface in our forests today. Values at risk have escalated significantly. Managers will wait longer to dispatch limited resources to small remote fires when the possibility exists that an undetected fire will show itself later in the burn period, potentially threatening a community.

Due to this simple fact, fires are not always attacked as quickly as they could be. Prioritization of resources and fires becomes a complicated dance resulting in delayed dispatches for initial attack resources. The result being that fires become more established before we arrive.

Now that I've given some background regarding how the fire environment has changed and how our roles as jumpers have changed, we can take a critical look at our program. Are we adequately assessing our capabilities to handle these new challenges? If not, how can we adapt to that always-changing end goal? Does our program meet the needs of today's fire managers and our other users? Are we adequately diversified enough to handle the broad range of all-risk assignments for which we may be used? Are we skilled enough as leaders for the roles we may be asked to fill? How can we continue to retool ourselves to meet the needs of the future?

I'm going to address three fundamental problems that I think we, as jumpers, need to address in order for our program to move successfully into the future, and ultimately to thrive in the future.

These problems are an overqualified and undercompensated workforce. Another is understaffing and how it relates to what we not so affectionately call "lockdown" – resulting in decreased crew experience, lost training opportunities and a lack of relationship building with our users. And, finally, the actual parachute system itself; the storied round versus ram-air ("square") debate.

An overqualified and undercompensated workforce

A primary component of the smokejumpers mission today involves a lot of incident management and leadership on fires. Often, when we jump these emerging incidents, we're not so much "pounding line" as we are setting up the incident command system (ICS) – coming up with the strategies and plans to begin the process of extended attack.

We staff every airplane in Missoula with a type-3 incident commander. On any given plane load, we also have multiple division- and task force-qualified leaders, EMTs and paramedics, helitack, C-fallers … the list is long. Even first-year jumpers often get tasked with incident-command responsibilities, and we all take on increasingly challenging logistical assignments – such as GPS reconnaissance, mapping, radio operations and intelligence gathering, etc.

When the ordered resources arrive, typically during the second operational period, we plug them in quickly, efficiently and safely.

The "manpower" of the jump base is at the GS-5, GS-6 and to some extent the GS-7 levels. Because this "job" has turned into a career for most people, attrition

and turnover has dropped to just shy of non-existent. Jumpers are remaining at the GS-6 level – both temporary and seasonal – for literally decades.

If a "6" is motivated, it is not hard to have the equivalent, if not more, skills and qualifications than some of the base leadership. Additionally, many of our 5s and 6s actually spend more time out on fires during the season. They don't have the base supervisory responsibilities that require time at station.

These "entry-level" smokejumpers are filling any number of supervisory and overhead positions on large, dynamic and complex fires. We all still enjoy – in fact, love – the line-digging aspect of the job; and don't get me wrong, even our GS-8s and above still dig a lot of line every summer.

All are still encouraged, however, and at some level expected, to be pursuing qualifications and overhead positions on fires. The first speech a rookie receives upon completion of training reflects this attitude, with the expectation being "that you will become a leader in the national fire program."

At my experience level, eight years after becoming a GS-6, I'm competing with probably close to more than 30 other extremely qualified jumpers with an equal amount of experience, time-in-grade and qualifications for a seasonal GS-7 appointment in Missoula. Most have approximately 15 years of fire experience on engines, hotshot crews, and approximately eight or more years as jumpers. Most are married with kids.

The current system of compensation is flawed and woefully inadequate. We need to be compensated for our skills, motivation, drive and leadership in the fire community.

I was supervising task-force trainees this summer who were GS-12s making probably three times more than I was! Is it so unreasonable to think that if I'm managing close to 200 people on an active division with significant values at risk that I should at least be compensated as well as a type-2 crew boss?

Compound that with the liability insurance that we're all encouraged to carry, as our agency won't necessarily support us legally, and it literally becomes somewhat asinine to even want to pursue those qualifications and the accompanying responsibilities. And yet all of us do it. It is expected of us.

I believe the Bureau of Land Management program has a slightly better system, with reward-based upgrades as people meet certain leadership criteria. In our organization, temporary 120-day upgrades – based solely on qualifications being pursued and/or attained – seem like a start.

While we give out a few every year, they should be widespread. Do they even cost the base much out of pocket during a moderate to busy fire season when the majority of our personnel's wages are covered by fire dollars?

To add insult to injury, many of us are not even eligible for basic jobs inside fire program leadership outside of the smokejumper program due to the simple fact that we lack time-in-grade at the GS-7 level.

Staffing levels

Many forest managers still aren't using smokejumpers to our full potential. Some fire management officers still think that our core mission is to put out small, remote wilderness fires. Some fail to realize that we are very experienced "teams" that may be a solution to a multitude of fire and all risk problems. Some fail to realize the extent of our individual supervisory capabilities and qualifications.

Most districts are facing significant financial constraints, resulting in slashed equipment budgets and personnel staffing. This is widespread throughout the country and on almost every national forest. These districts may have had five engines and an IA crew several years ago, but today are severely "hamstrung," with minimal personnel to support only a few engines.

Smokejumpers could easily fill some of these shortages on a call-when-needed basis. So why are some managers failing to realize what an asset the smokejumper program could be for them? Simply put, we fail to build strong relationships with our users. Furthermore, we fail to educate them on our revised mission and our current capabilities.

When we actually initial attack small fires, we are extremely self-sufficient. It is both our strength and our weakness. Managers order us because they have limited resources on hand, they know we will solve their problem efficiently and cost-effectively, and they know we require minimal logistical support. We leave almost as silently as we drop in, typically submitting a fireman's report with a handshake for a job well done.

One could contrast that to an extended-attack overhead assignment, where a jumper works hand-in-hand with dozens of fire managers from around the country. A smokejumper has the opportunity to form exponentially more relationships with managers than one would be able to make on initial attack fires during the same time period – all in an operational and environmental context.

As overhead we get to "prove" ourselves, and be mentored and mentor others, both personally and professionally, on these assignments.

There is no reason for not pursuing these overhead opportunities at all cost! These relationships are instrumental for growing smokejumper program

support and are key to increased smokejumper use as we move into the future. The added value is that our jumpers, who are now getting tasked with taking on more responsibilities on these larger initial attack fires, get hands-on experience on well-organized fires from experienced trainers.

In my experience, the only way to become a smart, confident and respected leader is to practice those skills and continually expose oneself to the ICS environment. If we are getting used less as traditional smokejumpers, we need to diversify as firefighters.

Lockdown

Overqualified and underpaid GS-6s literally cringe when we hear the word. Quite simply, it means that the local or regional coordination center has deemed smokejumpers more valuable than overhead and has closed the door to all training and supervisory opportunities.

Lockdown eliminates a dozen or more significant training and relationship building opportunities annually for our team alone. The coordination center wants smokejumpers staffing aircraft, and I whole-heartedly agree with this. Why would you have 26 seats on aircraft sitting on the ramp with only 20 jumpers available to fill those seats?

The simple solution is to hire more GS-5/GS-6 temporary and permanent seasonal jumpers and request boosts earlier and more frequently. When national coordination centers come to the realization that there is a national shortage of smokejumpers, we will get the Washington Office's attention. We need our numbers back to where they were historically if we want to be used in every capacity and to our full capability.

I want to spend as much time as possible on fire during the season in a diverse range of positions. The only way I can close the financial gap between my "realized" value and my income – due to being overqualified and under-compensated – is to be on fires during the fire season.

The more time I spend on fire, the more money I make. The more experience I gain, the more qualifications I can pursue. The more competence I will have as a leader on fires and at the base, the more relationships I will form that will benefit the base in both the short and long term.

In Montana the American Legion puts up white crosses beside the road at places where someone has died in a car wreck. But they won't do it where someone died while riding a bicycle on the roadway. Jon McBride died of a heart attack on a frontage road adjacent to I-90 40 miles east of Missoula, Mt, while bike riding with the BOWS (Boys on Wednesday). The BOWS got together and made and installed a cross where Jon died. Former smokejumpers who participated in the installation were Chuck Fricke (GAC-61), Ted Nyquest (MSO-54), Bob Schumaker (MSO-59), Gary Weyermann (MSO-63), and Roy Williams (MSO-GAC-60).

You can't limit ambitious people on the team that strive to branch out, both personally and professionally, as smokejumpers without having a direct negative impact on the greater program. We need this job to be flexible enough to provide us the opportunity to do both.

There are always jumpers who request to be available locally, or have family obligations, or simply don't want to pursue project fires and details, and would rather "jump" fires. Increasing the number of entry-level smokejumpers would support this core initial attack force, while allowing more senior members to pursue qualifications while building relationships with users outside of smokejumping.

I am passionate about smokejumping! I love jumping fires! But I think it is critical that we don't lose sight of the fact that the reality is pretty clear: Only a percentage of our year is spent jumping fires and we need to diversify and network as much as possible within the national fire program if we want to strengthen our own.

Parachute systems

This brings me to my last point, the square versus round debate and the Forest Service's possible transition to the ram-air parachute. At this point I have chosen to remain on the round system.

The ram-air parachute is expensive. Management has said that the transition to the square parachute would cost the program approximately $12 million over 10 years. Currently the Redmond base is as small as it has ever been. Rumors abound that Redmond and NCSB are both facing serious budget constraints, that Missoula may absorb West Yellowstone, and that Redding has a retention problem.

Missoula has approximately 20 people fewer than when I started. Every district in the country is slashing jobs and equipment. Even our own regional office is talking about moving employees from its downtown office to the Aerial Fire Depot to free up lease dollars.

Ode To The "Ned" – A McCall Rookie Smokejumper

by Rob Shaver (McCall '67)

The trembling Ned stood staring at the gaping airplane door
His turn was next, his heartbeat loud above the engines' roar
He tottered in the doorway, spotter's hand upon his toe
Behind his wire mask his face was white as mountain snow

His glassy eyes saw nothing as he waited there to leap
Beneath his breath he stammered, "Now I lay me down to sleep …"
Finally the spotter gave that dreaded slap at last
Reflexes hurled him out into the prop's tornado blast

A scream of terror pierced the air; it was lost in all the din
Upside-down he tumbled, right-side up, then down again
For two eternal seconds he felt the hand of death
Then came a jerk, a burst of orange, and he caught his faltering breath

Across the azure morning sky like thistle down he sailed
His talon hands the risers gripped in case his harness failed
He looked up at his canopy; he peered down at the ground
Cautiously he tugged a line and spun himself around
Now filled with gay elation he had a sudden plan
I'll show those guys who wait down there the wonder that I am
Phenomenal and reckless was his descent that day
He planed and slipped, spun and dipped
It was high adventure all the way

His astral show brought cries and yells from those down on the ground
But our glory-blinded hero failed to watch where he came down
He landed on the highway, and such was his tragic luck
He disappeared still grinning beneath a logging truck

How, in light of this economic downturn and governmental shift toward "cost savings" and budget cuts, can we realistically be arguing for such an expensive system? Is it not fiscal irresponsibility?

Also, where is the guarantee of this $12 million in financial support? Is this support still going to be available five years into this transition if the Forest Service continues to slash budgets, personnel and equipment nationwide? If our funding stops, which is fairly plausible, or if our estimated cost of implementation is inaccurate or insufficient, what are the chances that we'll be able to move forward on a system that is estimated to be 2-3 times more expensive than our current one?

Along those lines, what are the costs to the end user after successful implementation of the ram-air system? One of the strongest criticisms of the smokejumper program from our users is our high cost. Are these users interested in absorbing the additional costs of the ram-air system when they see no added value from it?

They ultimately don't care how we get there; they care about a particular problem we solve for them. This pot of money addresses the transition to the system, but doesn't adequately address the expenses after implementation or address how districts will be saddled with the burden after the fact.

Almost everyone to whom I've spoken and who has flown a ram-air parachute thinks improvements need to be made to the current three evaluation canopies. Why would you adopt, pay for and transition to a system when it is not a finished product? Do people fail to realize that we have the ultimate freedom and latitude right now to explore these problems, their solutions and alternatives?

We have the ability to test new systems, new canopies, new products, different manufacturers and developers. When we adopt a system, won't we be transitioning to "The System"? It's a system that increasingly seems not to excite us too much. It will be infinitely harder to correct or change systems down the road if we make a commitment to something that doesn't currently meet our needs.

The training and loft requirements are significantly higher. The majority of the square jumpers to whom I've talked have expressed the need for more training jumps relative to a round to remain as proficient. This is to be expected; it is a much more technical parachute system.

The learning curve for flying the ram-air is steeper, and some of our most experienced jumpers experience significant challenges during both training and on operational fire jumps. In addition, numerous high- and low-speed malfunctions requiring reserve deployments require additional training.

Since Missoula began evaluating the ram-air, we've watched the man hours dedicated to the loft and training skyrocket. Between ram-air refresher, new man ram-air training, train-the-trainer courses, harness manufacturing, commitments to Alaska and Boise for continued training after certification, and continued testing and evaluation of the three different canopies, the time commitment is significant.

As we move forward with the transition, Missoula's employees will be traveling to sites around the country and training other jumpers in those places. As it is, there are only a limited number of people available for district (local project) work outside of the base, and that number will decrease for the foreseeable future.

Isn't our real mission fire suppression, prescribed fire, fuels projects, hazardous-fuel reduction, duty officer assignments, tree climbing, team assignments, etc.? This is an enormous opportunity cost that few seem to acknowledge. Our users and the Forest Service need smokejumpers and leaders in the field, not in the loft and under canopy.

Another negative impact of the transition is the possible elimination of the detailer program. Missoula typically trains several temporary detailers from around the country annually.

These individuals are critical to the success of the program and have proven to be very valuable proponents and users of smokejumpers time and time again. They learn about the capabilities of the smokejumper program and then return to their home units armed with that knowledge and their relationships formed during the detail. Will this program continue to exist if we make the transition to the ram-air?

I have yet to be presented with a solid list of advantages that the ram-air canopy has over the round – the exceptions being the RSL (reserve static-line deployment) and the AAD (automatic activation device) systems used with the square.

Could these systems not be integrated into a round canopy at a relative cost? Why are we still using the antiquated Capewell system on the round instead of a three-ring release system? Can we not integrate the RSL system into our existing reserve/main? Why can't we use an AAD on a round?

Yes, the square can handle higher winds. In approximately 60 operational fire jumps, I've been winded out two times, and I've landed moving backward maybe a few more. More typically it seems that if rounds don't jump, squares don't jump either. If they do jump, we reinforce them the next morning when conditions are more favorable.

I've been on several fires where rounds have jumped and the squares didn't, due to the limitations of the

cloud ceiling. They typically came back later in the day or the next morning to support us. This argument seems like a moot point.

Mid-air collisions on Forest Service round canopies are extremely rare. While they've happened, several with severe consequences, these collisions have typically been the result of pilot error and a lack of situational awareness, not equipment failure or parachute malfunction.

While one can gain more vertical separation when using a square parachute, which would theoretically minimize the risk of a "mid-air," jumpers are humans and will make mistakes. I have seen several square jumpers do one too many bomb turns in the name of vertical separation, ultimately resulting in an altitude insufficient to make the jump spot.

A mid-air collision on a ram-air has a high probability of disastrous consequences, severe injury, and possible death for both jumpers involved. Mid-airs on a round canopy are fairly common in military mass-exit troop deployment, and are statistically proven to only rarely result in a collapsed canopy, a fatality or even an injury. Forest Service round jumpers typically jump two at a time and horizontal separation and airspace issues should be a non-factor for a well-trained jumper. If a particular jump spot is so small that air space will be an issue, we should be jumping single-person sticks regardless of the canopy.

Malfunction rates on a round compared to a square are simply incomparable. The malfunctions that do occur on a round are almost exclusively slow speed in nature and do not require a reserve deployment.

The most common malfunction, and a rare one at that, is a broken steering line resulting in a slow turn in one direction. Jumpers are taught to utilize "riser turns" to counteract this slow turn. It is typical to do at least one practice jump per season using only the risers to steer. This provides a controlled training simulation for this particular malfunction.

Steering line malfunctions on ram-air parachutes induce a fast and uncontrollable spin requiring an unstable reserve deployment. Ram-air parachutes are susceptible to a wider range and a greater number of malfunctions. The vast majority of those malfunctions require reserve deployment. That's simply not an acceptable level of risk for me.

Many of our jump spots on forests throughout the country involve penetrating a fairly tight canopy. It is significantly more challenging to sink a square parachute vertically.

The ram-air parachute requires forward air speed to fly with stability; as you decrease forward air speed, you decrease stability, increasing risk as the potential of stalling the canopy rises. As ram-air canopies stall, they begin falling backward, and the only course of action is to increase forward air speed, often resulting in surging, abrupt, and swift forward acceleration.

This typically occurs at very low elevations and on the final descent. The consequences can be severe and unforgiving.

One can have softer landings on the ram-air canopy if the canopy is flared well in favorable winds. Complaints of hard landings on the round canopy are common with our larger jumpers. Our current large round canopy was designed with a specified weight limit. If we are meeting or exceeding these specifications, we need to manufacture an extra-large canopy.

The alternative to a soft ram-air landing can be much worse than a hard round landing, however, and often results in significant physical injury, a higher potential for paralysis and the possibility of death in extreme cases. Simple physics can easily explain the concept that seems lost on so many.

Kinetic energy is the measurement of energy in motion. Mechanism of Injury and the associated blunt-force trauma is directly correlated to the kinetic energy experienced during an accident. The key component here is velocity; it's important because as speed increases, it is **squared**!

$KE=1/2 *m*v^2$ where m is mass and v is velocity.

Let's look at a 150-pound male. One jumper is on the square system and one on the round system. The wind is 10 mph.

The square has an approximate forward speed of 20 mph; subtract the 10 and he's traveling 10 mph. If he's a good pilot, he should easily be able to flare his chute on landing and have an easy, soft, slow-speed landing.

The round moving at 10 mph forward speed is now traveling at 0 mph. While he can't flare, he has no forward speed. If he executes a good roll, the landing will be similarly straightforward with slightly more vertical fall. The potential kinetic energy in both of these landings is close with a slight edge to the round from a numbers perspective; the edge going to the square if the pilot flares perfectly, due to decreased vertical fall involved. The kinetic energy in each landing is low, probably between 0 and 30.

Now let's look at the same two jumpers. This time they both get caught off guard with a 180-degree, 10-mph wind switch at their backs.

The round is running with a tailwind, moving 20 mph, with velocity squared of 400 and with kinetic energy of 300. He's in for a hard landing, and the risk for injury is fairly high.

The ram-air pilot loses his ability to flare due to his speed relative to the wind speed, and he's now moving

close to 30 mph. His velocity squared is 900, compared to 400 on the round! His kinetic energy in turn is 675 versus 300 for the round! The ram-air's probability of injury is significantly higher than that of the round because his kinetic energy is greater than two times that of the round in this example!

EMTs, paramedics and doctors around the world rely on a "complete and accurate account of the mechanism of injury" to predict injuries and treat trauma patients. It should be obvious that there is a high probability for significant blunt-force traumatic injury to a jumper when he experiences a hard, high-velocity landing on a ram-air parachute. We've all witnessed this phenomenon, and we've all seen even experienced square parachute pilots suffer high-velocity landings.

I believe that our ram-air injury rates over the previous five years attest to this. There is no denying that smokejumping is a somewhat dangerous mode of travel. There are inherent risks when parachuting into unforgiving, harsh, rocky terrain commonly accompanied by variable mountain winds. These risks increase significantly when jumping a ram-air parachute.

I shouldn't even have to mention the three fatalities – **Billy Martin** (LGD-79), **David Liston** (FBX-98) and, most recently, **Mark Urban** (NIFC-03) – which have occurred on the ram-air system since 1990.

The Bureau of Land Management smokejumper program currently employs around 150 jumpers. Since 1990 their program has experienced, on average, a fatality every eight years. The USFS program employs approximately 300 jumpers. From experience, does it seem reasonable that the smokejumper program, as a whole, might experience two fatalities every eight years if the Forest Service transitions to the ram-air?

What would happen to our program if we adopt this parachute and four years from now had a fatality, paralysis or severely debilitating injury to one of our jumpers? Can the program survive an incident like this? Can we accept that as a cost of doing business?

I can't envision a transition back to the round after a serious incident, years into funding, with a program-wide commitment to a new parachute. This doesn't even account for the more hazardous, technical jump country found in regions 1, 5 and 6 versus the BLM's jump country.

If we are willing to accept these increased risks, what are the real, actual, tangible advantages of the ram-air system? I want to see concrete evidence and explicit explanations for why this canopy is better than the one we're currently on.

Ultimately, as I write this, I realize that little of why I am so passionate about the smokejumper program has anything to do with the parachute or parachuting. While I do parachute 15 to 20 times a year, I don't necessarily consider myself an expert parachutist. Professional parachutists parachute for a living and jump multiple times every day; many make thousands of jumps annually. Some accrue tens of thousands of jumps during their careers. They are the best canopy pilots in the world, and they pursue new technologies and innovation as an industry. We are simply firefighters who parachute.

Does the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service really want to delve into parachute development, design, and testing for such a niche group of users who are increasingly getting used less and less by districts around the country? Are we willing to sacrifice professional development to become more focused parachutists?

Closing

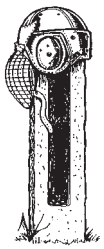
I've loved living the life of a smokejumper. The people, the places, the experiences, the opportunities, the adventure; the skills, the training, the challenges, the obstacles, the fears and the insight that I've gained while employed as a smokejumper have given me an acute appreciation of what one is truly capable of if one puts his or her mind to it.

I typically spend less than 20 minutes a year under canopy, but spend close to six months of my life away from home, dedicated to fire and the travel and the lifestyle associated with it. During that six-month period, I spend close to 100 days on active fire assignments and work nearly 800 hours of overtime, filling a variety of roles while making significant sacrifices to other aspects of my personal and professional life.

I enjoy the small initial-attack fires with close friends, but I also grow from the challenges, personal tests and complexities found in incident command and on large project fires. I want to see this program move healthily forward into the future while providing its employees with the career opportunities and support they deserve.

The smokejumper program is, at its core, the strongest professional development program in the Forest Service and, in my opinion, one of the strongest in the country outside of the military. Individuals who leave the smokejumper program go on to become extremely strong leaders, mentors and role models throughout this country. They pursue a wide range of careers from national incident managers and fire leaders to politicians, to scientists, to private business owners and entrepreneurs.

I think it's critical that we don't lose sight of what this program really means to most of us, while truly recognizing how fragile it may really be.



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

Walter Morris (Pendleton '45)

Walter, 92, died Oct. 13, 2013, in Palm Coast, Florida. He was one of the original black paratroopers in the Army's 555th Parachute Infantry Company, the "Triple Nickles," and served during the time when the military was segregated.

Walter, a first sergeant, led his men on a westbound train from Camp Mackall, North Carolina, in May 1945, during a secret mission called "Operation Firefly." They had expected to join the fighting in the Pacific, but upon arrival in Pendleton, Oregon, they learned they would be parachuting into remote areas to fight forest fires caused by Japanese incendiary balloons. He told the Associated Press in 2000: "There was this group of loggers sitting around this big potbellied stove, and they said, 'Oh, you're here. We've been waiting for you a long time. We read in the paper that you were coming out here to be smokejumpers.' "

After high school graduation, Walter began an apprenticeship as a bricklayer, but he found construction work was sparse during the Depression. He joined the Army as a one-year volunteer in January 1941. Walter and his men were largely servants to the white combat troops at Ft. Benning, Georgia – they did the cooking, mess hall serving and other mundane tasks, but longed to be paratroopers.

In their off time, Sgt. Morris and a few others trained themselves to be paratroopers while the "jump school" facilities were not in use by "official" trainees. A passing general took note of their efforts and put Walter in charge of a handful of black soldiers, who began official training to be Army paratroopers. Walter was the first black soldier to earn the Army's coveted "Jump Wings." The handful soon became a company with Walter in charge. The Airborne Training School was subsequently inundated with black applicants and the company became a battalion. Walter was promoted to sergeant major, the battalion's highest-ranking enlisted man.

Bernard 'Bernie' Hilde (Missoula '69)

Bernie, 69, died Oct. 16, 2013, in Eagle, Idaho. He joined the Navy immediately after high school graduation and was based in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as well as aboard the USS Chipola in Vietnam. Bernie attended the University of Montana, but launched a career jumping at Missoula during the 1969-94 seasons. Following retirement, he and his wife traveled around the world twice.

Roger Wolfertz (Cave Junction '48)

Roger died on September 28, 2013. He jumped for two seasons after a summer in a blister rust program in Idaho. After graduation from the University of Denver in 1951, Roger enlisted in the US Air Force and served in England as a Russian language specialist. After discharge from the USAF in London, Roger married a Danish nurse, whom he had met on a train in Holland. Together they spent the next six months in Innsbruck, Austria, attending university, hiking and skiing. With three friends, Roger sailed a 42' sailboat from England to Miami in 1956. Settling down in Sacramento, Roger spent 40 years as a lawyer for the California Department of Education. During that time he and his wife raised their daughter and traveled to over 100 countries, including high altitude trekking in Nepal and Kyrgyzstan.

Steve Walker (Missoula '68)

Steve died October 19, 2013, at his home in East Lake Creek, Colorado. He traveled to Vail, Colorado, in the '70s from Idaho and began a career as the East Lake Creek Ranch manager and a Vail ski instructor. Steve jumped at Missoula 1968-70 and 1974-77. He was a member of Squad VI, Missoula New Man Squad. Steve joins Bert Tanner and Willie Von Bracht as "Off the List." The other six stand tall and ready.

Richard E. "Dick" Light (Cave Junction '58)

Dick died October 27, 2013, in Albany, Oregon, of Alzheimer's related issues. After serving in the 82nd Airborne, he jumped at Cave Junction during the 1958-59 seasons and was on the 1959 Silver City Crew. Dick earned his degree in Business & Technology from Oregon State University. Later he earned his

teaching credential and taught 5th grade for eight years. Dick also worked in sales, construction and owned a restaurant.

Del W. Cumley (Missoula '50)

Del died November 26, 2013, at his home in Missoula. He served in the Army Air Corps from 1945-48 and later in the Air Force from 1951-53 as a Staff Sergeant. Del jumped at Missoula during the 1950 season. He began his career as a chemist at the pulp mill in Frenchtown in 1957, rose to the position of Production Manager, and retired in 1982.

Howard L. Wolf (McCall '53)

Howard, 78, of Sweet Home, Oregon, died July 3, 2013. He graduated from the University of Missouri with honors in Forestry. On his return to Missouri after his rookie year at McCall 1953, he was badly injured in a car accident that ended his jumping days.

After graduating from the University of Missouri, Howard worked for the USFS and then for the private forestry sector. He was well known in the Northwest timber industry. Howard died after an extended battle with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

Glenn E. Anderson (Grangeville '62)

Glenn, 69, died July 12, 2011, in Anchorage, Alaska. He graduated from Washington State University and worked for the State of Washington for several years as a biologist on a black bear study. Glenn then worked for the federal government in Eastern Washington as a Forester and Fire Management Officer before moving to Alaska in 1980. Glenn jumped at Missoula and Grangeville 1962-64.

Michael P. Kelly (McCall '12)

Mike died November 16, 2013. He was a 1999 graduate of Eagle H.S. (Idaho), where he was an accomplished wrestler. Mike began his career with the USFS in 2001 and was working with the Tahoe Hotshots at the time of his death. In the off-season, he traveled the world from the Amazon to Switzerland with Brazil holding a special place in his heart. Mike jumped at McCall in 2013 and at West Yellowstone in 2013.

George M. Fusko (Missoula '62)

George died November 16, 2013, in Decatur, Michigan. He was a 1963 graduate of the University of Montana and was commissioned in the US Navy in 1965. In 1984, George was the first non-flight officer to be designated Commanding Officer of a Patrol Squadron. He retired from the Naval Reserve in 1990 as a Captain. George taught for 33 years in the Decatur Public Schools before retiring in 2001. After retiring, he joined the Decatur School Board as a trustee, a position he held until his death. George jumped at Missoula during the 1962 season.

James B. "Jim" Foresman (McCall '57)

Jim died November 20, 2013, in Pittsburg, Kansas. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after high school and served in Japan and Korea. Jim graduated from Kansas State with a bachelor's and a master's from the University of Tulsa. After college Jim spent over 23 years as a petroleum geologist engaged in international exploration. While at Phillips Petroleum, he served as Staff Director of International Ventures and participated in the Glomar Challenger Deep Sea Drilling Program. Later, he returned and served on the staff of Pittsburg State University until his retirement in 2003. Jim jumped the 1957 season at McCall.

Robert A. "Rigger" Snyder (Cave Junction '48)

Rigger died January 4, 2014, in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. He was a Merchant Marine during WWII, a smokejumper, an ironworker, and a superintendent at Pocono Raceway. He retired from Baker Chemical.

Rigger was proud to be a "Gobi" jumper and was a great financial supporter of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum project that saved the base from destruction. He jumped at Cave Junction 1948-51.

A Jump Into The Frozen Hell Of The North Woods July 11, 1963

*A few weeks ago I was a dinner guest of **Ernie Hartley** (MSO-62) and his wife, Susan. While reminiscing, Ernie mentioned that he had an article that had been written by **Doug "Digger" Daniels** (MSO-61). Digger had written the piece while he and Ernie were assigned to the Fairbanks base. That was some 50 years ago.*

Digger has always been known for his irreverent use of the English language. He's the guy who commented about the beauty of "flutter-bys" as they skipped along the breeze over a mountain meadow. Knowing Digger's liberal use of words, I was most interested in reading the following article.

—Kent Lewis (MSO-62)

Once again I am called upon to face death. Fire call came in at 1600. Just had time to eat what could very well have been my last supper – dead pig meat, taters and peas.

The death winds are blowing quite violently and the muster call has gone out for the wily, cunning beasts of the north. Our main threat will be the striped-bellied, needle-nosed, blood-sucking hover bugs – that is if we are lucky enough to make it past the skimmeny whomps[1], which will undoubtedly be lurking in the slipstream.

Take off at 1620 … after an uneventful ride to the fire, we jump into hell at 1730. Needless to say, the skimmeny whomps were out for me today. Try as they did, I still managed to cheat death once again. They did manage to give me a complete inversion however, but cool, calm thinking brought me through the incident without a mar to my tender young bod.

The sport and fun is over, but there is plenty of excitement awaiting us at the head of the raging inferno which is gobbling across the tundra, skin bubbling any animal or object that might be in its path.

Everyone grabs a fire tool and races off through the tundra to meet the hellious adversary as they would meet any other personal enemy.

The death winds are now whispering at a low ebb and causing only nominal trouble. The holocaust has a good start, however, and is now crowning out through the reindeer moss, the lichens, and the trappers-tea bushes.

After a considerable amount of time we are able to knock the fire fish-limber. Only through the toughness of mind and body could this raging demon ever been quenched.

Once again those innate and learned characteristics that make a smokejumper a smokejumper have led us to another glorious victory for good ole Smokey Bear.

The excitement is over, but the job is only half begun. We now begin the long tedious job of mopping up. Only after this has been completed can we think of catching a bite to eat and a few winks of sleep.

Finally we can declare – gratefully – that the inferno has been thoroughly suppressed.

Now the problem of getting back to base confronts us. It's miles to the nearest place that a plane can land – the terrain is tough, and the tundra terrible to walk in. Also, there is the 120-pound pack to think of.

But, in the smokejumper tradition, without curse or grimace each man loads up his pack and starts up the trail as if undaunted by the trying, tiring time he has spent killing the enemy of nature's wonderlands.

Hours of work, sweat, blood, guts and more sweat bring us at last to the river bank, where we can relax for a short time before we must face once again the possibility of a spin, crash and burn death in the plane that we hope will carry us home safely to our loved ones.

This is just a short account of the trials of a smoghopper and how he earns the right to be called "the rough, tough SOB he hired out to be."

Author's note

1. Skimmeny whomps – Skimmeny whomps are very mysterious creatures. The common ones are much like birds except that they have very little resemblance whatsoever. They have an orange body and purple wings with green polka dots, and they are covered all over with fur … except where they have scales. You may think it strange that you have never encountered such a colorful, gaudy creature. This can be easily explained. Although skimmeny whomps possess these strange characteristics, they also possess several others that are even stranger.

First off, skimmeny whomps fly at such a great speed that it is impossible to follow them with the untrained eye. Next, they are completely invisible and transparent to the human eye. They have been observed through scientific means, which I am unable to disclose because of security reasons.

The normal human has never seen one, but nearly everyone has experienced their presence – this is what I've been getting to.

Skimmeny whomps are very mischievous creatures by nature. They thrive on pulling tricks that always cause trouble and often can cause tragedy.

One of these tricks is that of flying into the slipstream and causing malfunctions on parachutes – inversion, streamers, lineovers, etc. Some of their more gentle tricks are climbing into open gas tanks and clogging up gas lines on cars, spilling over drinks in bars, and so on.

I hope this description has cleared up things a bit, and I'm sure you will be aware of these creatures from this time on.

Touching All Bases

Grangeville Base Report

by Mike Blinn (Redding '01)

Winter has been slow on the Camas Prairie. Since last report, not much has changed at Grangeville. Due to the furlough, prescribed fire implementation was low on the Nez-Clear fire zone.

We didn't send any folks down to Region 8 in the fall. We did fly the training supervisor position, and as this goes to print, we will have requested a cert and be well on our way to making a selection for that position.

We have many holes in our overhead structure currently and will be making a push to fill those positions, as well as any created by way of attrition or new hires. Stay tuned to USAjobs if you're looking for a spotter position, as we may fill one or more of those, and possibly an assistant foreman position later this spring.

Mike Blinn and his wife Erin welcomed a baby boy, Sean Lochiel Blinn, January 3, 2014. **Pat Gocke** (RDD-09) is currently detailing with the Davidson River Hand Crew as a crewboss trainee. **Garryn Ryg** (GAC-09) travelled to Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida and is participating in its prescribed fire program.

We are hoping for a more active Region 8 spring this year, as the last couple have been slow.

The rookie hiring process has begun for the year. We have three vacancies for rookie/transfer hires this year barring any further attrition throughout the spring. Past that, it's status quo in Central Idaho. Snow pack is low, and the winter has been very pleasant thus far. Hopefully we'll see you guys soon … maybe on a February booster to Redding.

McCall Base Report

by Adam Dealaman (McCall '10)

As the dragon sleeps soundly through the winter, the McCall Smokejumpers are busy prepping their minds, bodies and tools for the upcoming firestorm that will be 2-0-1-4!

It's definitely wintertime here in McCall and going to the base is like walking into church on a Wednesday. Operations are busy with fleet auctions and mandatory physical paperwork. Training is busy hiring rookies and getting the bros educated. Loadies, who saw their NWCG video clip pay dividends last season, are scheming on how to get even more PC goodness to the fire masses. Slammin' IVs and taking vitals, medical room supervisor **Hans "Hanzo Roll" Ohme** (MYC-01) is on "Baby Watch" 2014, and by press time will be the proud father of two. And, lastly, if I was a bettin' man, I'd say the loft is probably sewing something.

Since winter base news is slim, a short recap of the 2013 season is in order. Thanks to some in-depth, deep-in-the-weeds reporting, **Matt "The Morning Brief" Galyardt** (MYC-02) e-mailed me the annual report, I was able to compile some hard-hitting 2013 stats.

As it turns out, 2013 was quite a significant year for the champagne of bases. Looking at our 10-year average, we were right behind 2006 for total fire jumps. McCall and Ogden bases staffed 69 fires last year with 363 total fire jumps. Including Silver/Ogden spike operations and boosts, those numbers shot up to 117 fires staffed and 493 fire jumps.

All of this action resulted in the base being jumped out a total of 12 times and left a few empty barstools here in town. Since '13 was such a heavy initial-attack year, our single resources were a bit behind our 10-year average. The base sent out 63 single resources last year, with a total of 356 days on fires.

Aside from throwing 673 standard jumper-cargo bundles, loadies were especially busy last year, too. They flew 24 PC missions on 12 separate fires; 14 of those PC missions were straight out of Paul's Market with fresh chow.

Lastly, this past fire season proved to be big for overall base qualifications. Training foreman **Jeff "Suge Knight" Schricker** (MYC-98) was getting hit with "signed off" task books all season. Seven Type 3 ICs got their cards punched last season, bringing the total number of qualified to 14. Additionally several single resources, Type 4s,

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

Contributions since the previous publication of donors January 2014

Donor	In Memory/Honor of
John Bernstein (Assoc)	**Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09)
John Coyle (Assoc)	Smokejumpers in need
Sandra Hogenson/Cliff Hjelmer	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
Larry Wright (MSO-71)	Finn Ward, **Walt Currie** (MSO-75)
	Bernie Hilde (MSO-69)
American Legion Post #127	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
Enid Andreasen	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
John Coyle, Kevin Quick, David Hilde, Mary Ann Quick, Graydon Larson	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
John Lammers (MSO-71)	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
	Steve Walker (MSO-68)
Charlie Rodgers (MSO-64)	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
C.J. Horner (MSO-65)	Families in Need
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Stacey Riemer	**Bernie Hilde** (MSO-69)
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	Jon McBride (MSO-54)
	Ben Musquez (MSO-56)
	Dave Barnhart (MSO-56)
	Art Jukkala (MSO-56)
Squad VI	**Bert Tanner, Steve Walker,**
	Willie vonBracht (MSO-68)
Michael Burney (IDC-66)	Families in Need

Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—$37,240

Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to: Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico, CA 95926

DIVS, TFLDs, and a claims specialist (what the –?) were qualified in '13.

It's too early in the year to report on promotions, transfers, incarcerations, rookie hires, etc. The fire hire process doesn't end until March and, as it stands right now, there is only one vacant GS-6 position due to the departure of **Clay "Yazz" Yazzie** (MYC-09) last season.

McCall is looking at hiring 6-8 "Neds" this year with **Eric "Messy" Messenger** (GAC-99) leading the rookie training in '14. New to the rookie training cadre this year will be Michigan State track star-turned-smokejumper **Matt "INGUS" Ingram** (MYC-09). Matt and returning

trainer **Dan "Boothie" Booth** (MYC-07) will undoubtedly be treating them "Neds" like a baby treats a diaper.

Region 8 module rotations haven't happened yet, and the only wintertime detail/work I am aware of is here in McCall. **Matt "Smokejumper" Carroll** (MYC-03) is detailed to the "Office of Learning" which, he has assured us, is indeed a "real" office. Filling in behind Carroll in his diversity outreach and recruitment position is me, **Adam "I'll do ANYTHING for Winter Work" Dealaman** (MYC-10). And never one to be stingy with the drip mix or PSD machine, **Jarrod "Shaq Daddy" Sayer** (MYC-95) is currently down at the Prescribed Fire Training Academy ripping off several thousand acres of southern rough.

Sadly, our friend and bro **Mike Kelly** (MYC-12) left this earth Nov. 16, 2013. The first time I met Mike was in '09 when both our Hotshot crews were on the same rotation in Northern California.

The Tahoe Hotshots, for whom Mike worked, were always an intimidating crew to run into on the fireline. They are built like long-distance runners, with strength and endurance, but maintain that laid-back California attitude. Mike was no exception to this, and he stood out on the crew as a great guy and terrific fire fighter.

He was taller than everyone else, and in interacting with him, you'd get the sense that he was going to be a great fireline leader someday. After a smokejumper rookie training injury that sidelined him in 2011, I was excited – along with the rest of the McCall base – to see Mike come back and rookie in 2012.

Mike was instant family here in McCall, proving to be a great friend and fun to be around on and off the line. West Yellowstone got Mike last season, but we were glad to see him when he paid us a visit on his days off while boosting GAC. I'm glad I had the opportunity to call Mike Kelly my friend, neighbor and brother. We'll miss you, Mike.

Great Basin Base Report

by Todd Jinkins (NIFC '98)

Sept. 27, 2013, is a day that will weigh on the hearts of all Great Basin Smokejumpers forever. On that day the smokejumper community lost one of its kindest, hardest-working, most intelligent and dedicated members.

Mark "Yeti" Urban (NIFC-03) was the type of person and smokejumper both young and old smokejumpers respected.

For the young jumper, Mark represented the tough rookie trainer who mentored them through training, supervised them as a spotter, led them by example on the fireline and befriended them with his quiet demeanor. For the older jumpers, Mark was the man whom we all looked at and said, "That guy is doing it right."

His life was directed by a compass that pointed not in any cardinal direction, but in the direction by which we all wish we could be guided. His compass needle pointed toward compassion, freedom, and desire to be the best at whatever he did.

The 2013 season came to an abrupt end Aug. 30 when we jumped our last fire. It is the first time in many decades that the Boise base had not jumped a fire in September.

Overall, the Boise base experienced a slightly below-average season. We put 589 jumpers out the door on 108 fires; our 10-year average has been 756 jumpers out on 143 fires. The fire season in the Great Basin seemed to ebb and flow throughout the season with periods of extreme fire starts and activity and long fire lulls.

We started the year with 67 smokejumpers, including three rookie jumpers: **Troy Mackey** (NIFC-13), **Zack Becker** (NIFC-13) and **Nate Towers** (NIFC-13).

Three outstanding transfers also came to us from Alaska and Redding: **Rob Miller** (FBX-05), **David Smith** (RDD-03) and **Gabe Harry** (RDD-12). **Scott Salisberry** (RDD-94) came back to jump a partial season in Boise as a detailer from Western Great Basin Coordination Center after a 10-year jumping hiatus.

Hector Madrid (MYC-88), the Great Basin Base Manager, left the jump program in January 2014 to return home to New Mexico as the Bureau of Land Management's state fire management officer. This is Hector's second time leaving the program, so I am sure we will see him back because we all know that the third time is the charm.

As I write this update, it is cold, snowy and overcast in Boise, but we continue to plan for the spring and summer that always comes and throws us back into a wild frenzy. We will train new rookie candidates this spring to carry forth the traditions and honor the lives of smokejumpers of yesteryear. Stay tuned to hear updates of their adventures.

Alaska Base Report

by Jay Wattenbarger (Fairbanks '92)

The 2013 fire season finally wound down for us Nov. 2 when six bros demobed from a fire near Delta Junction. The fire was boat access only and we had to swap out the jet lower unit for a prop due to flowing slush in the Tanana River.

Since that time our loft has been busy preparing for the upcoming season with a couple of other folks taking care of the administrative and training chores. Two of our

rookie trainers are going through the rookie applications and will start making offers in February. We anticipate hiring around eight rookies.

Gabe Mason (NCSB-07) took a job running a Forest Service fire crew in Oregon last summer and will be missed.

We've had a relatively mild winter with average snowfall but I've heard no forecast for the coming fire season, nor would I have much faith in one at this time. We anticipate having the same jump ships, three Casas and one Dornier, and a head count around 65.

Redding Base Update

by Mike Manion (Redding '13)

The California Smokejumpers have decided to disregard winter downtime this year. The 2013 season saw its last fire jump Oct. 28, and there were jumpers available until mid-December, but with warm temperatures and precipitation at 20 percent of the winter average, we have rolled right in to the 2014 season.

Redding had its earliest practice jump in history Jan. 7 so jumpers could be available. With red-flag warnings in much of North Ops in mid-January, the hopes for a record-setting January-February fire jump are high. If you want proof, call the Redding base and ask to talk to **Brian Pontes** (RDD-03) – you can actually hear a smile on his face. We hope to start early refresher in mid-January.

While the permanent work force is scrambling to burn their "use or lose," fires have been staffed periodically throughout the seasonal transition. Currently **Mitch Hokanson** (RDD-00) and **Rico Gonzalez** (RDD-99) are working as divs on the 800-acre Campbell Fire on the Lassen National Forest, and **Roberto Cervantes** (RDD-12) and **Don Graham** (RDD-01) have tagged on with the Shasta Regulars to get a piece of the winter action as well.

Jerry Spence (RDD-94) and **John Casey** (RDD-00) flew ASM on the Mendocino National Forest. The Pacific Southwest Regional Training Facility outside Sacramento is getting a taste of bro diversity as **Ty Irwin** (RDD-02) and **Frankie Bentancourt** (RDD-12) do work setting up rooms for meetings and making the facilities look like Buckingham Palace.

Even with the annual holdup of hiring, California Smokejumpers have managed to fill a couple big roles. **John Casey** (RDD-00) accepted the GS-9 assistant operations manager position and **Luis Gomez** (RDD-94) gladly took the GS-11 operations manager spot.

With the resignation of **Brian Quizzler** and the coming retirement for **Tim Quigley** (RDD-79) and **Dan Hernandez** (RDD-85), we are hoping to fill a 6, 7, 8 and 9 by this spring. That will be in addition to the 8-10 rookie positions we are hoping to have.

Needless to say, like many this time of year, the hiring guys are busy – so stay tuned.

ODDS AND ENDS

by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Jack Atkins** (MSO-68), **Willie Lowden** (NCSB-72), **Michael Burney** (IDC-66), and **Jim Sayre** (MSO-80) who just became our latest **Life Members**.

Tony Sleznick (RDD-92): "Well, another milestone here. The day of the government's re-opening (Oct. 2013), I was fortunate to deliver Redding's Jumper 51 from Missoula to Redmond for its annual maintenance check and eventual new paint job. This was full circle for me in that this was the first airplane I got to jump out of when I was a rookie back in 1992. How satisfying it was to fly the aircraft I had such fond history in! More challenges and opportunity are coming as I am slated for initial training in the DC-3T in Missoula next spring. How lucky am I?"

John Bernstein (Associate): "The October issue of *Smokejumper* brought tears to my eyes and struck home. I felt like I really knew Luke (Sheehy) after reading so much about him.

"This has been a tragic year for the fire service. Here in Houston, we lost four firefighters in a collapse in March. Then the Hotshots in Arizona and now, this fine young lad, **Luke Sheehy** (RDD-09). I know it comes with the territory, but I still ask why?"

Bill Little (Associate) passed along some more in-

formation about the Johnson Flying Service Travelair (NC8112). We ran a short article by Bill and that photo in the January 2005 issue of *Smokejumper*. That particular plane rolled out of the factory March 18, 1939. The historical significance lies in the fact that it was the plane used by **Rufus Robinson** (MSO-40) and **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) for the first fire jump in the U.S. on July 12, 1040.

There have been various thoughts about different individuals who are thought to be the youngest smokejumpers in the history of the organization. I ran this by **Bob Derry** (MSO-43) as I thought he was pretty young when he started in 1943. Bob replied back that he was 15 when he started as a "smoke chaser" and 16 when he took his rookie training at Missoula. The fact that he was one of the "Derry brothers" probably didn't hurt his ability to get accepted at such a young age. Another factor was the lack of manpower due to the military needs of WWII.

Bob also said, "In '43 there was a crew of Coast Guard who came down from Alaska and went through our training. As I was going to be 17 in September, I probably would be drafted. The Coast Guard commander told me to just sign up, and he would request me as I had already gone through (smokejumper) training. At the physical I found out that I was color blind, so no Coast Guard for me. However, the Seabees needed grunts to go with the old construction guys and, in retrospect, it was the best thing that could have happened to me.

"The closest I got to Japan was on the island of Kwajalein, where our job was to lengthen the runway so the B-29s could land. When I was discharged in '45, I joined the Operating Engineers and ran a crane for several years in construction."

Michael P. Kelly (MYC-12) was killed at 0110 November 16, 2013, when he was run over by a car filled with colleagues from the Tahoe Hotshots. Mike rookied at McCall in 2013 and jumped out of West Yellowstone in 2013.

He had been an employee of the Tahoe N.F. since 2008 and was a squadleader on the Tahoe Hotshots.

According to the California Highway Patrol (CHP), Mike was lying on the roadway when he was run over by a car driven by a fellow firefighter. The car continued back to where the crew was based before notifying authorities of the accident. The CHP is investigating the accident.

Troop Emonds (CJ-66) is featured in the November issue of *Coast Weekend*. The article deals with his fire tool business and the development of a better Pulaski and tools with interchangeable handles. You can learn more at *Dragonslayers.com*.

Bud Filler (MYC-52): "Wanted to tell you the *Smokejumper* magazine is the best in the magazine industry, bar none. You are to be commended for continuing to turn out some outstanding very professional literature.

"Up here in Idaho, the Leap'in' Legends continue to get together once a month at the Meridian Golf Club, and the stories even get better. The jumpers are from the late 40s, 50s, and some from the 60s. We welcome any jumpers, of course. **Jim Lancaster** (MYC-62) does a great job in keeping everything organized."

Robin Twogood (MSO-56) has kept me up to date on the amazing number of smokejumpers that attended Darby (MT) High School. He had missed **Del Cumley** (MSO-50). With the addition of Del, who passed away November 26, 2013, the number stands at 21 individuals.

Carl Gidlund (MSO-58) forwarded me an article from *Military.com*. "The US Army and other services will soon begin fielding the first new parachute in decades. The product is known as the Military Free Fall Advanced Ram-Air System." The interesting part of the article states that the parachute "was recently tested in static-line jumps."

Tom Hunnicutt (RDD-78): "Framed in my living room is a picture of 'Mouse' (**Allen Owen** CJ-70) that appeared on the cover of *Smokejumper* April 2001. He is wearing a pack bigger that he is (Mouse was 4' 11"). Every time I look at that picture, I realize that on a brutal packout whenever Mouse came to a tree, across the trail, he had to take off his pack, throw it over the tree and put it back on before continuing on the packout. When one of his best friends, **Troop Emonds** (CJ-66), came to the same tree, he just stepped over it and continued on. I am so lucky to have known both of them."

Robert A. "Rigger" Snyder (CJ-48) passed away in January.

Stan "Clancy" Collins (MYC-67) summed up a lot of our feelings about Rigger in an email: "Rigger was not only skilled, but a leader, and a gentleman. To stand on his shoulders for just those traits would not truly reflect the heritage he provided. He was a master of applied science. And his science kept us honest. Instead of prolonged studies to document fire and its affects on wildlife, quick observable lessons were more to the point. When a logger brought his pet raccoon into the Owl one evening, a lit match to its particulars registered with the logger, jumpers, patrons, and management alike. Without that precocious quest for cause and effect, the Gobi would have been an indistinct base through the ages. Thank you, Rigger!"

In Memoriam

Mark Thomas Urban
August 16, 1973 - September 27, 2013
Great Basin Smokejumpers