

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
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SMOKEJUMPER



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Message from the President



by **Jim Cherry**
(Missoula '57)

PRESIDENT

I FIND IT amazing how little is known about smokejumpers by the general public. I make it a practice to wear clothing with some type of smoke-jumper logo on it wherever I go on a trip - a cap or a shirt or a travel bag. It will raise questions such as: "What's a smokejumper?" I had the question asked most recently, when on vacation in Florida, from a staff person in the restaurant. Turned out that she had lived for 20 years in Seattle, Washington, and didn't have a clue. This, unfortunately, isn't a new experience for me - to encounter people who don't have a clue as to the importance of smokejumpers to fire management in the US.

We need to "toot our horn" a whole lot louder or we may come to a time when smokejumpers and their work diminishes so much in the public eye (and congress) that funding will follow the lack of knowl-

edge and interest, and 'poof' - no more smokejumpers.

I take great joy whenever I hear of a jumper who has moved on and taken a position on a district or a forest or a regional office at an administrative level because they know the value of the smokejumpers in fire management, and they are the people who will keep the program alive and in use on that district or that forest. It's when there is no one who has a clue in those administrative positions that the danger lurks. It's up to the current jumpers to keep themselves open to a higher calling so they can "toot the horn" from a position of power and influence.

Looks like the western mountains are finally getting some snow. Hope it turns out to be a sizable snowpack that takes a long time to melt this spring. So far here in much of the Upper Midwest, it has been a mild winter. Where I live, along the banks of the Winnebago River in north central Iowa, in my 33 years here I have never seen the river still free of ice this late in the year (mid-January). We are usually frozen over by early December. I've heard that the North Pole is up to 50 degrees warmer this year. Hard to deny the warming trend. We are going to need every break we can get in keeping fires in check.

Early aggressive initial attack is going to be critical. Need those smokejumpers!

By the time you are reading this in late March/early April, the planning and sign up for the 2016 trail projects will be well underway. If you haven't been a part of one of those projects, I encourage you to do so. The companionship that is shared is something you don't want to miss. There is a project for every level of physical ability, so if you have grown a bit out of shape from your jumping days (most have), don't count yourself out.

This is also a good time for jumpers and pilots (past and present) and their immediate family members to be looking at the scholarship program that is available through the NSA. Check out the criteria and the application process on the NSA webpage. Don't let the deadline for submitting applications slip past you.

Finally, I ask that you give some thought to

including the NSA in your charitable activity and in your estate planning. We have included a lot of information on how you can accomplish gifting to the NSA on our webpage. Some methods can result in considerable tax savings for you and your heirs. Also, keep in mind the fact that the NSA's Good Samaritan Fund is financed primarily through gifts given in memory or in honor of another person. It's a way of remembering someone and getting a double benefit - remembering one and helping another at the same time.

Fire Starters

by **Tom Decker** (Idaho City '65)

This is the second in a series from Tom Decker's (IDC-64) Fire Starters, a collection of short, thought provoking pieces that he wrote as a result of his smokejumping years and his time as a US Army Chaplain.

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	GrangevilleGAC	Redding.....RDD
Boise.....NIFC	Idaho CityIDC	Redmond.....RAC
Cave JunctionCJ	La Grande.....LGD	West Yellowstone WYS
Fairbanks.....FBX	McCall.....MYC	Whitehorse Yukon YXY
Fort St. John.....YXJ	MissoulaMSO	Winthrop.....NCSB

Get Smokejumper One Month Before Anyone Else

NSA members are signing up for the electronic version of *Smokejumper* that is delivered via email. It is sent in a PDF file that contains everything that is in the hard copy issue.

The advantages are: early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings. If you like the hard copy, you can download and print it at home.

NSA Director **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) says: "I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct \$ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing. I think I mentioned in an earlier message that I'm having other magazines/newsletters delivered electronically. It takes less space to store them electronically and if I do want a hard copy, it is easy to print using the *Fast Draft printer option* which allows printing 48 pages in less than two minutes on my printer and uses a lot less ink."

If you want to be added to the electronic mailing, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59):
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Stay hooked up.

Every jumper knows how to hook up. Hooking up is attaching the parachute to what's called a static line inside the airplane. Thus hooked up, when the jumper exits the plane, the parachute is deployed—pulled—from the chute's backpack and opens to a beautiful canopy! The hookup is absolutely essential! Jumpers would tell each to "Hook up." The spotter checks their "hook up" when they got in the door. Other jumpers eye the "hook up," just to be sure.

I remember going through a tough time and talked to a smokejumper friend—someone with whom I had not talked to in about 40 years—and just as we were finishing our conversation,

he said, "Remember to hook up!"

He really caught me off guard!

Not long after that conversation, I opened up an odd looking package that came in the mail; in it was a note and an old hook-up snap cut from a parachute. The note said simply, "Stay hooked up!"

I knew what he meant!

Just like jumpers said to each other before getting into the door, he was saying to stay safe, stay connected and don't do anything dumb.

Remembering to hook up applies to marriage, to jobs, to raising kids, to being a grandparent, to growing older, to health care, even dying and making it amidst the inconsistencies and incongruities of life.

Hoot! 🦉

The Day I Jumped A Fire in S—— Kickers

by Jeff R. Davis (Missoula '57)

In my era, only two styles of footgear were used by the smokejumpers: western-style loggers manufactured either by White's or Buffalo. Somewhat like its namesake, the Buffalo brand went extinct after a couple of years, and the only jump boots allowed were White's. At no time were cowboy boots considered acceptable gear for jumping, but there's a first time for everything.

I had just returned Aug. 2, 1963, from a full fire season on the Gila National Forest in Region 3, New Mexico, where I'd made 11 fire jumps. My poor old White's were nearly worn out from that rocky Southwest terrain. When I got back to Missoula there was no action in Region 1. I therefore thought I could risk having my boots repaired in the one shop in town that could rebuild 'em.

Bad decision. We got a fire bust Aug. 5. I dropped a load of cargo on the Granite Peak Fire, Nez Perce Forest, out of DC-2 67 Victor, and by Aug. 6 I found myself at the top of the jump list and called to a fire at 2:50 that afternoon.

I was frantic. Jumpers don't usually loan each other their precious White's, and, anyhow, I

couldn't find anybody with my size. The only pair of boots I owned – other than my White's – were a cheap pair of Mexican cowboy boots I'd bought earlier that summer in Juarez, Mexico.

I thought they looked pretty nifty, actually – jet black with colorful red, white and blue eagles on both sides. But "nifty" doesn't cut it when it comes to jumping fires, and I knew damned well I'd be pulled off the jump list if the overhead caught me attempting it in cowboy boots.

But I didn't want to miss my chance at a Region 1 fire jump. The fire season here was usually winding to a close by September, and in fact this fire was to be the only fire jump I got in R-1 for the year.

I decided to use my 'kickers, sneaking aboard the plane and calling as little attention to myself as possible. It worked. I found myself taking off at 4:27 in a DC-3 with seven other jumpers, bound for the Battle Creek Fire on the Nez Perce Forest near Moose Creek, Idaho.

I was banking on the assumption that the spotter wouldn't refuse to drop me if he didn't know

about it until I was standing in the door. I was the only overhead aboard – a foreman – and the jumpers required at least one foreman or squad leader for every eight-man fire. I was all they had – ‘kickers or no ‘kickers.

By 5:30 I was facing good news and bad news. The good news was that we were over the fire and I was pretty well assured I’d get my jump. It was too far from home to dry run it and return with a foreman and approved gear, and I didn’t think most spotters were that chickens—t anyway.

The bad news was that this spotter could easily be that chickens—t, and he didn’t like me anyhow. He was **Leonard Krout** (MSO-46), second-in-command at the Aerial Fire Depot, the base in Missoula.

We’d see. I delayed my approach to the door as long as possible. Krout was still dropping drift streamers, and since it was quite windy, it required several passes.

Another aspect of Krout’s reputation was that he was known for never dry running a fire. If it were too windy to safely drop the guys, he’d search around for a handy patch of fir or lodgepole or other timber safe to snag jumpers into – or if that failed, he’d just go down to 900 feet and drop them anyhow.

I was assured I’d get this fire.

The moment of truth arrived. I slowly approached ahead of my jump partner, hooked up and stood ready in the door with my left foot forward. Leonard was still busy lining up the aircraft on final. When he was nearly over the release point, he reached over, grabbed my left boot and guided it to the lip of the door – standard procedure.

I was watching him intently. Without glancing up, he placed my boot in the door. As his fingers closed over the pointy toe of my shit-kickers, he twisted around and stared directly up into my face. What he’d been expecting, of course, was the blunt, rounded toe of a White’s logger. What he got instead was the sharp, pointy-toed leather of a sleazy Mexican s——kicker.

It was too late for him to do anything but kick me out. I was right over the release point and he didn’t have another second to spare. I was ready for him. Before he could say a word I hollered to him, “Shut up, Leonard, and keep spotting!”

He instinctively slapped me out the door, and I had only one thought as I tucked into my exit position. Those old parachutes. I was jumping an FS-2 28. Those old “flat wraps” opened with a bang. So the only thought I had as I went out the door was to curl my toes and clench my feet hard so the opening shock wouldn’t snap those suckers off my feet.

It worked. At any rate, I looked down right after my canopy check and was relieved to see I was still wearing my trusty ‘kickers.

It was indeed a windy jump, and I didn’t have much time to line up on my approach into the spot. I opened at about 800 feet, because ol’ Leonard had done his thing and reduced the exit altitude to about 900 feet. I hit the spot. I *remember* hitting the spot because I thumped it so damned hard I saw stars.

The moment of truth arrived. I slowly approached ahead of my jump partner, hooked up and stood ready in the door with my left foot forward.

I was the only one of the eight jumpers aboard who did hit the ground. The rest were hanging in the nearby thickets of lodgepole pine. I was by far the most experienced jumper aboard and had just returned from a crash course in jumping squirrely winds in New Mexico, so I had a better chance at the spot than the others.

And I was completely unhurt. It was only later on the fire, when I let an overeager buck handle a chain saw to knock down some peckerholes on the fire, that he dropped three leaners smack on my head and I sprained an ankle. I was off the list for the rest of the summer.

Everyone back at the base thought I’d sprained my ankle on the jump, of course, when they heard I’d made it in ‘kickers; I never did live that jump down. My pride was hurt worse than the ankle was. Still, 52 years later I find myself trying to run with that same ankle wrapped in an ankle brace to hold it together.

The jump on Battle Creek is never going away, despite the passage of time. 🦋

“Beas”

by John B. Driscoll (Missoula '68)

In Part I, “Smokejumper” January 2015, of “Beas,” John Driscoll took Ray Beasley (MYC-52) from his time in the Air Force, to Smokejumpers and to being recruited, along with other jumpers, to the CIA. Operations in Cuba and Tibet were covered. In Part II, John picks up with “Beas” and Shep Johnson (MYC-56) arriving in Laos.

Part II

Laos

Beas and Shep arrived in Laos before the Bay of Pigs invasion started. In no time at all they were dropping rice, French-packed with double bags, so the outer bag would contain the burst inner bags, which they dropped without parachutes from 800 feet. They also dropped supplies on one-ton pallets.

The recipients were Meo (Hmong) tribesmen on the ground. Shep said, “I call them Meo because I respect them a lot. They were courageous. I don’t think all those people made it out of Laos. The ones that didn’t went to the hills where they came from.”

He remembered that their Gen. Vang Pao knew everybody. “I loved Gen. Vang Pao. He had more guts than anybody I’ve ever seen. He took a lot of chances. He’d been wounded several times. He had a lot of kids and he’d take those kids with him. It was a damned airplane load almost.”

One day the general came down the runway of the secret base at Long Cheng, code-named Big Sky,¹ and he said, “Shep, you’re not getting cargo out to the field like you’re supposed to.” Shep told him he didn’t have enough riggers and the general drove off in his Jeep.

“Next day, I had more damned people,” Shep said.

He asked Jerry Daniels (MSO-58), a former Missoula smokejumper and fluent Meo speaker, serving as Vang Pao’s operations chief, “What the hell did the general do to get me all these people?”

Daniels told him, “He shot the lieutenant.”

Shep never did see that lieutenant again, and added, “He smoked pot all the time.”

Shep attended Vang Pao’s funeral in California, but he didn’t attend the Meo community’s funeral for Daniels in Missoula,² after his body was sent home from Bangkok in a sealed casket.

With his tears welling, Shep remembered, “When Jerry died I didn’t go to the funeral. I should have. I just didn’t want to. I knew him as well as any one of the Americans. He was quite a person. He had a lot of respect. He got wounded seven times going forward with his people.”

Gen. Vang Pao gave credit to Daniels for bringing him to Montana. One night, when we were sitting next to each other at the head table in a banquet at the Woodside Grange Hall, he told me that he decided to buy his pig farm a few hundred yards away after Daniels took him for a ride up the Bitterroot Valley.

“This valley reminded me of the Plain of Jars,” Vang Pao said.

Pam Roberts, from Hardin, Mont., then a U.S. State Department Refugee Services Officer, said she was the one who flew into Missoula with Vang Pao’s four wives and linked them up with Daniels’ mother, Louise, who came to be called “Mom” by the community that took root and later buried her son.

Beas hasn’t talked much about Laos, except – like Shep – to mention the grievous loss of Lewis, Eubanks and Bevan. Like all the others, he was issued a short-nosed, .38-caliber pistol in a shoulder holster in case they went down, “but the ground crews would steal them when we left them hanging in the aircraft.”

So Beas armed himself with a .30-caliber Browning automatic rifle. The other guys kidded him, saying, “It’ll never work because of back pressure.” Beas said, “Bullshit,” and kept it within reach on all the cargo drops.

He once mentioned a hot Marine out of Korea with a lot of experience: “If you needed somebody killed, he was the guy.”

Beas thought the man married a Lao princess and that helped cement the loyalty to him of tribes up high on the Mekong River. Beas thought the man he knew was the model for Marlon Brando's character in *Apocalypse Now*.

"The company didn't like him having a bounty on human ears, though that's what was getting the job done," Beas said. He sensed Ivy Leaguers somewhere up above were applying Marquess of Queensbury rules.

Shep talked about a man named Father Bischard, who followed him and Beas over to Laos from Guatemala. "Wherever he went, he walked or caught a ride on one of our airplanes. I'd tell him, 'That's a pretty bad area,' " Shep said. "That didn't make any difference to him. He was like a chaplain to anybody, even the Meo.

"If people had complaints, he'd try to do something about it. He'd come down and sit in our operations shack waiting for an airplane. He was from Nova Scotia or Maine, or someplace. I respected him a lot; everybody did, I suppose, because he was a preacher."

He thought Father Bischard must have been the one who gave Beas, and the 177 Cuban Airborne troops he helped train for the Bay of Pigs Invasion, a golden medal with the image of St. Michael the Archangel.

Guatemala

The CIA sent Beas and Shep to Guatemala in the fall of 1960. That's when CIA proprietary pilots were delivering C-46 and C-54 transport planes to a CIA training base near Retalhuleu on the Pacific side.³ The transports were to be platforms for resupply drops into Cuba and insertions onto the island of the paratroops of rebel Brigade 2506.

CIA pilots began training Cuban aircrews in combat airdrop procedures. The contingent of smokejumpers, including Beas, Shep, Miles and Paperlegs, trained the Cuban paratroopers. They were also tasked to train Guatemala's first paratroopers, from scratch.

"They trained on a rich guy's ranch," Beas said. "There was a jungle training center and an airport training center, and one for bad guys in the hot area on the Atlantic side, which is where we sometimes dropped a container of gasoline or some-

thing. God, they were isolated, living terribly."

Beas detested the way the Guatemalan officers – all trained by the French – mistreated their own soldiers, who were "shorter than their own bolt-action Mausers."

For their first jump, he and Miles kicked the Guatemalans out of a C-46, with doors open on both sides, over Guatemala City's soccer field. "God, it was fun!" he said.

The last man hung up, frozen in the door. Miles had to put a knee in his back and he landed nearly a mile further away from the rest.

Shep spent a lot of his time packing parachutes. He summarized, "We trained commando raiders how to jump and Special Forces taught them that other stuff."

At 31 Beas remembers walking a few miles into Retalhuleu to get beer at the American bar there. He'd load it up and bring it back to the base. They had a kids' Radio Flyer red wagon they could tow around, carrying a cooler filled with ice and beer.

"It was hotter than hell down there, and we couldn't drink the water and sure couldn't eat the ice," Beas said.

A C-46 would go to the embassy in Panama and load up completely with high-quality booze and more beer. Beas said: "You could get 25-year-old Scotch for 25 cents a shot."

In the parachute loft they had a big cage with a couple of lovebirds for entertainment. They'd start walking down the runway around 4:30 p.m. toward the bar and a small brothel inside the fence. Waiting outside the bar would be a monkey with a prehensile tail to hook over anybody who would take him into the bar so he could drink martinis out of flat glasses.

"All night long you'd hear that monkey, dragging his chain back and forth on the tin roof of the bar. It made a hell of a racket," Beas said.

Beas feels smokejumpers, in general, held the big advantage of never having to conform to any particular institutional norm. For example, he mentioned New Year's Eve 1960 and a party at the bar in Retalhuleu. He walked in with a couple of Cuban paratrooper friends and encountered a U.S. Air Force major, wearing his uniform and an attitude. One thing led to another and Beas ended up punching the officer.

The major picked himself up, brushed off and

said, "I'll get your ass!" Beas thinks, "He probably would have, except I was one of Thorsrud's crazies."

That term causes Beas to reflect on how they all settled for \$850 each month, when pilots on the same high-risk runs were making much more. "There was a big difference, but we still did the work," he said. Pay increased later.

Both Beas and Shep tell of a C-54 crash landing on one of Guatemala's Pacific beaches. On board were Miles and Paperlegs, training Cubans on cargo dropping. The aircraft hit a tree between the number 3 and 4 engines. They crashed, pulled the radios out and left for Laos or someplace the next day.

At the scene of the crash, Shep found a local Indian who had taken it over. "He stayed right there on the beach," Shep said. "The airplane was in pretty good shape, and he'd get right in the door and you didn't go in there. Nobody messed with him. I think they just left it, because the Indian wouldn't let anybody take it."

Beas remembered learning that the crew honestly thought they were ditching at sea and ended up jumping out the door and swimming on the sand. With such a big plane on their hands, they pulled the radios, and Miles pulled the altimeter, and they signed it over to a peasant who happened to walk up on the wreck.

"It probably shows something different in the official records, but some poor guy in Guatemala owns it," Beas said. He thinks the altimeter is in Air America's museum.

Beas once caught a ride into Miami for three days of rest and recuperation. One of the Cuban trainees asked him to bring with him into town a box measuring 2 inches high and less than 5 inches wide and 8 inches long. "I know I shouldn't have done it," he said.

He didn't look inside and delivered it as instructed to the Fontainebleau Hotel and a guy there called "The Greek." Four other suits came out of the back to sit with him in a booth and talk.

"They were mafia," Beas said. "One was from Philadelphia and one was from Florida." He didn't know where the other two called home. They all had an interest in the invasion because they'd lost assets in the Cuban revolution.

"One of them said his kid was flying guns into Cuba in a Cessna 182, but kept getting caught." Beas wasn't sure what all of it was about and he didn't want to know. The Greek offered him the pick of about 250 gorgeous women standing and sitting along the walls of the lounge, but Beas demurred.

"I just wanted to get the hell out of there," he recalled. Besides, he already had reservations elsewhere and a date with a stewardess.

In Guatemala, Beas signed up to complete a school at the airport teaching him how to arm the B-26s that came in with the Alabama Air National Guard.

"We armed the aircraft with wing guns and a 20-millimeter (gun) in the center. We tested them by diving on empty oil drums floating out in the center of a lake," he said.

Once he asked, "Why are we doing this?" He learned the B-26s were to attack an air base and that armaments people would follow in to rearm the B-26s. "That never happened, because Castro had one jet and it shot the shit out of the propeller-driven planes."

Beas sensed that Thorsrud was torn up by what happened.

Recognition

Coming home in summers to jump fires put a special pressure on the CIA smokejumpers, because the hazards of firefighting from the air breeds camaraderie, a light that dispels secrets.

"I know I've jumped fires with partners who returned to the top of the jump list with these secrets intact, pretty much." This generates concentric circles of night fire line chatter, which for generations has generally been guarded inside smokejumper ranks.

But Beas and Shep had to face another kind of security problem, stemming from the fact that they periodically returned to small towns in the summer. Beas' cashiers checks from Washington, D.C., went to a bank in McCall where he and Shep and Miles and Paperlegs gave a local bank's assistant vice president their power of attorney to cash and deposit them.

When they got back off an early CIA tour, they discovered their checks cashed, but never deposited. The banker took about \$3,500 from each

jumper. Because of the small-town importance of family reputations, they didn't do anything after he promised to pay them back. He didn't.

Shep didn't talk about that incident, but remembered not being able to cash his checks in his hometown. In later years it would be \$12,000 to \$16,000 for three or four months.

"Nobody got checks for three or four thousand dollars a month in those days," Shep said. "I knew everybody in McCall, so I went down to Cascade to cash a check. They just called back to McCall to get a reference." Needless to say, CIA smokejumpers have become urban legends in some rural areas.

Then there was the problem Shep had getting treatment for his second war wound, this one received at Long Cheng in Laos. For years the shrapnel in his hip kept shifting around his sciatic nerve.

"God, it hurt, but I was careful to not let the cat out of the bag," he said. When he could no longer stand the pain, he went on his own nickel to his private physician in Idaho, who gave him a local anesthetic, "and sure enough he took that shrapnel out."

Now the question of recognition has become a different one, at least for me as one fellow smokejumper. After seeing the 274 names on a brass plaque at the University of Texas-Dallas, I got to thinking it might be appropriate after all these years to have the names of the 100 CIA-smokejumpers mounted on a brass plate at the University of Montana in Missoula, location for the National Smokejumpers Association archives. With that idea in mind, I drove to Tucson, Ariz. and visited Thorsrud in person before he passed away.

We had a very congenial conversation. He told me that not once did he ever have a smokejumper work for him who was not outstanding about completing the work that needed doing.

On a far less-congenial note, he was adamant in saying, "I don't want my name on any plaque!" His still-pressing concern was operational security. He explained himself this way: "It's like a sweater. If you pull on a loose end in one place, it starts unraveling in another."

Not wanting to be recognized for work that's been accomplished is a normal sentiment, usually found in direct proportion to the value of what a

person has contributed. Yet, that decision must be left for others to make.

In this case, however, we may want to accept his concern about security, because he knows more of the larger covert picture. To honor 11 smokejumpers and the rest of the Air America air crews, he co-commissioned a painting, now hanging in the gallery at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Va.

In "Khampa Airlift to Tibet," artist Dru Blair depicts a C-130 aircraft with its rear door fully open, red combat lanterns glowing from the inside, flying high between snow-covered peaks under a full moon. Jumpers clothed in smoke-jumper gear exit the rear behind a large pallet of cargo, tethered to the lead jumper. Each canopy is either orienting on the aircraft or turning toward the jump spot along a moon-reflecting river.

The painting is a fine tribute. Most who were involved have been killed, or died of natural causes. Big Andy, Beas and Missoula jumper **Bill Demmons** (MSO-51) attended (the dedication at Langley). Shep didn't want to go back and probably couldn't, physically, if he'd wanted. Beas thought the ceremony nice.

The main briefer was a Missoula jumper, still active in agency operations. Beas noted that the steadily increasing total tonnage transported by 150 flights impressed current agency operators. Beas was impressed by the briefer's grasp of parachute artistry.

The CIA gallery holds another painting commissioned by the Thorsruds. In "Seven Days in the Arctic," artist Keith Woodcock shows a B-17, with a Fulton Skyhook on its nose, coming up under a long curving line hooked to a man springing from the Arctic ice. Below him another man is releasing his balloon so it will raise the upper end of a line tethered to him.

CIA Smokejumper Number One

Now it's the morning of my scheduled interview with Beas and I've just received a text message from his daughter. She's telling me the interview needs to be canceled. Beas woke up in the night shaking badly and can't make it stop.

Over the past three years his attitude has improved, especially since making a visit to the PTSD people out at the Fort Harrison Veterans

Hospital. Physically, things haven't been drifting in the same direction. Even though she suggests we reschedule the interview, I sense that's not going to happen.

Why should it? He and the others have already done enough, and he's told me enough, along with Shep. Add their memories to the vast amount of published open or declassified sources and it's possible to pass on this general sense of the real story.

As well, I see no reason to look further into the identity of CIA-Smokejumper Number One because I'm satisfied I already know who he was.

In November 1950, when forces of the new Chinese Communist government entered the Korean War, President Truman's administration had to wring all the help it could get from the young CIA, created three years earlier. Truman wanted to slow China's growing influence by means of a covert-action program, which included leafleting, supply and agent airdrops along the Chinese-Korean border and inside China.

C-47 aircraft, outfitted with a pole hook and cable and snatching winch, were used to exfiltrate agents by hoisting them from the ground. This was dangerous for aircrews and agent, and not always successful. It's highly likely that the two CIA agents whom Thorsrud and another Missoula smokejumper were asked to train in rough-terrain parachute techniques were part of those covert actions.

That the CIA returned to the Nine Mile training base for more men a few weeks later, given the expansion of covert action requirements in China, seems logical. Missoula jumper **Joe McDonald** (WYS-51), who was a rookie that season, happened to live in the barracks with the experienced jumpers.⁴ He remembers each one of them going over to the office, one at a time, to talk with the man representing the CIA.

"They each came back to our barracks, packed their stuff, said good-bye, and left, just like that," McDonald said.

Who was that man who could be told about the young CIA's exploding requirements for covert air support and the need for increased numbers of parachute dispatch officers? Who would have the real-world experience to know the kind of personnel required? Who would have been in a

position to witness and work with smokejumpers as they were evolving by then? Who would have been the man the CIA could send to Nine Mile that day, able to make a convincing case for young men to make a snap life-altering decision without once being able to answer their common-sense questions: "Where will I be going? What will I be doing? When will I get home?"

I've concluded that the first CIA smokejumper was a career Forest Service employee, working that summer on the Troy and Sylvanite ranger districts of Montana's Kootenai National Forest. He was born to a Serbian-speaking family in the mining city of Butte, Mont., and grew up near the Columbia Gardens, where he acquired a love of the outdoors.

By working summers on the Kootenai and Deer Lodge National Forests in Montana, he completed his forestry degree at the University of Montana in 1940, the same year smokejumping began. Because he had also been commissioned through ROTC as a U.S. Army 2nd Lieutenant, he had to leave for active military service at Fort Benning's Infantry School, just as World War II was beginning.

He was selected and assigned as one of the original members of the OSS by 1943. As a special operations officer he parachuted into mountainous terrain to work behind enemy lines in Yugoslavia for three months and Northern Italy for six months. In both places he organized guerilla units and helped rescue downed allied pilots.

At war's end, because he commanded the OSS War Crimes Detachment in Northern Italy in support of the War Crimes Trials, he was not discharged until December 1945, more than two months after Wild Bill Donovan's OSS was disbanded. That same month he began his Forest Service career on the Philipsburg District of Montana's Deer Lodge National Forest.

There he managed timber and assisted the ranger with fire prevention, detection and suppression. He probably already chased smoke over his college summers, but after this combination of professional work for five years, he would have enjoyed a good understanding of fire-control relationships in the Northern Region, and would have requested smokejumpers often and understood their unique capabilities.

From the CIA's point of view, it's hard to imagine a man more suited by experience to help train a new set of agents for the mountainous Chinese-Korean border, or a better place than Montana to train them.

For all these reasons, I've concluded that CIA-Smokeyumper Number One was John Risto Milodragovich, a man Beas called "Milo."

Milo figures prominently on both the National Museum of the Forest Service Honor Roll and the Special Forces Roll of Honor. Beas had always kind of wondered about Milo, with whom he worked in Missoula and who was the godfather to one of his daughters. It's instructive to also note that through the early 1950s, Milo's old boss, Wild Bill Donovan, worked energetically in his new assignment as U.S. ambassador to Thailand.

From Bangkok, Donovan became a dominant influence in shaping how our country began view-

ing all of the nations of Southeast Asia as a whole cloth.⁵

Perhaps it's best to leave this story here. 🦋

Endnotes

1. *Sky is Falling: An Oral History of the CIA's Evacuation of the Hmong from Laos* by Gayle Morrison
2. *Hog's Exit: Jerry Daniels, the Hmong, and the CIA* by Gayle Morrison
3. *The Cuban Invasion, The Chronicle of a Disaster*, by Tad Szulc and Karl Meyer
4. "In Our Own Words" *Smokeyumper Oral Histories* by John Driscoll, Mansfield Archives, University of Montana
5. *Wild Bill Donovan, The Spymaster who created the OSS and Modern American Espionage*, by Douglas Waller

2015 Al Dunton Leadership Winners

The **Al Dunton** (FBX-67) Leadership Award is presented annually to one BLM and one USFS smokejumper who goes beyond the requirements of the job and demonstrates excellence in leadership in one or more of the Wildland Fire Leadership Principles. This year's award winners are **Eric Messenger** (GAC-00) and **Ezra Butterfield** (FBX-06). The descriptions of these outstanding individuals from their nomination papers as follows:

Eric Messenger is a spotter with the McCall Smokejumpers. Aside from his responsibilities as a Smokejumper Spotter, Eric serves as a fully qualified ICT3 (Incident Command Type 3), DIVS (Division Group Supervisor), RXB2 (Prescription Fire Burn Boss) and SOFR (Safety Officer). Eric has also been actively involved with the McCall Smokejumper Rookie Training Program for eight years, including serving the last two years as the Lead Rookie Trainer.

Eric has been a leader in fire management for over twenty years. He does not seek praise for his exceptional performance over the years. In fact, he would rather that praise fall to those that he leads

and the team. His leadership during the 2015 training and field season as a field-going firefighter and trainer are deserving of the highest praise that the McCall Smokejumpers and the National Smokejumper Program can muster.

Ezra Butterfield was asked to help instruct the USFS Ram-Air training in 2008. No one knew it at that time, but the Alaska Smokejumpers had just stumbled on to one of the most capable instructors at the base. He is a natural instructor with a strong command presence, a great knowledge of the BLM Smokejumper System, and has an excellent ability to explain processes to a student. The entire smokejumper community has benefited from Ezra's ability to instruct. Since his initial involvement, Ezra has instructed multiple New Man Ram-Air classes, fire refreshers, parachute refreshers, rookie training, and tree climbing while holding a high professional standard.

Ezra is a solid decision maker, a team player, a good supervisor, accepts responsibility for his actions, leads by example, and is always looking out for the well-being of others. 🦋



BLAST FROM THE PAST



by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)
The Missoulian, December 14, 1949

DISASTER WHICH MET a group of Forest Service smokejumpers in the Montana mountains last August didn't even dent the nerve of the parachute corps, an official reported today.

The smokejumpers spirit is higher than ever, he said, and the flying firefighting service isn't wanting for new recruits.

The tragedy which struck the service last August was the first in its 10 years of operations. When it happened, it was bad.

Sixteen men who parachuted from the Forest Service plane to fight a blaze in the Helena N.F. were trapped by the flames. Eleven of them burned to death before they could break free. Two others died the next day from burns suffered in the Mann Gulch action.

Carl Gustafson, Chief of the Forest Service Division of Fire Control, told a reporter how the other smokejumpers reacted.

"It didn't faze them a bit," he said. "The buddies of the men who died stationed in Missoula, Mon-



tana, kept right on jumping."

"One of them made three jumps and another made four, immediately after the Mann Gulch Fire."

"In fact, the survivors and friends of those who lost their lives did more (fire) fighting after that than in any previous year. That wasn't all," said Gustafson.

A good number of former smokejumpers, now in other lines of work, wrote saying they would come back to make emergency firefighting jumps, if needed. And the Forest Service got a batch of new applications for smokejumping jobs.

Smokejumpers work only part time during the forest fire season. Gustafson said he doesn't anticipate any difficulty in recruiting a corps next year. "It doesn't scare them off this year and we don't foresee any trouble in 1950," he said.

The Forest Service's parachute division was organized to get men quickly to remote and hard-to-reach fires. The smokejumpers are mostly young men, many of them are college students earning expense money during the summer. A good portion of them are ex-GIs.

Fire And Ice

by Don Havel (Fairbanks '66)

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil on fires;
The Arctic trails leave their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the greatest sight they ever did see
Were the days on the marge of Blair Lakes
When we fought fire on ice.*

It was April 18, 1970, when Alaska BLM smokejumper foreman Larry Cravens (FBX-

64) came up to me and said, "Get some cold weather gear together. You're going on a fire and you won't need your jump gear."

Those who know realize Fairbanks in April is still frozen.

The location of the fire, designated Fire No. 9365, was on the shore of Blair Lakes, which is south of Fairbanks, sort of between Fairbanks and Big Delta.

In my jump log I noted that I made a spring-training practice jump that morning and then

spent the rest of the day preparing the equipment needed for the fire. Included were six chain saws, five gas-operated pumps, hoses, pulaskis, shovels, one ISSB (short-band radio for communications back to the Fairbanks BLM dispatcher), four FM hand-held radios for communications on the fire, and one Huey chopper.

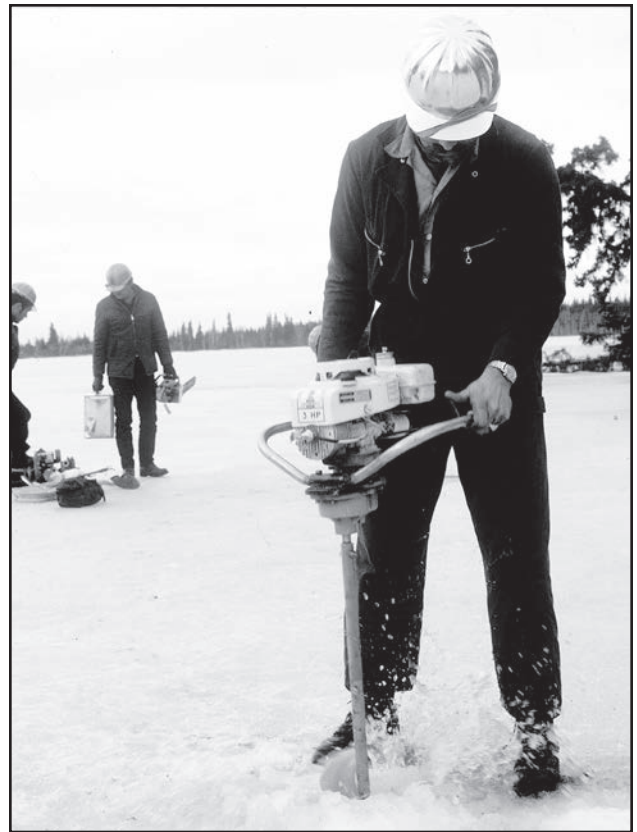
I ordered up extra sleeping bags. We used military mummy-type bags filled with feathers and down. In cold weather you could slip one bag inside the other. A little crowded, but warm.

A 8 a.m. April 19 we loaded the chopper, took off with the first load at 9 a.m. and landed on the frozen lake at 10. I am not sure who was on the first load, but according to my log, the manpower we ended up having on the fore included eight helitack personnel, five jumpers, six roadside fire-fighters, and 25 EFF – emergency firefighters.

These men were from various villages around the state. They were trained by the BLM to work as effective firefighting units. The unit I had on this fire was from Fort Yukon and was led by Tommy Carol. I noted in my log that the first part of the EFF crew was dispatched off the Blair Lakes Fire to another fire at Birch Lake with **Herb Corn** (IDC-67) going as fire boss. The last of the supplies and EFF arrived April 20.

This fire was somewhat unusual in that it did not just start but was left over from the previous fall. There was a mass of larger spruce trees of the type that grew along rivers and lakes in interior Alaska that had toppled and piled high on each other. I imagine this carpet of trees – plus the fact the fire was smoldering in a deep layer of peat moss – kept the fire from burning out during the frigid winter months. The BLM fire personnel in Fairbanks felt it was better to try and put the fire out now than take a chance of it spreading during the summer months.

Before heading out to the fire, I was given an infrared photo showing where the spots were burning along the vast lakeshore and beyond. Using this information, I divided the personnel into two EFF squads to the south end of the lake, two EFF squads one mile north of the lake, the helitack crew 1 1/2 miles north of the lake, and the jumpers and roadside crew on the north end of the lake. Apparently some of the hot spots were also along creeks north of the lake.



EFF augering through ice. Courtesy D. Havel)

A small plane flew over April 21 and took infrared shots of the area and detected no new hot spots. All the hot spots were manned. We had our final patrol and mopup April 22 and found no further fire activity. However, the patrol plane came over, took some more shots and found one hot spot still burning. He dropped a metal canister onto the ice with a photo in it to point out where it was.

I de-manned all the firefighters except for the jumpers who put out the last hot spot. I had the chopper stay on the fire overnight. The last infrared shots were taken April 23 and only showed our hunker fire. We de-manned at 11 a.m. I noted in my log April 25 that standby was canceled at the jump shack because it was snowing.

Well, that just leaves one last thing – how did we put out the hot spots? We brought with us several gas-powered ice augers to drill holes through the ice on the lake. We set the water pumps by the holes, put suction hoses in the holes to the water, laid the water hoses out, and pumped water into the hot spots. We drained everything at night to keep it from freezing.

I should note, too, that the poetry at the beginning and end of this story is mostly not mine, but that of the greatest Alaskan/Yukon poet, Robert Service.

*I'll tell you a tale of the Northern Lights,
And so help me God its true.
I'll tell you of the howling wilderness
And the haggard Arctic heights. 🗿*



Gathering Of The Last Of The Mohicans— CJ Reunion 2016

If you were a part of this motley crew, or came before, or after, this is a reminder that by now you should have received your reunion registration paperwork. If not, procrastination time is over. Come on... get it in the mail, we want you there!

The response has been awesome, and this gathering is going to be memorable. For many of us, it may well be the last reunion our old bones and joints can muster. Even more reason to kick one more Gobi stone.

If you have not received a Registration Packet, we either had an old address or it was lost in the

shuffle. Let me know and one will be sent by email or postal mail.

We also want to extend an invitation to those of you from other bases. It will be great to have you and, as stated above, the Siskiyou Smokejumper era is wrapping up and you can be there to toast a big part of Smokejumper history. I will email or postal mail you a registration packet upon request. Dates are June 24 – 26, 2016, at the base (and museum), Cave Junction, Oregon. 🗿

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SOUNDING OFF

from the editor



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

NSA PRESIDENT JIM Cherry, in his column this issue, mentions an occurrence that is probably common to all of us: someone asking us, "What is a smokejumper?" I live in Chico, which is just 70 miles south of the California Smokejumper Base in Redding. I have had 23 of my local USFS fire crew people go on to become smokejumpers. Still, I find it is very rare that people on the street have the slightest clue about smokejumpers and their job in wildland firefighting.

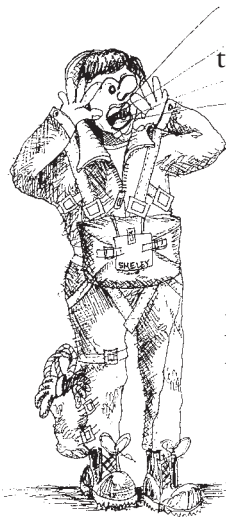
It seems like most people in the western U.S. should know the value of the smokejumper operations, but that is not the case. This lack of knowledge will eventually have the potential to hurt the smokejumper program. You see, these people are taxpayers and they write letters to their local officials

and congressmen. Having a career politician as one of my lifelong friends, I know the value of people who will sit down and write to their congressmen/women.

Since the 1940s through the late 80s, the smokejumper community was mainly composed of students who jumped a couple seasons and then moved on to the "real world." This is no longer the case. With the advent of the 20 plus-year smokejumper, we have seen the development of, what I consider, the best wildland firefighters in the world. With my position in the NSA, I am in contact with many of the current jumpers and visit one of the bases regularly. Their skills and fitness levels are amazing.

My biggest concern with the current-day method of fighting wildfire is that they are not used enough. During the fire season, I check the NSA website and the link on the lower left side and the "*Smokejumper Status Report*." Everyone who reads this magazine should do the same if they want to keep up with the action.

Fires constantly burn throughout Northern California during the fire season



that is growing longer each year. It is disappointing to see the number of jumpers in reserve when there are numerous lightning strikes.

I know, "the mission has changed - no more two-manners in the Bob." Now we wait until those two-manners turn into "Complex Fires" and cost millions to control.

The downside of the "professional" smokejumper is that the number of jumpers moving into USFS/BLM administration and other fire positions is limited. The number moving into the real world and becoming politicians, educators, doctors, lawyers, pilots and military is also limited. The day of having large numbers of smokejumpers as District Rangers, Fire Control Officers, and Forest Superintendents is history.

I go back to my experience in running fire crews for the USFS in R-5. The fire operation in this very large region (California) was dominated by ex-smokejumpers and efficiently run. It was hard not to find ex-jumpers in the administrative positions on a fire.

As a taxpayer with some knowledge of wildland firefighting, I'm concerned when initial attack is slow and de-

layed. Regardless of all of the science about letting fire burn, that is something that has to be reserved for specific conditions. We can't let those two-manners turn into Complex Fires, destroying watershed, polluting the air, and spending millions of dollars.

Three years ago there was a lightning strike fire in the

Feather River Canyon that was reported by a hiker on the Pacific Crest Trail. It was "watched" for two days and eventually turned into a \$48 million operation. All the time there were jumpers at the Redding Base.

Will things change? I doubt it unless we get more of the current smokejumpers to move

into fire management and administrative positions. We have the best-trained and qualified wildland firefighters in the ranks of the current jumpers. Their expertise is needed in the field outside the jumper world. Let's allow 50-60 new young people a year into the smokejumping profession and become the best. 🔦

LETTERS

Thoughts From Female Smokejumper Concerning Pull-ups

Hi Chuck,

I recently went to the NSA website and I saw your article on pull-ups and female firefighters. You made some awesome points and totally convinced me, and that's coming from someone who has always felt the requirements were lame, bare minimums, and that anyone should be able to do seven pull-ups.

I do CrossFit now and even a few competitions in the old people category, and your point is well taken. I can kick butt if it's pull-ups, handstand push-ups, or toes to bar. But the bigger women kill me on rowing, deadlifts, squats, power leans, snatches, etc.

Some of these women, even in the 50+ age group, are seriously strong, and like you said, the bigger gals struggle with pull-ups, handstand push-ups, etc. I am sure that women bigger than my 120 pounds, who are that kind of fit, would have had an easier time doing the job than I did. So thank you for your well-written opinion. I hope someone catches a hold of it and works to make changes.

—**Tara Rothwell** Redmond '92 🔦

Tara is the only female smokejumper to have served a term on the NSA Board of Directors. (Ed.)

Miscellaneous Musings Of A Muddled Mind: The Round *vs.* Square Debate

by **Denis Symes** (McCall '63)

In the October 2015 issue of Smokejumper magazine, **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) rather eloquently explained the reasons for retaining "round" parachutes by U.S. Forest Service smokejumpers in lieu of the "square" chutes used by the Bureau of Land Management jumpers. I'd like to give my opinions in support of Chuck's opinions and explain my views on the subject.

While I lack the many years of smokejumping that Chuck and many others have, I have jumped a number of different chutes, albeit more than 50 years ago.

As a Forest Service jumper, I jumped two seasons, 1963 and 1964; not many by today's standards, but this was before the advent of "professional" jumpers – we were college students engaging in exciting summer employment. I made seven training jumps in 1963 (six on the FS-2 and one on the FS-5A) and three fire jumps, for a total of 10. I made three refresher jumps in 1964, one fire jump and one "moral" jump (total five) for a two-season grand total of 15 Forest Service jumps.

In wet years, there are few fires and you just get what you can!

I started skydiving in the fall of 1963 and really enjoyed it until I got married and money became tight. Between 1963 and 1968, I made 561 free-falls using round chutes with Double “L”, Double “T” and, “TU” modifications and the “Para-Commander” (PC) parachute. While technically a round chute, the numerous slots and openings gave the PC excellent lift and maneuverability – for the time.

For a description of the PC, see: <http://www.parachutehistory.com/round/pc.html>. I made more than 450 jumps on the PC, and it was the hottest thing going until ram-air chutes became available.

One thing to keep in mind is that the rate of descent is dependent on area-of-the-canopy or on a lift factor built into the chute. A round canopy generates very little lift, as the forward speed is slow and the leading edge of the canopy is not a good airfoil.

The rate of descent is governed by the ratio of the canopy’s area to the jumper’s weight. A ram-air or square canopy has little area to distribute the jumper’s weight, but uses lift – airflow over the airfoil canopy – to control descent. Compare this to an aircraft’s wing; a thick wing Ford Tri-motor has great slow-speed characteristics, but is slow, and a thin-airfoil swept wing fighter has great high-speed capabilities, but a high stall speed.

Like Chuck, I have never jumped a ram-air chute, but you could stall the PC, and low-level turns were not wise for the same reasons. Hard turns result in the jumper swinging out past the circumference of the parachute to about 35-40 degrees from horizontal as you rapidly rotate and the canopy stalls on that side – you definitely don’t want to hit the ground in this position!

And, while you could stall the PC, the relatively large area of the canopy produced stalls that were not as drastic as a small-surface-area, ram-air chute produces – you still have a 24-foot canopy over your head! I broke my left ankle twice in two years while trying low-level tight turns to hit the six-inch target!

It seems to me that the BLM generally jumps in open rangeland while USFS jumpers generally jump in mountainous timberland – yes, there are exceptions to both assumptions, but this seems to be a general truism. As a skydiver, I jumped into large open “drop zones” with a target placed on a large flattened, pile of pea gravel to allow stretching legs

out to step on a six-inch disk (dead-center); you’d land in all sorts of positions with your legs out to hit the target.

Perhaps (in my mind at least) sport parachuting into large open areas is more akin to the BLM jumps than the USFS jumps into small or non-existent openings in rocky, mountainous timber.

As Chuck pointed out, traditional round chutes do lack the performance of the ram-air chutes, but allow for lower-height maneuvering and they do not stall. Ram-air chutes have relative little surface area and rely on forward speed to create the needed lift for controlled descent; lose the speed and you drop quickly.

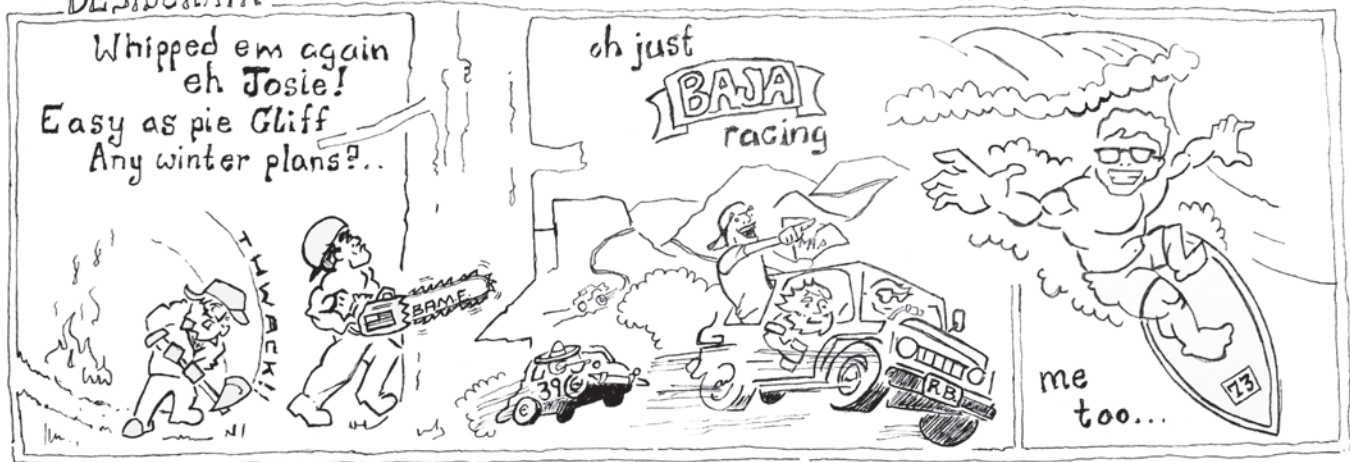
Turns are accomplished by essentially stalling one side of the canopy while the other side has lift; this also increases the rate of descent and will swing the jumper in a wide circle. (Remember playing “crack the whip” as a kid?)

Jumping mixed (USFS and BLM) crews of jumpers with different chutes does make it more difficult for the spotter as he puts out jumpers at 1,100 feet – at least that’s how high we jumped – and 3,000 feet, depending on the chute. But, the jump requirements are different for jumping into open areas vs. timbered mountain terrain, and each chute has its advantages for particular circumstances.

Round chutes do lack the performance of the ram-air chutes but allow for lower-height maneuvering, and they do not stall.

In my opinion, BLM jumpers can effectively use the higher speed (25 mph or greater) speed of ram-air chutes in the windy areas of open rangeland while the USFS jumpers’ slower speed and lower height-turning ability is advantageous in heavily timbered areas.

Like Chuck, I see no universal advantage for USFS jumpers to use ram-air chutes, except for ego purposes; an injured jumper is certainly a liability on a fire. But then, smarter people than I make such decisions; after all, that’s why they rose to such lofty positions of authority, isn’t it? 🙄



Does The Public Want Smokejumper Mission Changed?

Reader comment *Fairfield (Montana) Sun Times* October 2015

On September 21st KFBB TV ran a summary on the 5 largest fires burning in Montana:

- The Selway Complex Fire was 95,000 acres on the Nez Perce National Forest.
- Bear Creek Fire at 71,000 acres on the Flathead National Forest.
- 61,000 acres burned on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Fires on the Lewis and Clark Forest.
- 22,000 acres burned on the Trail Creek Fire on the Flathead National Forest.
- The Goat Rock Complex on the Kootenai National Forest burned 22,000 acres and was the 5th largest.

Some of these fires originated as small fires in wilderness and backcountry and were allowed to burn for "resource benefit." Some were outside of the wilderness but may not have been actively suppressed when

acreage was small.

In some cases initial attack wasn't adequately supported. In lulls in the weather, sometimes-adequate fire control was not engaged for days. Winds came up as they always do, and the small fires conflagrated into huge catastrophic complexes as they burned into each other. Heart Butte had to be hurriedly evacuated.

Those of us in Hamilton, off the Wilderness and Selway Complex, and those of us downwind from the Rocky Mountain Fires sat in dense smoke for weeks. A tremendous amount of carbon and particulate matter was released. Instead of combating global warming, we are adding to it. Huge burns sterilize the soil and burn right through previous burns. They release large amounts of sediment and ash that detrimentally affect fish and water. Streams lose their cover and become hot.

The backcountry forests that we know are becoming scorched earth.

Smokejumpers commented about what they do best in a recent *Great Falls Tribune* article: "We can get there quickly and put out fires when they are small, before they have a chance to turn into big fires."

No fire is 100% safe to fight but, generally, small fires are easier and safer to put out before they blow up into huge complexes. We need the Forest Service management to use some "smokejumper" common sense. We need to let them know that they should rethink their let-burn policy in light of our changing climate. We need more initial attack and need to devote resources to put fires out while they are small and controllable. This needs to be done before our beautiful cool forests are no more. (Reader from Kalispell, MT) 🌲

Lessons Unlearned—A Historical Prospective, Part II

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

Historical background

The M-4 Sherman tank entered combat service in the North African campaign with the British at El Alemein in October 1942. At the time, the Sherman was the best tank on the battlefield. Still, many Shermans were lost in North Africa until the Americans gained the experience necessary to combat the seasoned troops of the German Wehrmacht – unquestionably, the finest army in the field at that point in time.

Once the steep learning curve flattened, the Sherman performed with exemplary service in both North Africa and later Sicily and Italy. The British were so impressed with the new tank that they switched their armor as fast as possible to the Sherman. The new German Tiger and Panther tanks were encountered only in small numbers early in the war because most of the new German armor was needed on the Russian front.

Still, the British were quick to recognize the Panther-Tiger threat and developed the 17-pounder gun in their next generation of Sherman called the “Firefly.” The Americans were slow to respond but soon developed a high-velocity 76-mm gun for the M-4 resulting in a third generation of Sherman tank, the M-4A3E8 or “Easy Eight.”

Again, losses were high in Normandy when tanks were placed on the offensive in the unsuitable for armor hedgerow country of France. Soon, however, the breakout occurred and Allied Shermans now found themselves in country favorable to the inherent strengths of the M-4.

Tactics trump technology

Contrary to popular myth, the Sherman kill ratio on the superior Panther was now at about 2-to-1 in favor of the Sherman. If the Sherman fought in a defensive position, the ratio skyrocketed to an 8-to-1 ratio in favor of the Sherman. Let's take a look at a case example.

The fields of Lorraine, France, pitted both Ger-

man Panzers and American Shermans in open tank country in September 1944. The battles serve as a textbook proof of tactics that trump technology.

Both armies fought in an offensive posture. Creighton Abrams (37th Tank Battalion), 4th Armored Division, spearheaded Patton's 3rd Army. They faced 262 Panthers and assorted German armor. Interestingly, Abrams and his tankers refused the up-gunned, high-velocity Shermans before the engagement. They were quite comfortable with their tried-and-true 75-mm Shermans that had served them so well – the variety of reasons too long to list in this article – since landing in Europe.

At the end of more than 10 days of fighting, the 4th Armored Division left the Germans with about 60 vehicles in which to retreat. The Americans lost 41 Shermans.

Photographs of battle outcomes display clean 75-mm holes through the Panthers' side armor giving the appearance and reality that the American tankers used training, experience, mobility, terrain, weather, communications and, most importantly, tactics to hunt and kill the technologically-superior Panther.

The right technology for the right job

Part of the equation was to understand the strengths of the Sherman and weaknesses of the Panther. The Sherman gave the gunner both a wide periscope view along with his gunnery sight for a broader field of reference. The Panther gunner had only his gunnery sight. To get a feel for this limitation, imagine hunting with a scoped rifle without the ability to use the naked eye or binoculars.

The Sherman also had a separate drive for the turret and could track enemy targets quickly. The mobility of the Sherman and its battle worthiness is renowned. On any given day, more than 90 percent of the Shermans were in fighting service as compared to 40-60 percent of the high-tech Panthers.

The Sherman was also designed for speed and mobility. It was designed to cross most bridges and travel with ease on standard roads. At Lorraine, the 4th Armored already had more than a thousand miles on their Shermans – well past the mechanical life expectancy of a Panther. For the Shermans, they were just getting started.

Tankers soon learned they could hit the Panther with the new white-phosphorus round that was then sucked into the Panzer's ventilation system. This often forced abandonment of the tank. You didn't have to penetrate the armor of a Panther or Tiger to knock it out.

Technology serves a purpose, but it is not the firefighter's salvation. To the contrary, technology can be a hindrance if not right for the job or utilized improperly. **Hal Samsel** (MSO-49), our old loft foreman at Missoula, once told me (paraphrased without the colorful speech): "That old boy who invented the chain saw ... well, he changed the whole game. Now a squad could do the work of several crews. About everything they come up with since is just blowing hot air."

How true! We need to balance the right technology to fit the job.

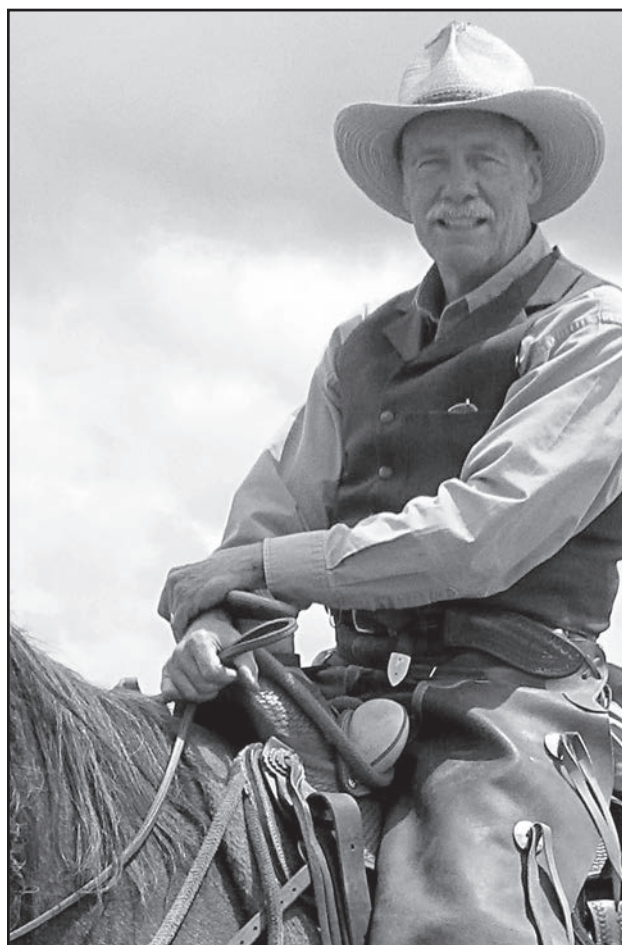
To balance technology to need in World War II, the U.S. Army followed a two-part doctrine:

1. Battle Worthiness: Equipment had to be battle-sound. It made no sense to ship material from the United States to Africa or Europe that could not stand up to the arduous conditions of combat.

2. Battle Need: This criterion demanded that ordinance listen to the needs of the troops and make adjustments accordingly. The key here is to listen to the troops in the field.

The old Forest Service was in tune to World War II Army doctrine. But somewhere along the line our outfit lost its way. Now, for fun, make a mental note or a list of all the items you were forced by agency policy to use that you neither needed, asked for, nor wanted. This is "battle need" – or lack of it. Remember your list and stay in tune for Part Three in your next issue of Smokejumper.

The German Panther was a high-tech precision craftsman's work of art. On paper, it was the best tank of World War II. It was, however, not the tank the German soldier in the field wanted. He simply



Karl Brauneis (NSA file)

asked for a German copy of the battle worthy Russian T-34.

In contrast, the Sherman was not the best tank on paper. It was, however, battle-worthy and adaptable to battle need. Shermans continued to fight on up through the Korean War and the 1957, 1967 and 1973 wars with the Israeli Defense Force.

In many respects, the Sherman is like our old smokejumper DC-3s. The Douglas Commercial-3 or C-47 matched the right technology to the right job. Sometimes, old technology is the right technology. Keep the DC-3 in mind as you ponder Battle Need and Battle Worthiness for your next issue of Smokejumper. 🦋

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1. *Armored Thunderbolt – The U.S. Army Sherman in World War II* by Steven Zaloga
2. *Citizen Soldiers* by Stephen Ambrose
3. *Panther vs. Sherman* by Jim Laurier and Steven Zaloga

I would also like to recognize first-person history with men like Don Gore, a Colorado game warden and Sherman tank commander in World War II. Don first told me about the Sherman when I was working with him at age 18, moving problem black bears:

"The closest I ever came to death was when we took

a turn in this town and came face to face with that long-barrel Panther 75 swinging around to kill us. But we could track faster in the Sherman and I had a hell of a gunner. He got on him like right now and we beat that Panther to the punch. Closest I've been to looking death in the eye."



RECORDING SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY



1947 Water Bomb Project

by Ronald Stephens (Missoula '46)

THE U.S. FOREST Service joined with the Army Air Corps in the summer of 1947 and ran a water bomb testing program southwest of Lolo, Mont., in the Lolo National Forest. The project used a B-29 bomber and two P-47 fighter aircrafts.

The B-29 – nicknamed the *Rocky Mountain Ranger* – came from Eglin Air Force Base in Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., but was deployed to Great Falls, Mont.

The bombs were made from auxiliary fuel wing tanks. The P-47 tanks were used as-is and were filled with water and some with foamy liquid; they were jettisoned on fires. The bomber used the same tanks that were taken to a machine hangar and equipped with tail fins for stabilization.

A proximity fuse and explosives were placed inside of each bomb. They were designed to explode 50 to 150 feet above

ground to disperse the water over the fire area.

An Air Corps captain controlled the project on the ground, supervising a group of young men to create a smoke target and to measure the effects of the event. Each aircraft conducted numerous tests.

The final tests were run as a demonstration to forestry groups who came from various countries from around the world. A successful smoke-jumper drop climaxed the demonstration. The jumpers were able to extinguish the test fires that were missed by the aircraft dropping the water bombs.

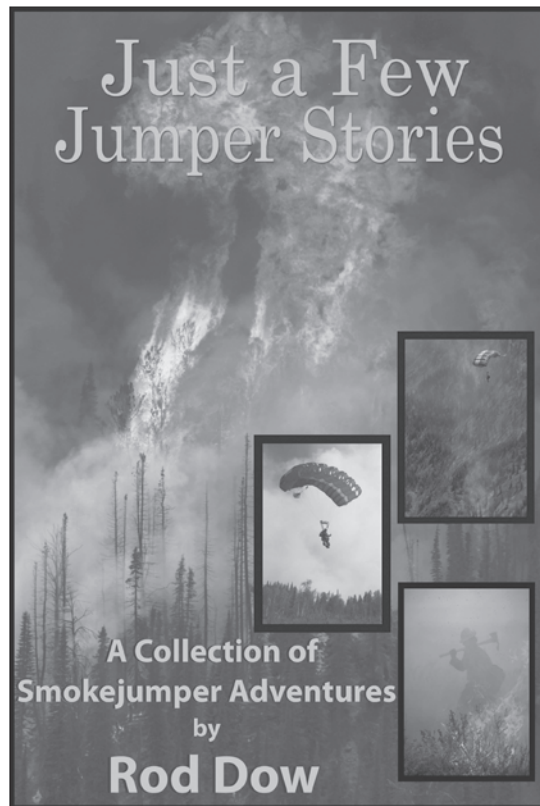
The day before the demonstration, the bomber experienced mechanical issues that could not be resolved; another plane needed to be brought from Eglin to replace it. The personnel had to make a hurried switch of the bomb sight to the new bomber; this may

have contributed to the missing of the target.

My fellow jumper (whose name is not available) and I were almost killed on two of these test missions, once by the bomber and once by the fighter. Interesting stories of these events can be related later.

I made a fire jump with another jumper on a fire that had been caused by a lightning strike. A fighter plane had attacked this fire. The bombs had scattered the fire everywhere, and we had to extinguish numerous small fires around the original fire.

The Army Air Corps was reorganized Sept. 18, 1947, becoming the United States Air Force. This may be the cause of the lack of information related to this test program. Also, the program was semi-secret and officials released little information at that time. 🕯



"An Old Salt sits on a soggy cubitainer under a smoky cargo chute, sipping cowboy coffee from a metal canteen cup. His skin and clothes resemble an after shift coal miner. Sizzling flatnose skewered on forked willow sticks drip grease into campfire ash. The campfire flares. Socks drying over a tripod leg drip into the coffee can. The stories begin. Laughter is heard coming from the fire pit late into the night.

Master storyteller Rod Dow brings the jump story to the written page while remaining true to its oral roots. That is, short stories without added fluff and filler. These stand alone stories, mostly under five pages in length, make for quick reading and laugh out loud sharing with others. A one of a kind book, "Just a Few Jumper Stories" will appeal to all wildland firefighters and should be on every Smokejumper's bookshelf." -Jon Larson

"When it comes to telling jump stories, no one does it better than Rod Dow. For years he talked about a few stories he wanted to write. Well, here they are, unbridled, unleashed and, in all cases, pure Dow. Rich in detail and sometimes hilarious, they embrace the heart of what makes smokejumping such a unique celebration of life. Read this and laugh your butt off." -Murry Taylor

Just a Few Jumper Stories by Rod Dow

A collection of stories, mostly from 32 years at McCall and Alaska. I hope they portray the smokejumper experience honestly and without pretension. They're written in a simple storytelling style that many of you will remember from around the hundreds of campfires you've seen in the past. The book is intended as a tribute to the humor, thrill, and love of nature that comes from jumping fires in Alaska and all over the mountain West. A quick warning: . . . there's cussing, drinking, car smashing, firefighting, and other poor choices. -Dow



Just a Few Jumper Stories can be ordered on Amazon for \$18.95 plus shipping. Or I can send you a signed copy from home for \$20 including shipping. Just send an email to dow4seven@gmail.com.
(I actually make more that way, it costs you less, and I'm usually a little quicker than Amazon.)

Order using
the form on
the insert!

SMOKEJUMPER MERCHANDISE



With these fine caps, style is now your game

Choose from the smooth nylon of the **navy blue SMOKEJUMPERS cap** (top), the dignified **khaki twill U.S. Forest Service Smokejumpers** (right) or the unique design on soft **cotton rich royal blue logo cap of the history-packed Siskiyou Smokejumper Base** from Cave Junction, Ore. All feature attention-grabbing style and long-lasting construction! The SMOKEJUMPERS cap offers gold embroidery and trim with a velcro strap. The U.S. Forest Service cap has a brass buckle and green-and-white "sandwich"-style bill, while the Siskiyou cap is a rich royal blue with khaki bill and brass headband buckle. Why not order one of each?

• SMOKEJUMPERS cap \$20 • USFS Smokejumpers cap \$16 • Siskiyou Smokejumper Base cap \$16



Compact technology: Your all-time NSA record

This handy thumb drive contains every edition of *The Static Line* (1993-99) and *Smokejumper* magazine (1999-present) ever published.

Looking for an article about the early days of jumping? Trying to find a name of a smokejumper once featured in a story? Now you have total access. Makes an excellent, environmentally friendly gift! **\$24**

Pin up this great new style

Stylish SMOKEJUMPERS logo pin with our new logo looks fantastic on a cap or lapel. Stays secure with double-post fasteners. Shiny chrome finish. **Order several ... you get FREE shipping!** **\$3**



You've been framed!

Top of this license plate frame reads "Jumpin' Fires" while the bottom reads "Smokejumpers." White letters on a black background. Buy one for each of your vehicles, and save!



\$3 each, or two for \$5

Polo shirt that brings you style and comfort! How will you wear it?

Honeycomb pique ... it offers breathability and outright comfort – combined with sharp, crisp looks – better than anything on the market. You get it all with this outstanding polo-style shirt ... with the SMOKEJUMPERS logo embroidered on the chest in gold.

Thanks to its outstanding style, this shirt looks great on the golf course, tennis court or with a pair of cotton slacks. Wear it to "dress up" a pair of jeans. You can't go wrong! M, L, XL and XXL. **Navy blue only.** **\$32**



Are you still hangin' around?

These high-quality t-shirts feature spectacular artwork of an "old" smokejumper dangling from a tree. Ash-gray t-shirt will withstand many years of washing. Perfect for the gym, around the house or around town! M, L, XL and XXL. **\$17**



Our most popular t-shirt!

People love this shirt ... and the quantity we've sold proves it! Shirt features stylized "SMOKEJUMPERS" on the front with fabulous artwork of jumping action on back. Hazy light blue (M, L, XL, XXL) with short sleeves. **\$17**



Movie inspired many dreams of smokejumping for young men

Loosely based on the Mann Gulch Fire in which 12 jumpers and a firefighter died, "**Red Skies of Montana**" fascinated many young men about life "out West." Released in 1952. **\$15**

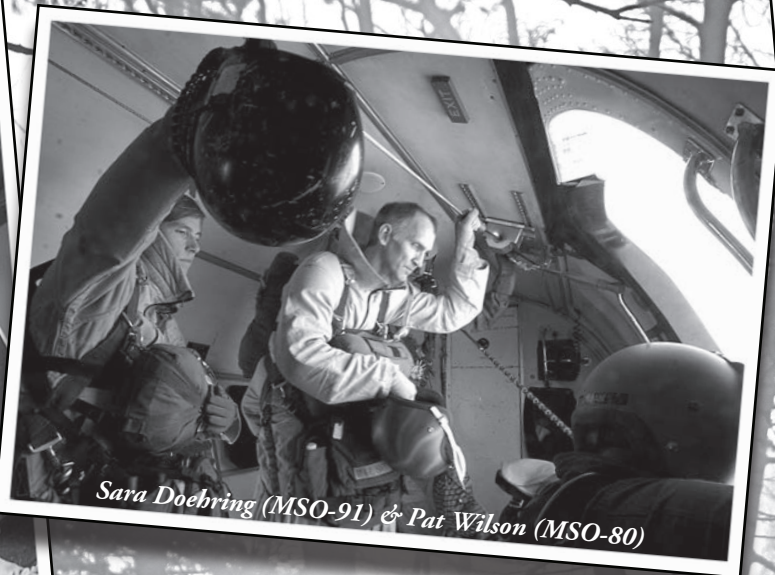


Exhaustive DVD tells the story of smokejumping from beginning

"**Smokejumpers: Firefighters From the Sky**" is a definitive record of smokejumping, featuring 120 minutes of history from 1939 to 2000. Footage filmed at current bases and in the field. **\$15**



Jon Kawczynski (FBX-96)



Sara Doebring (MSO-91) & Pat Wilson (MSO-80)



Sara Pierce (NCSB-99)

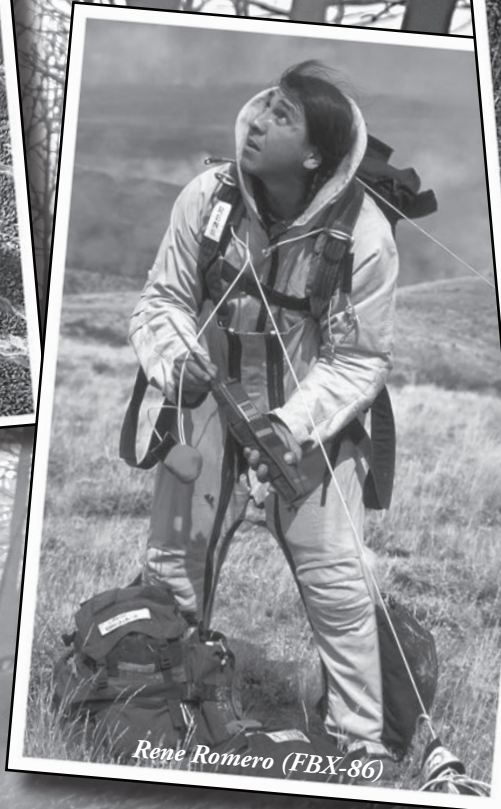


WILDFIRE
 Wildland Firefighting
 Courtesy Mike McQuinn
www.wildfirefighting.com

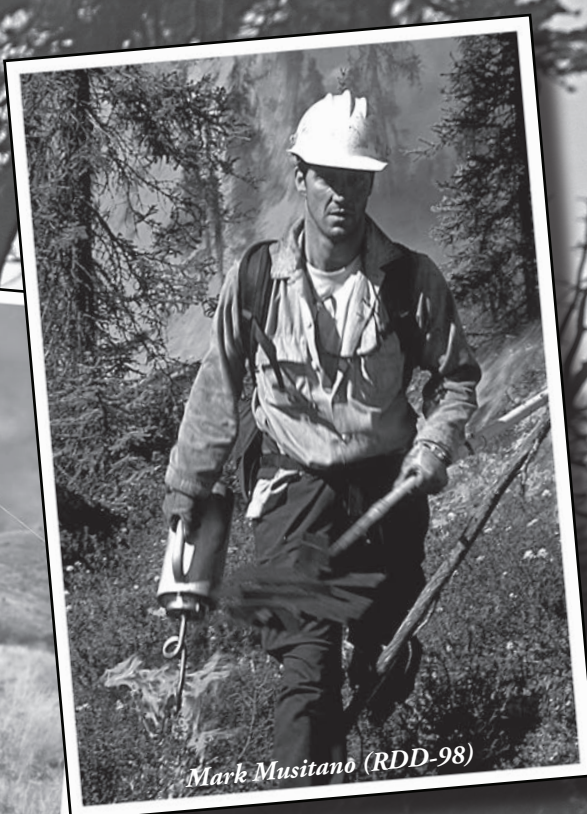
Layout Design: John



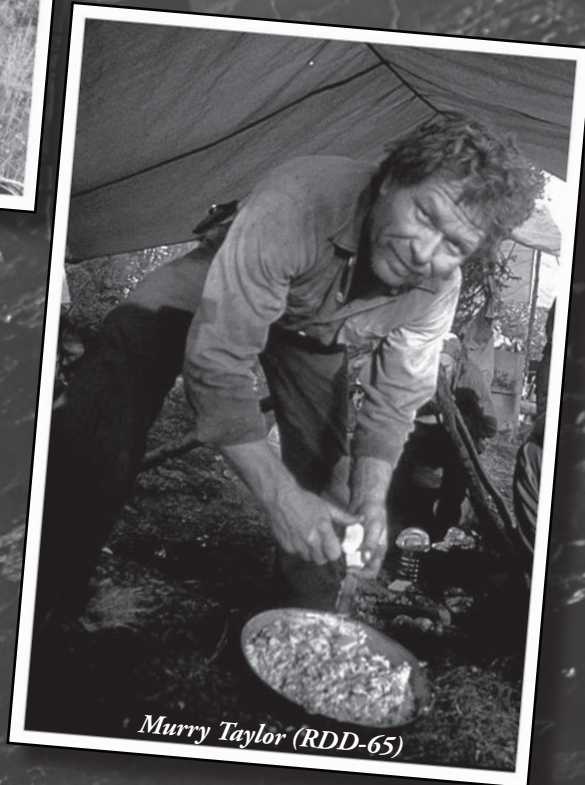
Kris Dudley (MYC-68)



Rene Romero (FBX-86)



Mark Musitano (RDD-98)



Murry Taylor (RDD-65)

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cMillan (FBX-96)
irewest.com



any Kirkley (CJ-64)

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

IN A PRESS release, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack stated that in 2015 wildfires burned a record 10,125,149 acres across the United States, surpassing the previous record set in 2006. In 2015, there were more than 50 fires that exceeded 50,000 acres each; of those, 20 fires exceeded more than 100,000 acres each. Half of the acreage burned in 2015 was in Alaska. A total of 13 wildland firefighters, including seven U.S. Forest Service firefighters, were killed in the line of duty in 2015. I haven't seen the final Smokejumper statistics for 2015, but it appears that 2015 was the third busiest in Smokejumper history.

The new BLM Hotshot crew I mentioned last column now has a name—Aravaipa. The new Superintendent is Greg Smith. The Aravaipa IHC will be the only hotshots stationed in Southern Arizona.

Our colleague, Bill Gabbert,

videotaped a 3 part “exit interview” with Tom Harbor, retiring National Director of Fire and Aviation Management for the Forest Service. The videos are posted on Bill’s web site, *Wild-fire Today*. I encourage everyone to watch the videos and listen to what he has to say about the Smokejumper Program. Harbor seems to have coined the phrase “no more two-manners in the Bob,” to which **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) countered in the last issue, “a no two-manner turns into a two thousand manner.” I couldn’t agree more. In the interview, Harbor talks about a Type III Team comprised of Smokejumpers who could respond to rapidly growing fires in the Wildland-Urban Interface. While it’s an interesting concept, all I can think of when I watch that part of the video is the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire and the 2013 Black Forest Fire in Colorado. Harbor stated there were 10,480 Federal wildland firefighters in 2015 and there will be 10,000 available 2016. He does not explain the decrease of 480. We will have to see if the new Director continues with Tom Harbor’s ideas. At deadline, a new Director had not been named.

The Missoula DC-3, J15, N115Z flew out of Missoula for the last time on December 9, 2015. J15 flew to Sacramento where it will be auctioned off. There was a small retirement

ceremony held in the Missoula hangar on December 8. **Tory Kendrick** (MSO-00) made the last practice jump out of the Doug. We are waiting to hear who got the last fire jump. The Missoula Doug was the last DC-3 in the Forest Service Inventory. J42, the McCall DC-3, retired in 2012. There was a lot of criticism surrounding the retirement of N115Z, to no avail. The era of the army surplus C-23B Sherpas, the Coast Guard surplus C 130’s, and the phasing out of the Dehavilland Twin Otters is on the horizon.

Have you read Dr. **Charlie Palmer’s** (MSO-94) new book, “Montana’s Waldron Creek Fire: The 1931 Tragedy and the Forgotten Five”? It’s well worth a read. After reading the book, I realized that it very much reminded me of another book, “The Man from the Cave” by Colin Fletcher (The Complete Walker, The Man Who Walked Through Time, The Thousand Mile summer et al). Montana’s Waldron Creek Fire is not so much about the fire itself, but about a man’s journey to solve a mystery - a forgotten mystery. Charlie’s journey took him from his own hometown of Great Falls, Montana, half way across the country to Chicago. Pick up a copy. I am sure this isn’t Charlie’s last book.

We received word that **Eric Hipke** (NCSB-90) retired last fall. We wish him good health,

lots of laughs and a long retirement.

Play safely this year. Work

Safely. Keep your head on a swivel and never forget that there is not a single stand of

timber, a patch of grassland, or a single structure worth anyone's life out there. 🌲

Oliver Huset: What A College Professor Couldn't Remember

by James R. Brunk (Missoula '45)

This is the third and fourth in a series former CPS-103 smokejumper James Brunk has named "Five Smokejumpers' Rescue Stories." Brunk was a conscientious objector during World War II. Jim earned his M.D. from the University of Virginia in 1954 and specialized in internal medicine.

Late one afternoon a few days after the rescue of **Neilford Eller** (MSO-45), **Oliver Huset** (MSO-44) and **Eddie Vail** (MSO-44) jumped on a two-man fire. Unfortunately, as Ollie neared the ground, his parachute caught the top of a tree, breaking it off and fouling his chute, which collapsed. Ollie landed on the mountain-side, hitting his head so hard that he was knocked cold in spite of his helmet.

When Eddie realized that Ollie was not coming to join him at the fire, he went looking for him. When Eddie found him, the first thing Ollie said was, "Hi, Ed. Where am I?" Obviously, as a result of being knocked unconscious, he now had retrograde amnesia.

Ed got him into his sleeping bag, signaled the airplane, and went back to check on the fire.

When Ed returned to see about Ollie, he was again greeted with, "Hi, Ed. Where am I?"

A crew of us, including **Addison "Ad" Carlson** (MSO-43), parachuted down to carry Ollie out to the road. After we landed, we got Ollie onto a stretcher not long before dark. However, since it soon became very dark, we had a great deal of difficulty finding and following a trail.

I do not remember, after 70 years, how far we had to carry Ollie, but it seemed near midnight when Ad stumbled and almost fell – and had a few well-chosen words to say.

Ollie, clearly remembering who Ad was, now offered, "You get on here, Ad, and let me carry this thing [the stretcher], a while."

Years later, after Ollie had become a college professor, when we were both at a smokejumpers reunion, I asked him if he remembered that jump. He didn't. Indeed, he never regained any memory of his accident on that mountain because of his clear retrograde amnesia.

He was a college professor for many years.

For Carey "Tiny" Evans, It Wasn't A Light Breeze

by James R. Brunk (Missoula '45)

Another rescue, which I had nothing to do with, was for **Carey "Tiny" Evans** (MSO-45).

His group had jumped on a fire on a very windy day. As a result, their parachutes oscillated violently. As Tiny neared the ground, he found himself falling unusually rapidly. He oscillated forward, swung back, and sat down so heavily that he could no longer move his legs. Indeed, he was paralyzed from the waist down.

David V. "Pete the Packer" Kauffman (MSO-45) jumped with an eight-man crew to carry Tiny out to an ambulance. Pete later said that Tiny got heavier the farther they went. Pete estimated that Tiny weighed 220 pounds. (I have no idea how far they had to carry that heavy man.)

Tiny later recovered the use of his legs, I think.

As a postscript, it is interesting to me that both David V. "Pete the Packer" Kauffman and I later became physicians and practiced medicine for many years – he in Montana and I in Virginia. 🌲

Recollections Of The 2015 Missoula Reunion

by Denis Symes (McCall '63)

Missoula is a magical city – regardless of where you jumped. It is nestled in the Bitterroot Valley, between two major wilderness areas, the Bob Marshall and the Selway-Bitterroot.

As the home of the University of Montana, the big “M” overlooking the campus is a real landmark – if you get lost, you can just follow your sight line and get back to the campus; no compass or GPS needed!

And, Missoula holds a special place in the hearts of all jumpers as it is where jumping really got its start. Sure, Winthrop was where the first experimental jumps took place and operational

techniques developed, but Missoula’s role in smokejumping history is unquestioned.

Arriving in Missoula after driving 15 hours through Wyoming and Montana (from Fort Collins, Colo.), I checked in at the Adams Center and was directed to the Knowles Hall dormitory, where I had reserved a room at \$28 a night. No, it was not air conditioned, and it took eons for the hot water to arrive at the shower, but at \$28 per night, it was a bargain. I deduced that Knowles Hall is a women’s dormitory from the pink tiles and the lack of urinals in the bathrooms!

I was fortunate in meeting up with several good friends and sharing beers with them. These



Reunion 2015. Left side: Jim Snapp, Stan Underwood, John Rohrbach, Ray Sweeney, Joann Sweeney. Right side: Beverly Snapp, Anh Rohrbach, Bob Dayton, Shari Dayton. (Courtesy J. Snapp)

included **Dave Hemry** (MYC-64), **Mike McCracken** (CJ-60), **Bob Miller** (MSO-61), **Fred Donner** (MSO-59), **John McDaniel** (CJ-57), **Bill Yensen** (MSO-53), **Doug Wamsley** (MSO-65), **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59), **Jack Atkins** (MSO-68) and **Hank Broderson** (MSO-54). There were others whom I cannot readily recall.

I had hoped to run into **Stan Bolle** (MSO-59), with whom I'd worked in Glacier National Park in 1960, but missed him.

One thing that makes Bill Yensen's presence especially important to me is that Bill spotted me on my first fire jump on Pollock Mountain in Idaho. I'm still not sure either of us really knew what we were doing!

The Missoula Smokejumpers made refresher jumps from the Turbo DC-3; one was with a round FS-14 and the next dozen or so were with ram-air chutes. The jump spot was Missoula's infamous "Field of Shame," and there was a large number of us older guys just wishing we could turn back the clock 50 or so years and suit up again.

The keynote speaker at the Saturday night dinner was unquestionably John McLean, who gave a well-documented presentation on the Yarnell Hill Fire of 2013. This was a tragic fire that resulted in the deaths of 19 members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots; John enumerated a number of mistakes, poor decisions and bad luck that culminated in the tragedy.

Unfortunately, lessons always seem to be learned from tragedy.

My biggest recollection of the reunion is the amount of money I spent at the NSA merchandise table. How many hats, shirts and other stuff do I really need? 'Nuff said about that and I guess many others feel the same way, but we'll do it again at the next reunion.

It is interesting to note that 50 years ago, most of us wore medium T-shirts; today, they only seem to come in large, extra large and double extra large sizes!

One thing we all need to do is be cognizant that the younger jumpers are apparently not joining the NSA, or not remaining in the organization. Just looking around at the reunion, there weren't as many young faces as I'd like to see.

Unless more young jumpers join, the organiza-

tion will dwindle and eventually not be there to keep the flame alive. We need to encourage the younger jumpers to join, remain in the organization and become active.

The NSA has settled on having national reunions every five years, alternating between Missoula, Boise and Redding. These are the only cities large enough to host the NSA reunion. Given the past rotations, I guess the next reunion will take place in 2020 in Boise.

I certainly plan on eating my fruits and vegetables, exercising and staying healthy so I can attend! See you there. 🍌

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. Or join our email list. Chuck's contact information is in the information box on page three. 🍌

BOOTS NEEDED FOR TRAVELING MUSEUM

A fully dressed smokejumper mannequin is part of the Traveling Smokejumper Museum. It is necessary that we have some boots for this display.

If you have an old used pair of Whites or firefighting boots that you are willing to donate, please contact Chuck Sheley. Contact information on page three of this magazine.



ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to **John Snedden** (BOI-73), **Jim Phillips** (MSO-67) and **Bill Tucker** (MSO-50) who just became our latest Life Members.

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "I am not a big fan of the Missoula Equipment Development Center simply for the fact that, as smokejumpers, we had to try their protective equipment out. Once we had to wear these like-aluminum shirts that flaked all over you.

"Then the NOMEX fire pants, they said we would never be required to wear them, and then the outfit forced us to, later on. We wrote a protest letter with almost every smokejumper signing it. What a waste of money – Nomex - it can only function if it is clean. It was designed for aviators and flash fires. When have you ever seen a clean pair of Nomex on the fire line?

"In my opinion it has cost the government millions of dollars in slow initial attack response times, destroyed the militia, and instilled a fear of reprisal from the bureaucrats - and for absolutely no gain in safety - the true Pharisees at work. Now you can lose your job if you aren't properly attired. Go figure. I'll keep my heavyweight blue jeans."

(At the time of this email, Karl was part of the management team for the Little Bob Lake Fire on the Wind River Indian Reservation. They are managing the fire under a 'Confine and Contain' plan at around \$6,000 a day for the 1,000+ acre fire. Pretty reasonable expenses. Bet he's working in his heavyweight blue jeans.) (Ed.)

John Manley (CJ-62): "Greetings, Chuck.... Great article on the chute issue, particularly like your stance regarding the appropriate contribution of viewpoints and opinions from NSA organization and individuals. Keep it up. We are



living in an era of very expensive mistakes made behind closed doors by government leaders with more authority than competence. Keep your dukes up, Chuck. It is obvious that your resistance to rolling over on this important decision is effective."

Neil Rylander (MSO-61): (Reunion Thoughts) "Just so you know the value of jumpers from their own bases and year meeting up. The MSO Class of 1961 included a meet out at the Aerial Fire Museum next to the jump base. Thirty one out of the original 60 met up. It was the highlight of the 75th reunion for us, as we would not have had the likelihood of having met with spouses and grandchildren, etc. For us it was the best and I, for one, suggest that meetings of jumpers from same bases and same years be encouraged. It was so good.

"A few guys came to the reunion that would not have ever come otherwise except for old friends getting the courage to call each other after 54 years. Wow! I have received so many emails from guys from MSO-61 saying meeting at the museum was the best part of the whole reunion."

Fred Cooper (NCSB-62): "Chuck, received my electronic version of the January 2016 Smokejumper Magazine on Nov. 24. Downloaded, printed, and read it Nov. 25 in one sitting. A well-balanced issue with a wide diversity of viewpoints and stories. Thanks again for a good job.

"I enjoyed your 'A Visit With My Black Son' article. Reminds me so much about my 35-year career in HR with the Forest Service and in USDA Office of the Secretary trying to achieve a minority and women representative workforce. Very difficult challenge that is still ongoing."

John Snedden (BOI-73) Regarding his Life Membership: "My goal is to assist in a small way in the accurate recording of jumper history. The PC re-writes by government and others are a menace to freedom. Plus, I enjoy each issue as my mind wanders back to the feeling of readiness for the slap and exit from the 'Doug.' It sometime feels like the hinge pin that anchors truth and accountability has been removed."

From the January 2016 issue of *Smokejumper*:

"On Wednesday September 23rd, 2015, five-year-old Max, son of **Joe** (NIFC-06) and **Courtney Wyatt**, was riding his bike home from school when he was struck by a minivan. Although he was wearing his helmet, he sustained multiple injuries and was in critical condition. He went into surgery shortly after arriving at the hospital to remove his spleen. Once he was stable, he and his mom, Courtney, flew to Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City, UT, with dad, Joe, following shortly after.

"Max suffers from a collapsed left lung, bruised right lung, chest wound, broken ribs, broken pelvis, broken left leg, and possible other broken bones."

The NSA was able to respond quickly to the needs of the Wyatt family with a donation from the Good Samaritan Fund.

An update KTMV News in Boise, December 10, 2015: "Five-year-old Maximo Wyatt is finally back home in Idaho - just in time for Christmas. Maximo spent more than 70 days in a Salt Lake City hospital fighting for his life after being hit by a minivan and dragged some 40 feet while riding his bike home from school with his dad. Max endured 13 surgeries, and skin grafts now cover much of his body."

I've mentioned in several articles that I would like to see the logging industry restored in the US under guidelines that prevent destruction of our forests. Restore the jobs, towns, schools and a way of life that has been lost in the past 30 years. We all use wood products and seem to think they come from outer space. Is it OK to shut down our timber industry while buying wood that comes from SE Asia?

Vientiane Times (Laos) December 2015:

"Illegal logging is reportedly widespread in Saravan province despite inspections being carried out by the local authorities. Deforestation is a chronic issue in Laos with protected areas still under threat from the surging demand for timber. While law enforcement remains lax, Laos will struggle to reach its goal to restore forest cover to 70 percent of the country by 2020."

Cameron Chambers (NCSB-04) was recently the subject of a Q&A by a writer from *Outdoor Life*. The lead to the article goes as follows: "Flyfishing fanatic Cameron Chambers spent six months pursuing a trip in Patagonia. His journals from that first trip a decade ago were recently published, and he keeps going back for more."

Davis Perkins (NCSB-72) Davis continues his work on international medical teams: "Chuck, just thought I'd drop you a quick note to say hello. I'm just back from 30 days in Lesvos Greece. I tell you, this is the worst human tragedy I've ever witnessed. On average we had about 2000 refugees make the perilous journey to Lesvos from Turkey each day. 50-60 refugees crammed into a rubber boat made for 20. Unreliable outboard engines. The Turkish smugglers (real bastards!) would charge around \$1200 per person for the trip, pack them at gunpoint into the rubber boats, and send them on their way. None had boat handling experience, many drownings (13 yesterday alone), and much hypothermia. Our teams were busy! This is such a terrible situation. It's hard to be back, and I'm contemplating a return. No end in sight. One saving grace was the quality of the people I was working with. Teams from Israel, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Spain, Norway, etc. All topnotch pros, competent, and dedicated to the task at hand. I made many lifelong friends as you can imagine."

Fred Donner (MSO-59): "In the January 2015 issue (page 36) Pete Dobbins mentions his father, Wally's recollection of a 'CIA pilot who had been captured in Laos' and planned for a B-17 Skyhook pickup. It is most likely Wally was talking about Allen Pope, who was shot down in a B-26 over Indonesia in May 1958 and held prisoner four years before

released. The Pope story is in my article in the January 2013 issue, 'The CIA, Smokejumpers, and B-17s.'"

Bill Meadows (ANC-66) concerning article on **Wally Dobbins** (MSO-47): "I'd like to fill in a few more thoughts on Wally Dobbins' life. He grew up just over the ridge from us on Big Beaver Creek, NW of Thompson Fall, Montana. My Dad hired him to help pick up bales of hay on our place. I had him as a civics teacher in the 7th grade, as he taught several years at Thompson Falls. He then took the football coaching position at Arlee in 1957. At no time did he ever mention his experiences with 'The Agency.'"

"Wally remained friends with my parents throughout their lifespan. During the summer, he manned a USFS radio station on the south side of Missoula. He and Marion would make

an annual visit to my parents during those summers.

"Wally always had a sense of humor. One story he told me was that he had drunk out of a creek, then walked upstream and saw a dead gopher lying in the creek. He said, 'That's where I got my good looks,' then laughed. It was an honor having Wally as a family friend since the early 40s."

Jim Clatworthy (MSO-56): "Your success story with Dennis (*Smokejumper* Jan. 2015) is a good example of what caring teachers and coaches can do. The power that educators have to bring out the best in their students is seldom rewarded, but it sure does give the mentor an intangible reward that is priceless! Thanks for sharing the story, and all the Best to Dennis and his wife. He's lucky to have had you as a mentor." 🍄

Help Needed With Pictorial Aircraft History

Bill Meadows (ANC-66) has offered to compile a pictorial and descriptive database of all the smokejumper aircraft used over the years for the NSA. Prints, slides, and historical info (ie: years assigned, base location, and testimonial comments) can be sent to him at: 168 Little Beaver Cr Rd., Trout Creek, MT 59874 or email: meadows168@montana.com.

Jim Kautz (MSO-74) will provide his expertise in scanning the material. Shots of value include: on-the-ground, air-to-air, ground-to-air, and interior of cargo and jumpers (hooked up and exiting). Be sure to include return addresses on each item so it is returned to the proper contributor. Please send by July 1, 2016.

The following is the list that has been compiled to date. If there are any more, please send information on to Bill.

Operational

A/C	DC-3
C-46	DC-3 Turbine
DC-2	DC-6

Grunman Goose	B-26
E-18 Twin Beech	Stearman
C-45 Twin Beech	Pilatus Porter
AT-11 Twin Beech	Norseman Noor-duynn
Lodestar	Stinson Reliant SR-10
Learstar	
Shorts Sky Van	
Shorts Sherpa	

deHavilland Caribou
de Havilland Twin Otter

Aero Commander 500B

Volpar
Beech 90
Beech 99
King Air 200
Cessna 206

Banderiande
CASA 212
Travel Air
Ford Trimotor

Special Use

Bell G3 B-1

Evaluated

Argosy
Bell 212
Islander
Cessna 208 Caravan
Noman 24
Arava

Military Co-Op

C-130
C-119
UH-1 (Bell 205) 🍄

Traveling Smokejumper Museum Exhibit Off To Fast Start

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

The Traveling Smokejumper Museum Exhibit is aimed at spreading the word and educating the public about the smokejumper program. It currently consists of 20 large wall panels, one of which is shown on the back page of this magazine. In addition, there are visual presentations: a dressed mannequin and two loop DVDs. It is compact, and we've made it as light-weight as possible to keep shipping charges down. It will ship in three boxes.

We have had an excellent response so far. The High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, a top-notch museum sitting on 135 acres with over 100,000 square feet of exhibit space, will run it as a feature June-October 2016. The museum hosts over 135,000 visitors a year.

The World Forestry Center in Portland, Oregon, will also run this exhibit. The WFC over went a \$7 million renovation in 2005, has over 20,000 square feet of exhibit space, and hosts over 65,000 visitors a year.

On a smaller scale, the newly-opened Chico Air Museum will put up a permanent smoke-

jumper exhibit using a portion of the exhibit. The museum hosted over 5,000 visitors in the last nine months.

It is important to note that this exhibit is modular. It can be adjusted to the size of the facility. The exhibit can consist of a smaller number of panels and adjusted to the size of the exhibit space, as done with the Chico Air Museum.

Now, we need you to act as ambassadors for the NSA and the smokejumper community in educating the public about this valuable tool in wildland firefighting in the U.S.

Museums across the country are in the market for exhibits to run. Most exhibits run from eight to ten weeks and are budgeted for in the museum's annual plan. There are organizations that deal specifically in developing and renting museum exhibits.

Make a local contact, sell the smokejumper exhibit, find out their interest and let me know. We'll reach close to 170,000 people in the next nine months. Let's make a goal of 200,000 in the next year. 📌

National Smokejumper Association Annual Scholarships

The National Smokejumper Association plans to annually award as many as six \$1,000 scholarships. The total number of awards will depend on the number of applicants and their qualifications.

What You Should Know When Applying For An NSA Scholarship

The NSA Board of Directors has recently adopted the best practice of many, if not most,

scholarship-granting institutions – namely, using metrics to select recipients. These metrics result in a numerical score that board members will use to rank applications.

Some of the criteria that will be taken into consideration include NSA membership, employment (past or present as a smokejumper or pilot), type of academic program, grade point average, and the quality of the essay submitted.

In evaluating the essay, board members will assess the overall quality of the writing and how the

essay reflects on the candidate's character, strengths and leadership style. Board members will also assess candidates' educational goals and how they will use their education or training in service to others. Finally, the essay is limited to one typewritten page in order to make submission easier for the candidate, as well as easier for the board to assess

Who May Apply For A National Smokejumper Association Scholarship?

National Smokejumper Association scholarships are intended to provide financial support to students who are committed to obtaining advanced education. An applicant must be:

- a current or former smokejumper or smokejumper pilot or have a direct family relation to a current or former smokejumper or smokejumper pilot (spouse or children)
- currently enrolled in an accredited program that will lead to a college degree or other accreditation

Previous applicants may reapply.

What Is Required If You Intend To Apply?

A narrative not to exceed one typewritten page addressing the criteria listed below:

A description of your leadership style/character/service potential and an explanation of how you intend to use your degree/training.

In addition, your narrative should contain a statement of financial need which is a short (1-2 paragraph) piece explaining the benefit of being awarded a scholarship.

This will also give you an opportunity to explain any extenuating circumstances you may have.

In addition to the narrative described above, you must submit an electronic photo of yourself. The photo will be used for publication purposes and should be **at least 1 MB in resolution**. We are looking for a good, clear, close-up photo – no sunglasses, caps or hats please. **A 4 x 6 hardcopy photo can be sent in place of an electronic photo.**

Finally, you need to include the name and address

of the registration unit of the educational facility and your student activity account number or related information. This information is required because award funds are sent directly to the educational facility.

Where Do You Send Your Application Package?

Email your application package to Terry Egan (Cave Junction '65) at grandparka@yahoo.com, no later than June 15. If you have any questions, you can reach him by phone at (253) 565-6041.

What Are The Scholarship Criteria And Selection Process?

- Scholarship applicants must demonstrate financial need.
- Applicants must be full-time students in good standing, with a minimum cumulative.
- Grade point average of 2.5 at his/her college, university, trade, or training.
- School.
- Current members of the National Smokejumper Association will receive priority consideration.
- Successful applicants will be notified by July 15. Scholarship funds will be paid by the National Smokejumper Association to the educational institution of choice and are intended to be used for academic purposes: such as tuition, fees, room, board and/or books.

Previous NSA Scholarship Winners

Joseph Philpott	Erin Springer
Matthew Castellon	Michael Francis
Barry Burris	Gretchen Stumhofer
Clem Pope	Jesse Rae Stevens
Justin Cook	Chris Wennogle
Tyson Atkinson	Nate Hesse
Chris Wennogle	Jessica Lusk
Ian Dooley	Jamie Foland
Mel Tenneson	Erin Springer
Jessica Dowers	Gavin Kearns 🏆
Eli Schned	



Touching All Bases



Great Basin Smokejumpers

by **Steve Stroud** (NIFC-03)

The 2015 fire season was the slowest in ten years for us. We made up for it by supporting other bases in areas of heightened fire activity: like Alaska, Redding, and the Northern Rockies Region.

The Sage Grouse Initiative seems to dictate some of our movement as we staffed one of our aircraft in Burns, Oregon, which was new for us. In the Basin we jumped 54 fires with 327 bros out the door and pounded another 10 fires.

Southeast prescribed fire has kept our employee's busy during the winter months. We sent three modules to Alexandria, LA.

We would like to congratulate **Jordan Williams** (NIFC-10), **Ian Webb** (NIFC-09), **Gabe Donaldson** (NIFC-04), **Ty Van Kuren** (NIFC-09), **Jesse Schmidt** (NIFC-15), **Rob Benoit** (NIFC-08), and **Steven Percy** (NIFC-14), as they all had babies in a five-month period! In another 18 years, we should have a strong rookie class.

We lost three of our best to retirement: **Dennis Geving** (MYC-89), **Frank Clements** (NCSB-88), and our long time admin assistant, Rhonda Stienman. We would like to offer sincere thanks for all the years in service from them, and they are all greatly missed. We also lost some great folks to the real world: **Steve Rameakers** (NIFC-10) took a job with Office of Aircraft Services in their Unmanned Aerial Systems program; **Shaylor Sorensen** (NIFC-06) accepted the Great Basin Training Unit/Air Attack job here at NIFC; **Jed Smith** (RDD-02) took an Air Attack job at Stead Air Tanker base. We hope they all order jumpers in their new positions!

Ivan Smith (MSO-95) accepted the Loft



Manager position. **Steve Stroud** (NIFC-03) accepted the Assistant Operations position. We should have about 15-17 new employees this year, including transfers and rookies.

Joe Wyatt (NIFC-06) and his wife were in Salt Lake for most of the fall. Their son, Maximo, was hit and drug by a minivan crossing the street on his bike. He sustained multiple injuries and burns and spent a lot of time at the Pediatric burn unit and ICU. We are pleased to say Max is back in Boise and doing well. He is riding his bike and

plans on going skiing at Bogus Basin in mid-January. "The Max" campaign was started in his name to promote bicycle safety in the Treasure Valley. A great thanks goes out to the NSA for contributing to Max's "Go Fund Me" page to help him in his recovery.

Mark May 27-29, 2016, on your calendars for the 30-year reunion for the Boise Base.

McCall Smokejumpers

by **Adam Dealaman** (MYC-10)

The snow has been falling steadily in McCall for the last several weeks. In fact, it's only the end of December and the total snowfall this winter has already exceeded the entire snowfall during the winter of 2014/2015. Judging by the number of 1A license plates in town, it looks like Brundage and Tamarack ski hills must be having a successful and well-deserved start to the ski season.

Much like a cheeseburger at Lardo's, the 2015 McCall Smokejumper season could be categorized as slightly below average.

The West Central Mountains saw an abnormally dry spring, and the first action of the season came in March when three jumpers pounded a

fire near Council, Idaho. The first jump of the season came on May 18th in the Goose Creek drainage, north of McCall. **Jake “Miko” Mikovitz** (MSO-08) and **Luis “Latin Hips” Moraga** (MYC-12) were the first to respond, and they had the fire out quick enough to make it back for afternoon roll call. The next real rush of activity wouldn't be until the second and third week of June when booster orders came in for Redding, Redmond, and Alaska. Boost requests were well above average for the base this year, with ten separate boost requests being filled by McCall. A total of 17 boosters, led by the single-man-stick **John “Holo” Holovnia** (MYC-12), were ordered to AK, most staying for 21 days battling the worst fire season Alaska has ever seen. July saw higher than normal precipitation and, coincidentally, higher than normal bar tabs at the Broken Horn. The return to a normal fire season came in August, and much of Idaho and the Payette NF saw a return of large fires, such as the Rapid and Tepee Springs Fires. The last fire Jump of the season came on August 30th in support of the Rapid Fire, and **Tobin “Big Laughs” Orient** (MYC-12) and **Jazz “SPAM-chula” Beyuka** (MYC-08) dug in there until the snow fell. Finally, just as soon as the season had started, it ended with a flurry of snow and annual leave slips.

Seventeen people received promotions or appointments during Fire-Hire, and several promotional details were had this year. Proving you can take the man out of Alaska but you can't take Alaska out of the man, **Eric “Dunes” Duning** (NIFC-00) detailed as an Alaska Fire Service employee for several months during the early part of the season. **Steve “Cerveza Hombre” Bierman** (RAC-86) took a season-long detail at the Chester ATB and has assured us all that he will, in fact, be coming back for another jump season in 2016. **Andrew “Hairdawg” Harris** (MYC-10) detailed as the Snowslide Handcrew Foreman, and **Adam “Huggy” Humbach** (MYC-09) detailed to the NIFC IR Fire mapping program. **Jon “General” Patton** (MYC-05) decided he missed us too much and, after spending time as the Krassel FOS, came back home as the Assistant Loft Foreman. **Phil “Philthy” Reid** (MYC-09), **Garrett “Huddy” Hudson** (MYC-07), **Matt “Ingus” Ingram** (MYC-09) became new faces in the spotter seat

this year. **Brent “Universal Soldier” Morrison** (MYC-10), **“Dirty” Kurt Ryan** (MYC-08), **Ian “That is Rich” Quist**, and **Adam “FAMDORK” Dealaman** (MYC-10) all accepted squad leader positions.

“The dice was loaded from the start” and the NEDS of 2015 never stood a chance. The NEDS' low-sodium diet was no match for the training cadre's salty, take-no-bullshit approach to training. The training cadre was once again led by **Eric “Messy” Messenger** (GAC-99) and, when the dust settled, only nine of the 12 NED candidates made it through training. The McCall Smoke-jumper unit is scheduled to begin a Ram-Air transition starting in 2017 and since the base is going to have to figure out how to put “the square peg in a round hole,” we may not have rookies for the next few seasons. The class of 2016 is rumored to be upwards of 20 nervous souls and will quite possibly be the last McCall class to jump a round parachute. God Bless 'em!

After 23 seasons of jumping, **Kevan Richards** (MYC-92) hung up his jumpsuit for retirement in the sunshine state of Florida. Kevin finished his jumping career with 415 total jumps, 155 of those being fire jumps. With 180 fire jumps and a grand total of 391 jumps, **Bob “Kaibeto Jumper” Charley** (MYC-92) also moved on this season and took a detail on an engine in Council, ID. After detailing for the entire season as a Salt Lake BLM ATGS, **Ryan “Garb” Garber** (MYC-00) left Valley County for a FOS position in the BLM West Desert of Salt Lake City. In order to be closer to his new family, **Peter “PornStache” Dutchick** (MYC-09) put the smokejumper base in his rear view and took a position with a BLM Sacramento veteran's fire crew. **Lane “LMFL” Lamoreaux** (MYC-09) hung it up this year, as well. He has been a great role model and motivation for everyone at the jump base and he will be sorely missed.

California Smokejumpers

by **Jason Foreman** (RDD-08)

Well, hello there fellas, and I miss you sisters! In case you hadn't heard, there have been big

changes at the California Smokejumper base.

In the last couple years, we lost roughly 1700 jumps worth of experience. We saw **Tim Quigley** (RDD-79), our loft manager, his assistant **Dan Hernandez** (RDD-85), and, last but not least, Training Manager **Bob Bente** (RDD-88) leave. All three left reaching mandatory retirement age. Let's congratulate them all and wish them the best! Their careers have shaped what we today have come to know as the California Smokejumpers.

Well, out with old and in with the new. Trying to capture the changes in the organization at Redding can be as challenging as convincing old salty jumpers to give up on that arcane, outdated canopy. With Bob's departure from the Training Manager position, his partner-in-crime, **Jerry Spence** (RDD-94), takes over. With Jerry moving up and out of his assistant position, his void will be filled by none other than **Brad Schuette** (RDD-04). This dynamic duo are now the leaders of our training staff, and we know they will keep us on course and hold true to the foundation that Bob established.

With canopy transitions and changing of winds, somehow, here at Redding, we got an additional position added to our organization. **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00) accepted the newly titled position, Assistant Operations Loadmaster. Certainly Dave can explain to all why we have the heaviest cargo in the smokejumper world. As Dave goes for the phone, he leaves an opening and **Patrick Johnson** (NCSB-08) swooped in to fill Dave's vacated Spotter position.

Pat can jump with the best of them, but his stay at the squadleader position is over. It just so happens that Pat wasn't the only one promoted in this outfit. We ended up filling three Smokejumper Squadleader positions in the last year: **Curtis Matthews** (RDD-10) got in place, followed by **Tye Erwin** (RDD-02) and **Roberto Cervantes** (RDD-12).

Can you imagine, three squadleader jobs being filled? Believe it or not, we hired four fresh faces into those coveted permanent, full-time smokejumper positions. The newest stick, **Brian Bull** (RDD-15) and **Brian Agbalob** (GAC-10), want to work year round! Additionally, **Colin Switzer** (RDD-13) and **Matt Weston** (RDD-13) don't mind working all the time. Congrats to The

Weston's—Ace Weston was born on the 22nd of July and, just like that, another Type 1 smoke-jumper.

All right, everyone up to speed on the personnel changes here at the Region 5 smokejumper program? If not, don't worry. There is always a fresh batch come spring; we call them "Rookies," and certainly there will be more changes to come. Speaking of, our class of twelve, wait - excuse me, ten rookies in 2015 did a decent job as one of them got a perm spot.

The 2015 fire season started early. With a record breaking April 13th request, we flew to the Tule River Indian Reservation, staffing a fire in a very sacred place. Then the fire jumps didn't stop until the 22nd of September. Over the course of six months, 420 jumpers were put out the door and staffed 77 fires. Hmmm, I wonder how many were squares, how many were BLM jumpers? Could we all make the same spots—does it really matter? Fifteen of our fires were staffed out of our spike bases. PTV accommodated us and any lucky booster who wondered "Where is Porterville?" for 67 days. San Bernardino let us in for five days and, by chance, we saw Fresno for a single day.

With all the jumping out of Redding and our spike bases, we must have gotten some more spotters qualified? Absolutely, **Dave Johnson** (RDD-00) and **Doug Powell** (RDD-05) both learned how to yell "Get Ready" and slap right. With all this yelling and slapping, a smokejumper program needs certified parachute riggers. It just so happens in order to certify an individual on how to stuff a clunky worn out parachute into a bag and strap it to somebody's back, one has to jump through a lot of hoops. Loft Manager **Nate Hesse** (RDD-01) became our Designated Parachute Rigging Examiner midyear and proceeded to test our skills. A stick of Master Parachute riggers was certified: **Mitch Hokanson** (RDD-00) and **Pat Johnson** (NCSB-08). Along with these gentlemen, Nate got five Senior Parachute riggers certified: **Matt Weston** (RDD-13), **Roberto Cervantes** (RDD-12), **Damien Withen** (RDD-13), **Paul Bailey** (RDD-10) and **Jason Foreman** (RDD-08).

Parachute rigging, slapping, and yelling—makes me hungry! Let's wrap and strap something and "Send it!" We threw 10,250 lbs. of cargo to support multiple incidents, continuing to inno-

vate and build our paracargo program. It started early, with a request to the Crocker Fire on the Mendocino National Forest. Multiple smokejumpers, Mendocino and Elk Mountain Hotshots requested paracargo to take care of a remote fire. The requests and interest continued to come in, becoming more prolific from multiple incidents and, we will continue to support all request.

In closing, some requests. Don't show up in Redding on a boost and tell us how hot it is. We already know it's hot, that's why we all work here. If you are allergic to Poison Oak, you will probably get it on your first fire jump in Region 5, if not inspect one of our cargo chutes. And finally, if a Redding spotter asks if you are good with that, just tell yourself—they're all good deals.

Redmond Smokejumpers

by **Dave Ortlund** (RAC-10)

After the excitement of a smokejumper reunion settled back in 2014, after the solo cups were swept from the ground, after the smell of stale beer had faded from a concrete floor, after the official 64 flipping coin was placed back in the rightful spot, the Redmond Smokejumpers dispersed like a herd of elk after the rut, wandering off to the variety of activities and occupations that fill the winter months. It's not until the spring of 2015 that I can pick up Redmond's story.

The April refresher was quiet, with modules still committed to prescribed burns in the southeast. By May, the base bustled with nearly 50 people, including an ongoing rookie class. For the second year in a row, Redmond hosted a joint rookie training with Grangeville. Eleven candidates graduated in early June, nine RAC and two GAC. During rookie training, the bros were jumping fires in the North Cascades National Park. Not long after graduation, some very lucky rooks jumped the Paradise Fire in the Olympic National Park. Meanwhile, **Ashley Thrasher** and **Tyson Lucier** (RAC-14) were hucking themselves out of the Doug over the Gila, as part of the Silver City Smokejumpers. The first lightning bust in

the cascades came about the third week of June, emptying the base on the Willamette and the Deschutes N.F. The summer carried on with a steady thumping of thunderstorms across the northwest, resulting in clearing the base out almost every week. The fire activity proved manageable until August.

The unusually low snow pack of the Cascades and Sierra had experts predicting a volatile fire season. Fortunately, the predicted high fire danger and lightning underachieved the potential fire activity. A few loads of RAC jumpers flew to California to support Redding's initial attack effort. However, the level of support to California seemed lower than previous years. The usual constant flow of boosting took place between Redmond and NCSB, as well. In August, initial and extended attack in Washington stretched fire resources thin. Extreme fire behavior threatened and decimated property. The Washington fires even claimed the lives of our friends and brothers. However, despite overwhelming odds the fire community stuck together and pushed back throughout the month of August. White and blue rip-stop nylon deployed on the Strawberry Mountains just days before multiple fires grew together to create the Canyon Creek Complex, a fire that destroyed a majority of the Strawberry Wilderness and dozens of homes near John Day. Although the fire season fell short of early nefarious predictions, a few large fires displayed extreme behavior.

During the 2015 fire season, Redmond staffed 48 fires and totaled 260 fire jumps. The first fire jump of the season occurred on June 4th and the last jump occurred on September 24th. According to Base Manager **Bill Selby** (RAC-91), there were 44 active jumpers at the Redmond Air Center in 2015.

Last December, long-time Loft Foreman and formidable jumper **Jeff Robinson** (RDD-85) retired. In 2015, **Dirk Stevens** (RAC-91) was promoted to the Loft Foreman position. **Howard McGuire** (RAC-07) moved up to fill the position of Assistant Loft Foreman. **Chris Hinnenkamp** (RAC-08), **Jess Haury** (RAC-08), **Sean Wishart** (RAC-04), and **Craig Hingley** (RAC-04) were all promoted to GS-07 squadleader positions. **Josh Cantrell** (MSO-97) filled the role of

Training Foreman, while **Tony Johnson** (RAC-97) detailed as National Smokejumper Program Manager. **Jeff Coburn** (NCSB-08) and myself received details as GS-07 squadleaders. **Dustin Underhill** (RAC-10) detailed to McCall Smokejumpers for the year, and we are happy to have his intensity back home now. **Craig Hingley** (RAC-04) detailed as AFMO to the Rogue Siskiyou National Forest.

The Redmond Smokejumper Welfare Fund has gained some serious traction in the last year. The fund is now a legitimate nonprofit organization with expanding potential. During the 2015 season, the fund contributed over 7000 dollars to injured firefighters. A large portion of contributions went to help Tyson Lucier (RAC-14) with his recovery from a severe fire-jump-related injury. Lucier's injury occurred on the Gila early in the summer. The rapid action and decision making of all jumpers involved in the evacuation, especially Tyson's RB Ashley Thrasher, saved Tyson's life. This incident highlights the importance of emergency medical training and proficiency throughout the fire community. Lucier is motivated and recovering at a good pace. He even managed to hike around and bag an elk this last fall.

As for 2015 jump milestones, Base Manager

"Wild Bill" Selby made his 350th jump. Dirk Stevens made his 200th fire jump. Justin Wood (RAC-01) made his 250th jump, and **Ryan Koch** (RAC-01) hit his 300th jump.

The season closed with an outstanding rendition of T-Ball, held in Garret's Grandma's cow pasture. The 2014 rookie class put on the event. Thanks to **Joe Madden** (RAC-14) for heading that up. During the celebration, **Ray Rubio** (RAC-95) clinched the coveted "Smokejumper of The Year" award. Ray also made his 350th jump in 2015. The hoopla concluded with the biggest and most exciting flip that many of us could recall Redmond having. After four people matched the pot, the massive total was won by snookie **Kevin McCarthy** (RAC-14). Half of the winnings went to the Tyson Lucier recovery fund.

As I think back to the moments that defined the Redmond Smokejumpers in 2015, there is much more to tell. Hopefully, this scratches the surface. At this moment, the ground of central Oregon is covered by feet of snow. I have to get to Prineville to play open mike with the base band, *Sawshack Redemption*. Spring is coming rapidly and with it BBQ's, rookies, heated Ram-air discussions, and good deal fire jumps. Happy New Year from the Redmond Smokejumpers! 🍄

Washington Cattlemen Fed Up With Fires

by Dan Wheat, Capital Press

(underlining and bolding from Smokejumper)

A panel of ranchers, at the Washington Cattlemen's Association annual meeting in Cle Elum, Wash., unloaded frustration and anger at state and federal agencies, saying their land management practices and inept firefighting are to blame for massive losses of rangeland, cattle, and fencing in the last two years.

The losses threaten the cattle industry, particularly in Okanogan County where more than 1 million acres burned in the last two summers.

That totals one third of the entire acreage of the county, which at 5,315 square miles is larger than some states. Millions of dollars of public and private timber have been lost.

About 1,000 head of cattle died in the Carlton Fire last year in Okanogan County while the tally so far this year is under 300. Hundreds of miles of fencing were lost both years, but probably the biggest impact is loss of grazing on thousands of acres for several years causing ranchers to buy more hay and sell off cattle.

"There's got to be some change or this will ruin

our industry,” said Vic Stokes, a Twisp rancher, who lost 250 head of cattle and 90 percent of his grazing in the Carlton Fire.

The convention panel, held at Suncadia Resort November 12, 2015, faulted the U.S. Forest Service and state agencies for not thinning forests and not allowing grazing which would reduce fire fuel loads.

The ranchers said local firefighters do good work but are restrained when state and federal agencies take over. The panel cited multiple examples of state Department of Natural Resources and USFS-led interagency fire teams refusing to attack fires last summer, watching them burn and in two cases backburning private timber and pastures without permission of the landowner or in direct defiance of their pleas not to do it.

Contacted later, USFS and DNR representatives said those agencies are working to reduce fire loads by thinning and prescribed burns.

Cathy Dowd, a USFS Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest spokeswoman, said when the USFS doesn't attack a fire, it's because there is no safe place from which to do so.

“Folks may not think we are doing anything, but we are definitely managing and monitoring from the air and in other ways and looking for ways to engage and suppress it,” Dowd said. “All this year's fires were suppression fires, meaning the goal was to put them out,” she said.

DNR Northeast Region Manager Loren Torgerson said it was the toughest fire season the state has experienced, that firefighters risk their lives daily and three died doing so.

“We saved many people, homes and ranches, and earned their heartfelt thanks,” he said.

He said DNR needs more resources for preventive thinning and fire fighting and urged the Cattlemen's Association to support that request.

Traditional fire suppression slowly begins behind fires and firelines are built along flanks, **Jim DeTro** (NCSB-67), Okanogan County commissioner and a smokejumper from 1967 to 1973, said at the meeting.

“Eventually, the beast wanes. They encircle it and claim victory but only when nature allows. But the dragon takes its toll. Firefighters earn overtime and hazardous duty pay, and they accept failure and loss with no regard to how the loss

could be prevented on the next event,” DeTro said.

In Pine Creek, Gerald Scholz and other ranchers built a fireline with bulldozers that held, but agencies wanted to backburn the area, including private ground, DeTro said. They did so even after they promised not to in response to Scholz's pleas, he said.

The next day DeTro confronted the official who said he wouldn't backburn, and he said “I didn't understand the difference between backburn and backfire,” DeTro said.

A backburn is supposed to be relatively small, but the area was not tied together by firelines, he said. “We warned them about the wind, but they did it anyway and it got away from them,” he said.

“Guys are getting way too happy with their drip torches (for backburning). If these agencies have that kind of attitude, they might as well backfire to the Pacific Ocean,” DeTro said.

“One-third of the 600,000 acres burned this year in the Okanogan, Tunk Block and North Star fires was caused by backburning,” he said.

Craig Vejraska, an Omak rancher and former Okanogan County commissioner, said agencies burned his private timber, which is his bank account, without asking permission and just a week ago burned what grass he had left to complete a blackened area.

“It could have saved our bacon and now we have 700 cattle looking for a home,” he said.

“We should take the incident command away and give it and the money to the Riverside Fire Department. They put out a hell of a lot more fire than DNR,” he said.

He yelled at two USFS officials for being part of the problem. Earlier they talked about forest management and they responded that was their arena, not firefighting.

Dowd, of the USFS, didn't know anything about Scholz and Vejraska's claims. DNR spokeswoman Sandra Kaiser said DNR staff contacted Scholz, but he was unable to provide any names or details about his claims. Scholz could not be reached for comment, but his wife, Bobbi, said she's not aware of DNR contacting him.

The fire had been stopped, then DNR backburned in the wind despite their pleas not too,

destroying their timber and shed full of hay, she said.

"We can blame USFS all we want. USFS is dysfunctional, but who makes it so?" asked state Rep. Joel Kretz, R-Wauconda, a rancher. He said Congress has to change forest management.

"We are in a critical situation right now where virtually every rancher is burned out. We need every inch of WDFW land made available for grazing to maintain an industry," Vejraska said.

While state agencies are asking for more money to fight fires, Kretz said they shouldn't get any until they perform.

In the 2014 Carlton Fire, "huge (public) resources sat in town, Brewster, while Gebbers Farms bulldozers and 180 Gebbers orchard sprayers with water saved the town," Kretz said.

"If you look at a map of that fire, you see a big green donut hole in the middle. Part of it was private (Gebbers) and part of it was public that had been thinned. But the big difference was Gebbers' crews got in there and actually fought fire," Kretz said.

"I went up on the fire with Gebbers folks. We saw occasional state rigs looking at maps and smoke, and when they did see any smoke they headed for town. Gebbers headed toward the fire," he said.

"What you hear from the state is that it's catastrophic. That they can't fight them. They talk safety. You can't go in when its crowning out (in tree tops) at 40-mph winds, but watching Gebbers, they didn't go into the teeth of the fire but got ahead of it and didn't put in scratchy thin fire lines but two D-8s (Caterpillar dozers) side by side," Kretz said.

"I saw a complete and utter inability (by fire officials) to make a decision. They would say you can put in a fireline but can you use a D-4, not a D-8? They're worried about environmental impacts, but it's a fire," he said.

DNR officials have a "smug" attitude when questioned later, saying they've heard stories and will have to run them down to see if they are true, he said.

Local residents had a fireline around the Cougar Flat Fire, which became part of the Carlton Fire, but were waived off by the DNR, which then let it get out of hand, Alex Thomason, a Brewster

attorney has said.

The DNR is directed by state Public Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark, who is also an Okanogan rancher. There's "a lot of sentiment against him" in Okanogan over politics, DeTro said.

"We have the crown jewel of initial attack in our back yard – the North Cascades Smoke-jumper Base in Winthrop – but it's under-utilized because of too much bureaucracy," DeTro said.

He has audio tapes, he said, proving smoke-jumpers on their way from the base to Oregon spotted the starts of the Carlton Fire from the air but were told to keep going to Oregon by interagency dispatchers in Wenatchee.

Kretz said he passed a bill in the Legislature last year that allows people to fight fires on public lands.

"We have to get back to locals grabbing their tools and fighting fires. I had a bill to let counties opt out of (the state) fire-suppression tax and use it for their own resources. We will run more bills this year," he said.

Doug Grumbach, a Ferry County rancher near Curlew, said a decision was made to let large portions of the Colville National Forest burn, including 33 percent of his grazing allotment. He said he's suspicious but doesn't know if proposals to designate the area as wilderness had anything to do with letting it burn.

He said he lost 21 cows and miles of fencing.

"You do everything you can to save these animals and to lose them is devastating. There needs to be a change. I don't ever want to go through this again. It ages you real fast," Grumbach said.

Neil Kasyer, a Centerville rancher near Mt. Adams in south-central Washington, said he was moving cattle out of the way of fire for four days before he saw anyone trying to put it out.

"DNR and tribal were bickering over who was in charge. Neither wanted to step up because they didn't know if they would get reimbursed until it was big enough," he said.

The fire burned some 55,000 acres around the base of the mountain for 20 days until rain put it out, he said.

He's still looking for some of his 700 head of cattle. A lot of riparian wildlife habitat has been

destroyed for years by the wildfires, he said.

“More money (for fire suppression) won’t help. What will help is controlling the fuel load, changing forest practices, and getting locals back

on initial attack,” Kasyer said. “Sitting there watching it for four days, deciding which way it will go and how big you want it to get is not the answer.” 🦋



Tim Bradley, Alex Theios and Don Havel Ft. Yukon, 1960s. (Courtesy D. Havel)

NSA Annual Trails Report Ready To Read

At the end of each season, **Steve Carlson** (IDC-62) puts together an excellent piece of work with reports from each of the Trail Projects done that year. During 2015 there were 20+ projects involving many smokejumpers and associates.

Steve's 43-page edition can

be found by going to the NSA website, which is listed at the bottom of each page of this magazine. Go to the lower left hand part of the home page and find the link to the "NSA Trails Restoration & Maintenance Project Specialists." Click on that link to the

Trails website and take it from there.

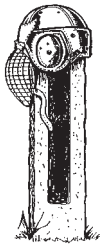
Each of the projects is well documented and makes a good read. Check it out. If you are not already a participant, we hope you will find something that interests you. There are projects for all levels of fitness.



Wilderness Canoe Base 2015 NSA Project

Front (L to R) Lee Dybvig, Jim Elliott, Marv Lindseth, Judy Cherry, Barbara Root, Ken Root, KG Sheley, Chuck Sheley, Jessica Reese. Middle (L to R) Susy Tinnel, Dan Tinnel, Jim Cherry, David Readinger, Ron Thoreson, Jane Collins, Mitch Long, Kristen Middlesworth. Back (L to R) Richard Trinity, David Shultz, Stan Collins, Don Havel, Terry Egan, Ginny Mangum, Jim Durdan, Bill Middlesworth, Andrew Shay. (Courtesy Jim Cherry)





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

Edward Bustamante (Grangeville '61)

Ed died January 9, 2016. He jumped at Grangeville 1961-62 and at Missoula 63, 64, 75 and 1976. Ed graduated from Western New Mexico University with a degree in Business and Economics. He worked for the US government for eleven years in Laos and Peru.

After he left the Agency, Ed worked for the USFS and then the Veterans Administration, retiring in 2000.

James W. Prochnau (Missoula '49)

Jim, 87, a leader in the Northwest timber industry, died January 9, 2016, in Albany, Oregon, after a three-month battle with pancreatic cancer. He rookied at Missoula in 1949 and was good friends with Leonard Piper. Both are pictured on the cover of Norman McLean's book *Young Men and Fire*.

Jim graduated from the University of Washington in forest management. He co-founded Jackson & Prochnau, a forestry consulting company in 1954. He performed consulting work throughout the U.S., Canada, Honduras, Russia and China. His expertise led him to be a highly-sought expert witness in court cases involving timber.

Roy L. Goss (North Cascades '46)

Roy died October 10, 2015. He served in the U.S. Navy during WWII, assigned to the battleship USS Indiana. Roy was a graduate of Washington State University where he earned his bachelor's degrees in Agriculture and Education and a PhD. in Agronomy.

Roy taught and worked 30 years as a research scientist and extension specialist for the WSU Agronomy department. In 2006, Roy was honored by Washington State University in the renaming of its primary turfgrass farm in Puyallup to "The Roy L. Goss Research Farm."

Roy retired in 1995 and was a resource person for master gardeners as well as being a keynote speaker at many seminars.

He jumped at NCSB 1946-50

Clarence W. "Capp" Rowley (Cave Junction '51)

Capp died January 5, 2016, in Abilene, Texas, of heart failure. He graduated from the University of Montana in forestry and went into the Air Force where he served as a pilot for 21 years. Capp flew B-52s and later, C-103s in Vietnam. He flew 922 combat sorties and 1402 combat hours while in Vietnam. Capp jumped at Cave Junction 1951-54.

Terrance P. "Terry" Gough (Redmond '67)

Terry, 69, died November 28, 2015, in Eugene, Oregon. He went through all 12 grades in Orofino, Idaho, graduating in 1964. Before receiving both his B.S. and J.D. from the University of Idaho, he served from 1969-1971 in the U.S. Army, including a tour in Vietnam. After serving in the [Vietnam War](#), Terry decided to become an attorney and change the world. He zealously defended his clients' civil rights and earned some newspaper ink. Most of all, he received the respect of his clients and the Eugene, Oregon, legal community. He was a member of the OCDLA and ACLU. His motto was, "Half the battle is staying calm." Terry practiced law for 41 years, until his passing.

John H. Lowell (Missoula '52)

John, 83, died December 21, 2015, from hemophilia at the Kalispell Medical Center. He graduated from the University of Montana in 1955, with a master's degree in forestry. After 30 years in the Forest Service, John retired from the Forest Service, and he and his wife, JoAnne, went back to Montana State University to obtain a master's degree in marriage and family therapy. In his

second career as a counselor, John spent 20 years helping people in Vancouver, Washington, and the Flathead Valley. Throughout his life he played the role of husband, father, Army ROTC officer, smokejumper, forest ranger, marriage and family counselor, emergency medical technician and ski patrolman. John jumped at Missoula during the 1952-53 seasons.

James R. Hedges (McCall '78)

Jim, 62, died November 20, 2015, in Olympia, Washington, of lung cancer, even though he did not smoke. After graduating from high school in 1971, he was a member of the Ojai Valley Hotshots before moving to Missoula. Jim graduated from the University of Montana in 1980 with a degree in forestry. He jumped in McCall during the 1978 season, Missoula 1979-1992, and then continued his firefighting career as a dispatcher of fixed-wing aircraft. His moves took him to Dillon, Montana, and finally Susanville, California.

Howard Lee Gorsuch (McCall '46)

Lee, 91, died November 25, 2015, at his home in Colville, Washington. He was a graduate of the University of Idaho School of Forestry. Lee served in the Airborne during WWII and was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge.

After graduation Lee worked for the USFS on the Lolo N.F. and the Colville N.F. He jumped at McCall in 1946 and Missoula 1947-53.

Dallas "Bruce Yergenson (McCall '54)

Bruce, 80, died November 24, 2015. He was born in Payette, Idaho, and grew up in the area and lived most of his life in McCall. He retired from the Forest Service in 1985 having worked as a smokejumper and district carpenter. He continued his work as a professional carpenter into his 70s. Bruce jumped at McCall 54, 57-66, 68-75 and Anchorage in 1967.

Ron Johnshoy (NICF '88)

Ron, 49, of Melba, Idaho, passed away Wednesday, December 23, 2015 in Lakewood, Colorado. He graduated from Northern Montana College in 1991 with degrees in Health and Physical Education. Ron taught and coached in Havre, Montana, Idaho Falls, Idaho, and

Lakeview, Oregon.

In August of 2002 the family made one last move to Melba, Idaho. For the last 13 years Ron taught P.E. and Health and was the Head Jr. High and Sr. High School Wrestling Coach at Melba Jr./Sr. High School.

Ron had a passion for wrestling and through the years had been involved with the local club wrestling programs; a member of Western Idaho Wrestling Association, and for seven years was a part of the USA Wrestling Team Idaho coaching staff. He jumped at NIFC 88-91, 94, and 95.

Mitchell L. Pond (Grangeville '90)

Mitch, 51, died December 13, 2015, in Pendleton, Oregon, due to complications of diabetes. He is the son of **Ron Pond** (MYC-66). Mitch received his AA degree from Haskell Indian Nations University and his undergraduate degree from Oregon State University. He was a participant in the Pendleton Round Up all of his life. Mitch was on the Baker River Hotshot Crew before jumping at Grangeville 1990-92.

Ralph B. Roberts (Missoula '55)

Ralph died October 3, 2015. He worked seasonally in R-4 and R-1 during his college years and jumped at Missoula during the 1955 season. After college, he worked in R-4 as a forester and then as Ranger on two forests. Ralph then moved on to R-6 and retired as a range staff officer on the Fremont N.F. in Lakeview, Oregon. Since retirement, he lived in Payette, Idaho.

John L. "Jock" Fleming (Missoula '49)

Jock, 87, died December 5, 2015, in Taos, NM. The son of an Army Colonel, he grew up in the Philippines, Liberty Island and Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. Jock graduated from Colorado A&M (now CSU) with a degree in Forestry in 1951. He jumped in Missoula during the 1949 season.

Drafted into the Army, he served in Korea where he earned the Korean Service Medal with two bronze stars, a U.N. Service Medal and a Combat Infantry Badge. After his discharge he returned to Taos where he has lived for the past 65 years. Jock worked for Pot Creek Lumber before starting his career with the USFS, retiring in

1982. After retiring from the USFS, Jock worked 14 seasons at Taos Ski Valley, training and managing lift operators.

James L. “Ladd” Cramer (Cave Junction ’58)

Jim died November 30, 2015, at a care facility in Brookings, Oregon. He jumped at Cave Junction 1958-59 and Fairbanks 1960-61. Jim then went into the US Air Force and trained as an A/P mechanic. After the Air Force, he worked as an A/P mechanic for various companies for over 20 years.

James R. Brunk (Missoula ’45)

Jim died December 3, 2015, at Oak Lea of Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community. He was a member of the CPS-103 jumpers and worked out of Missoula in 1945. After WWII he graduated from Eastern Mennonite College and then obtained his medical degree from the University of Virginia. After working at the Blue Ridge Sanatorium in Charlottesville for seven years, he practiced medicine in Harrisonburg, VA, until his retirement in the mid-1990s. Jim contributed several articles of historical significance to *Smoke-jumper* magazine.

Ward E. “Gene” Dickey (McCall ’54)

Gene died September 22, 2015, from congestive heart failure. After moving to Idaho at an early age, he graduated from Idaho Falls H.S. as class president. He jumped at McCall during the 1954 and ’55 seasons between his sophomore and junior years at the University of Idaho.

Following his graduation from Idaho, he attended medical school at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. and did his internship in Oregon. After his internship he joined the Army and was stationed in Germany. He practiced medicine in Bend, Oregon, after his stint in the Army, before moving to Boise in 1970 where he was medical director of several nursing homes.

Robert L. “Bob” Martin (Missoula ’41)

Bob, 98, died October 25, 2015, in Polson, Montana. When in high school in Oregon, he left home and walked and rode the rails to Montana, where he finished high school in Missoula. Bob worked for the Forest Service as a lookout and

smoke chaser before joining the smokejumpers in Missoula in the second year of the program.

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps shortly after Pearl Harbor and was deployed to North Africa, where he served as a crew chief and gunner on 50 combat missions.

After the war he worked as a heavy equipment mechanic and shop foreman. In 1949 he bought logging equipment and spent the next 30 years as a contract logger in Montana.

In retirement he worked as a gunsmith and with snowmobiles, where he invented and patented a snowmobile brake.

James O. “Jim” Ward (Missoula ’46)

Jim died February 16, 2013, in Oregon. He joined the Marine Corps in 1940 after completing high school in Portland, Oregon. Jim served in the Pacific Theater and was awarded the Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts.

After the war he attended Oregon State and Lewis and Clark Universities. He jumped at Missoula during the 1946-48 seasons. Jim started out as Athletic Director and Varsity Football Coach at Franklin High School and then went on to work as Plant Manager at Mailwell Envelope Co. in Portland, Oregon.

James E. Blowers (Missoula ’46)

James, a resident of El Cajon, CA, died June 6, 2013. He was born in San Diego and joined the Navy at age 17 during WWII. After the war, he heard about smokejumpers needing men, and he joined the group in Missoula jumping the 1946-47 seasons. He spent his later career delivering water for Sparketts, a pioneer in the bottled water business. Jim retired in the late 80s.

Stephen H. Wiltse (Missoula 59)

Steve, 77, died Nov. 6, 2015, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Born May 21, 1938, in Butte, Montana, he graduated from Falls City HS, where he played football. He received a bachelor’s degree from the College of Business Administration at the University of Nebraska. This prepared him for a long career “fighting fires” in his work as chief accounting officer for a variety of private firms before his retirement. Steve was an avid golfer. He jumped the 1959 season at Missoula.

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Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:

Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926

Bring NSA Traveling Smokejumper Museum To Your Community

Contact Chuck Sheley For Details

THE AIRCRAFT



Ford Tri-Motor 1941-1969

Ford's Tri-Motor aircraft was designed to reach the growing market of commercial air travel. To overcome concerns of engine reliability, Ford specified three engines and added features for passenger comfort, such as an enclosed cabin. From 1926 through 1933, Ford Motor Company built 199 Tri-Motors.

Easily recognizable by its corrugated aluminum skin, the Tri-Motor could carry 10-12 passengers in its commercial configuration and had a cruising speed of approximately 115 mph. Able to carry heavy loads and operate out of short airfields, the Tri-Motor was ideal for the needs of the early smokejumpers.



Noorduyn Norseman 1945 to early 1950s

The Norseman line of aircraft was designed and manufactured by Noorduyn Aviation Ltd. of Montreal, Canada. It was a single-engine utility aircraft designed for the rugged flight operations of the Canadian bush country. It carried up to ten people and could be equipped with wheels, floats or skis depending on the conditions. The U.S. Army Air Forces adopted the Norseman in 1942 for use as a light transport. A total of 762 were produced for the USAAF during World War II, and many more were used by other Allied nations.

The original Norseman aircraft were powered by one Pratt & Whitney R-1340 engines capable of producing 600 horsepower. With a cruising speed of 148 mph, and capable of hauling a max weight of 7,400 lbs, the Norseman was ideal for the rugged world of the smokejumpers.



Douglas DC-3 Mid-1940s to 2000s depending on variant

The DC-3, affectionately known by many names such as the Gooney Bird, Dakota or Skytrain, is one of the most well-known and historically important aircraft designs in history. The low-winged, twin engine monoplane design was an offshoot of the DC-2 airliner and designed by Douglas Aircraft as a means of enhancing the safety and comfort of commercial air travel.

Though Douglas produced many different variants, all of them shared a toughness and dependability during their service to the commercial airline industry and countless militaries and governments around the world. During World II, the United States purchased 9,348 DC-3 variants, while both Great Britain and the Soviet Union utilized the aircraft as well.

Depending on the model, the DC-3 could carry up to 28 passengers or 6,000 lbs. of cargo. It was extremely reliable and could operate from rough or unprepared runways making it extremely useful for smokejumpers.

The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have used a wide variety of aircraft over the 75+ years of smokejumping. These are a few of the most widely-used and iconic aircraft.



Beechcraft Model 18 Twin Beech 1950s to 1970s

The Beechcraft Model 18 was originally designed during the late 1930s as a small commercial airliner, but was soon produced for the U.S. military under several different designations including C-45, AT-7 and SNB. Many of these were basically identical to the civilian versions and were used for pilot training, light transport, staff and liaison missions.

The Twin Beech remained in continuous production until 1969, and more than 9,000 of the type were produced. It continued to serve many roles around the world including aerial spraying, cloud seeding, aerial firefighting among many more.

The plane was powered by two Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior radials and cruised at 211 mph, carrying a maximum of six passengers and crew.



Short 330 Sherpa 1990s to present

The Sherpa is a cargo carrying version of the Short 330 regional airliner produced by Short Aircraft of Ireland. First flown as a prototype in 1974, the Sherpa was marketed as a low maintenance aircraft with high-mounted wings, large cargo compartment and good Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) characteristics capable of operating from shorter airfields than other aircraft its size.

Depending on its configuration, the Sherpa has a cruise speed of 184 mph, carries up to 10 jumpers and has a range of approximately 300 miles. It began its service to the smokejumper program after the USDA purchased one from the U.S. military in 1991.

One of 20 Color Wall Panels From the Traveling Museum Exhibit
Courtesy: Stan Collins (MYC-67)