

SMOKEJUMPER



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Cave Junction Crew (Courtesy Bob Scofield)*



Message from the President



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

THIS PAST NOVEMBER 2016, I penned the NSA's Annual Fund Appeal Letter to our membership and explained why the Annual Fund is essential in covering the costs of day-to-day operations. In other words, the Annual Fund keeps the NSA's lights on. At the same time, I shared information about our urgency in preserving our smokejumper history, and asked you to go an 'extra mile' with your support and help with an additional donation directed to that history preservation that the NSA Board is committed to... and you responded... BIG TIME!! Thank you for all your generosity and support.

I want to share with you some of the work that has been going into our history preservation for several years on our website (www.smokejumpers.com) and that is available to you for your research and enjoyment:

Did you know that when you go to our website and click on *News and Events* and then click on *JumpList*, you have access to the names, training bases, and training year of the 6,000+ men and women who have ever been members of our elite profession over a 77-year history? You can find those old friends by searching with their first or last name, city or state of residence, training base or training year. Forgot the names of all those that you trained with or may have jumped with? Everyone listed also includes a listing of their active jump years. Use this search tool to your advantage.

- Did you know that we are also doing our best to keep an accurate listing of all jumpers who are known to be deceased? There are two ways to search for information. The first is the search method I've listed above, as that will inform you if a jumper is deceased and, if we have the information, when that death occurred. The second method is to click on *Obituaries* and there you will have the opportunity to sort through the list by 1) the date the name was added to the list, 2) last name, 3) base hired or 4) year trained. You will find that the amount of material provided in the

obituary varies greatly. This is where we can use your help. If you know of a jumper who is deceased and we don't have that information, please let us know. Also, if you have access to a deceased jumper's obituary, you could send it to the *Smokeyjumper* magazine editor, Chuck Sheley.

- This brings me to share with you a suggestion that came from one of our former jumpers. With the knowledge that he, alone, knows better than anyone else his smokejumper history and what impact that has made on his life, he has already written an obituary he would like to have preserved in our history. I agree with him. No one else would be able to come close to giving an account of those events that have been most meaningful in your life's career and how your jumping year(s) played a role. Give it some thought. Give it a try. Save your family from what might be a guessing game for them.

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Smokeyjumper base abbreviations:

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

You deserve to be more than a one-liner in the memory of your comrades. Send your desired obituary to the *Smokeyjumper* magazine editor, Chuck Sheley, and we will hold it until the NSA would receive notice of your death, at which time the final details would be included and the obituary published.

- Did you know that you can find detailed information about the more than 30 jumpers who have lost their lives in the line of duty and circumstances around the deaths? On the NSA website's home page, you can scroll down to the bottom, right hand corner and under the title *Smokeyjumping*, you click on *Killed in the line of duty*.
- Did you know that at the same place on the website's home page you can find the fire records for Regions 1 and 3 from the years 1940-1989, and you can find the jump records for the years 1946-2005? Take a look and renew your memory on when and whom you jumped with, the fire location and more. It's a great place to take a trip down memory lane. You will also find the Region 1 Parachute reports from 1940-1962. Great for history buffs.
- Did you know that at any given moment with a click of the mouse you can know the status of smokejumpers nationwide? On the left side of the website, scroll about ½ way down and you will find the link to the *Smokeyjumper Status Report*. Keep looking at the other links, too. You will have access to all the active fires, amazing photo galleries, and so much more.

I hope this review gives you encouragement to explore www.smokejumpers.com and discover what we have already accomplished in preserving our smokejumper history and lore. There is much more to come, both on the webpage and through other media. 🔦

* * * * *

Firestarter

by Tom Decker

Fire work.

The range fire grew to 150,000 acres, and we watched the huge clouds of gray smoke cover the Idaho sky as it billowed up and changed the light

of day to a dull, tawdry yellow. The fire burned no homes but devoured cheat grass, choke cherry brush, and chaparral in its path. When the fire had passed, exposed outcroppings of rock and piles of abandoned junk appeared. They had laid hidden for years beneath the growth of brush. By the following spring, the charred land had again turned into lush, green pasture. Unless one looked hard, there was little evidence of a burn.

We worry about what might be exposed when God's love burns the life-long accumulation of brush. Just like fire burns the brush on a prairie and exposes what's left, God's fire exposes the stuff that we hoped was hidden: grudges, hurt feelings,

wounded pride, unresolved anger, resentments, and fear about what will happen if we are "discovered."

We carry this baggage through life, protecting it as though our very lives depended upon it. The reality is that our very lives depend on *getting rid of it*.

God's love in Christ burns out all fear because God forgives all that is amiss without our having to do *anything*. Where God's love is, there can be no fear. Whatever's past is over and done with. Christ has paid the price with his own death, and Christ is risen! The work of the Spirit, who always comes with Christ, plants new life in us. God's life springs up in us, as lush as any prairie after a fire. And there's never any evidence of a burn.

Hoot! 🦉

Alaska, Bent Props And Luck

by Bill Mader (Boise '75)

What follows happened. Of course, age removes the bad memories and leaves a sense of humor.

I was involved in two events in Alaska that stand out. They occurred in either 1976 or 1977. I'm not sure which because I jumped both those years and memories have melted together. But what I am sure about are the events, what led to them, and the torn metal afterward.

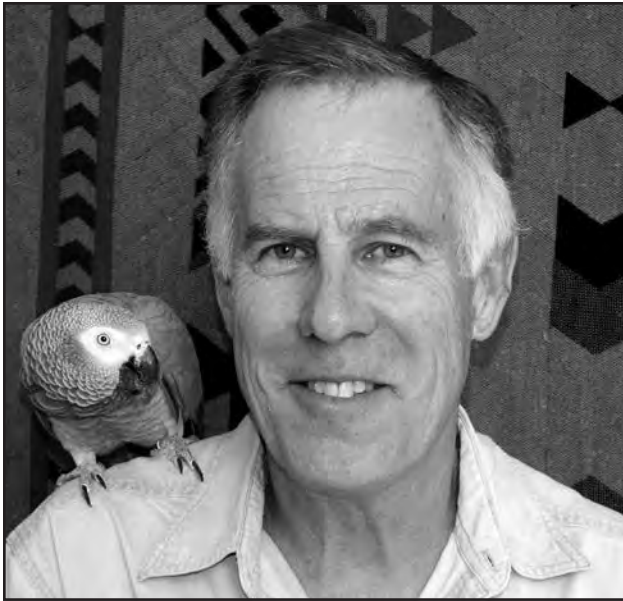
Planes never look the same after a crash and some people don't look the same, either. I came by this observation before I started jumping when I was part of a helitack crew based in southern Arizona. What I saw there had a theme about chance and luck that I didn't give much thought to until later when I jumped Alaska; and sometimes it made no difference if you did the right thing.

I'd been helicoptered into a hot lightning strike with other crew members to the top of the Graham Mountains in eastern Arizona in June of 1974. It was mostly pine and jagged rocks. A B-17 laid a load of slurry in a small clearing after we landed so it wouldn't burn up in the event we needed to get out. A few hundred yards away a PB4Y2 slurry bomber (the Navy version of the B-24 with a single massive tail) made a slurry

pass on the other side of the ridge in an attempt to stop the fire and give us a little protection. The plane sunk in a downdraft, hit a tree and crashed killing the pilot and co-pilot; a father and son team (George & Greg Stell). As cited by Brad Gray (see www.arizonawrecks.com) this PB4Y2 is the only known aircraft crash in Arizona where the plane actually saw combat duty during WWII. A picture of the plane before and after the crash exists on the website. "Charlie 50" as it was known in the fire fighting community probably supported jumpers in the west on occasion. Mr. Gray's research indicated it had served in the Pacific Theater with VPB-111 in 1945. "Charlie" had been to the other side of world and came back to an Arizona mountaintop.

The father, I'd been told, flew four engine bombers in WWII. I only remember him as a relaxed gentleman in his fifties who didn't say much. I suspect he could not leave the excitement of riding huge radial engines over changing landscapes and that he knew luck – both good and bad – always lurked in the morning darkness.

The engines during the crash careened down a canyon and started more fires. I saw a large chunk of aluminum high up in a clipped tree where they



Bill Mader (Courtesy B. Mader)

had first impacted. The fire burned for days. Only the tail section was left, tombstone-like on the ridge. No doubt pieces are still there today and wandering hikers probably wonder what happened, or if any one remembers or if anyone cares. After our section of the fire was under control I walked down to the tail section and far in the back found a picture one of the pilot's had taken of an earlier plane crash; it was a small plane. It had been a picture of curiosity I sensed, something that was supposed to happen to only other people. I remember hauling their body bags off a Huey and into a truck. I recall these two pilots and two others from another slurry bomber practicing slurry drops at Tucson International Airport in 1974. All the drops were perfect. All four pilots were killed within two months. I can't remember what they looked like.

The slurry bomber losses of course speak to what can happen on fires and it often happens in seconds, including jumped fires. There are jumpers with more fire jumps than I have, some fewer, and there are jumpers who have better stories than mine. Nevertheless, when I reflect, there's something about these two milestones below which occurred in Alaska – maybe it's the suddenness or the randomness or the luck – that always stands out. Frankly, they are not important but they may be interesting.

My baggage of wounded knees and arthritis remind me of my skill set that takes only seconds

to describe. I was average at hitting jump spots. I missed more than I hit. We jumped round T-10 chutes. As many will recall, in those days we had seven training jumps before we were certified ready to jump fires.

My eighth jump was a fire in central Idaho. Of course, time often brings improvement. Now, depending on whether the chute is round or square, jumpers receive 15-20 jumps or more before their first fire jump.

In 1976 and 1977, I was part of the Boise, McCall, and Redding jump crew that flew up every year to support the Alaska BLM jumpers. I was one of the handful of Boise jumpers.

It is important to remember that jumping in Alaska was different in those days. There were no tents to sleep in, no cell phones, no tweets and no texting. Occasionally a radio worked. And I don't recall seeing a lot of emergency fire shelters or Nomex pants. There were only lats and longs, and these were often dartboard guesses on a wrinkled map.

Most importantly, it was before GPS, back when all the valleys looked the same. This meant that we occasionally dropped guys in that geographic conundrum called "lost." Eventually they were found by flying search patterns and looking for flashing mirrors on the ground, and piles of spent ration cans rusting on the tundra or maybe a few salmon skeletons.

It happened to me, but it also happened to planes and pilots. I remember this quandary occurring on a patrol. I was the last jumper in the load, number eight. We had droned through the atmosphere for some time when I decided to stand up and stretch.

I turned and looked into the cockpit. A huge aeronautical map was stretched across the instrument panel. The pilot was leaning back studying the map intently, a single hand on the control yoke. The spotter in the right seat seemed to be moving his head back and forth.

Befuddlement drifted through the air. Finally the pilot said, "I don't know ... it all looks the same to me."

Lostness (a unique Alaskan word) seems absurd now when I have Siri in my car telling me in a wonderful female voice where I am and where I should be going, but she never tells me where I

came from and what shaped me. She never mentions Alaska and jumping and mountains and fire. The appeal back then was the chaos and calamity, and it had a magnetism about it that bred camaraderie.

And maybe that was the whole appeal about jumping. You never knew what was going to happen. There was no certainty. You were always rolling the dice. This shadowed a world where there were no medals, no uniforms, no battle ribbons, no knee guards, and no flurry of emails congratulating you on this or that. And you bought your own boots.

You just got in the door and jumped. You either jumped or you didn't jump, and you made your decision over mountains, then, not later – over the roar of engines, vibrations and wind and the smell of engine exhaust, vomit, sweat and smoke. There were no fifty shades of gray. It was black or white.

Jumping fires had a stark simplicity about it and a total honesty I've had a hard time finding since. In fact, it just doesn't seem to exist much anymore. If you were hurt, usually broken bones, your name was quietly erased from the blackboard, where you were linked to a scrawled tail number of a plane that took you to unknown places with mysterious names like Anaktuvuk, Fort Yukon or Noatak. Often the places had no names, as if they didn't want to be remembered.

If you didn't heal enough to jump again, you "retired" and moved on; some erased chalk, a little spit on a blackboard, a name gone and that was the end of it.

We were a nomadic parachute outpost of roving Vietnam vets, students, teachers, aspiring professionals, guys running from broken pasts, optimistic misfits, the occasional long-term, mournful PTSD souls, drifters, and maybe a few noble vagabonds with poems in their hearts.

Some of those I jumped with are gone now: a few natural deaths, a few accidents, maybe a little baggage from Vietnam. When we jumped back then, the fires had a cleanliness about them when compared to the world now. We knew who the monster was. We touched him, saw him running over the ridge, inhaled the smoke, felt the heat and risk. We beat him to death with shovels, Pulaskis, chain saws and slurry bombers.

The monster had the dignity of no ambiguity. Times were simpler. There was closure. We knew exactly what he looked like, where he came from. The monsters roving the planet now – terrorism, wars with no end, mutating viruses – are different and closure is elusive.

So that's what it was like back then and this is what happened.

The first airplane crash

It was not supposed to have ended this way. We'd flown out of Galena, which was a satellite jump base situated next to the Yukon River. Our plane was a Volpar, a plane type that had been commonly used by Air America (CIA) in Southeast Asia. It was a low-wing, twin-engine aircraft that typically carried eight jumpers and their gear.

My experience indicated that it had generally been a reliable type except for an engine failure once when we'd been on patrol. We'd put our chutes on, ready to jump, but the plane managed to limp into Fairbanks.

We were returning in our Volpar to the paved strip at Galena where two F-4 phantom jet fighters were parked side by side. The F-4s had caught my eye because I'd always been interested in planes and hoped someday to earn my private pilot's license.

Learning to fly was on my list of things to do, along with studying birds of prey and discovering dinosaur bones and tracks. I'm not sure what the connection between all of them and jumping was, other than maybe a sense of curiosity to see what was on the other side of the hill.

Galena, although certainly on the other side of the hill (the Yukon River as well), seemed distant from all these life aspirations at that moment. In fact everything seemed normal and under control, maybe even slightly boring. By the way, the F-4s were there, so I was told, to intercept Russian "cat and mouse" incursions: bombers, fighters – that sort of thing.

Remember, we were still in the trenches of the Cold War and it was important that jets – on both sides, though it really didn't matter which – periodically intercepted something and jotted it down.

It had been an uneventful patrol: no smokes,

no jumps. As was customary, we put our helmets on for landing as the pilot turned the Volpar final for the runway. My thoughts were on a warm, cooked lunch in the Air Force commissary (I'd grown fond of any food other than the Army C-ration stuff and freeze-dried blocks in different colors).

The Volpar was a comparatively good jump plane because it was fast, and Alaska was a big place and big places like fast. Consequently, it landed fast. Fast, then as fate would have it, was the first problem.

On landing, immediately after the wheels touched, the plane violently veered right, left the pavement and shot across the tundra, moving at what I thought was something close to warp speed.

I realized almost immediately – well, maybe 10 seconds into the ordeal – that this was a highly unorthodox landing, most certainly not approved in standard FAA protocols. Tumbling bodies in the fuselage and chunks of tundra flying past the window supported my observation.

After a long, hard ride, the plane came to a sliding, crooked stop at the end of two trenches the bent props had dug. Everyone was calm but anxious to get out. I was in the third stick, or third pair of jumpers.

To my immediate right and closer to the pilot was **Clay Morgan** (MYC-74). His wife, Barbara, later became the first teacher-astronaut in space aboard the space shuttle *Endeavour*.

Clay is the only jumper I can recall from the wreck. The jump door quickly dropped open, and I waited for the guys ahead of me to my left to exit. Within seconds I was out.

Clay, with enviable cat-like reflexes and even sharper wit, had pushed out the very small emergency door over the left wing, dived out, tumbled off the trailing edge of the wing and beat us out. I was puzzled to see him, when I ran out of the plane, since I'd been closer to the jump door. Clay, ever the humorist, said he wanted to be there to greet all of us when we disembarked.

We took our helmets off and got clear of the plane, then examined the damage. Both landing gears were punched up through the wing, the prop blades in each engine were bent backward, and the fuselage was all beaten up. The plane was

a total write-off, and – this is the interesting part – there was a small fire brewing in the left wing root.

We were within obvious sight of the control tower and relaxed knowing that at any second we'd hear sirens and a giant fire truck with huge tires (think *Aliens Two* and the rescue vehicle) speeding our way. The sirens never came. In fact, nothing came. In fact, a lot of nothing.

The flames grew a little bigger. More waiting. Still no sirens, no fire truck. The fire got bigger; there was smoke. My general rule of thumb regarding airplane fires is that the plane in question often has the distasteful habit of blowing up with little warning.

Finally, one of us – our spotter, I think – got on the radio and called the tower, pointing out our predicament. Of course this was like reporting a rumor of snow on Mount Everest. No doubt a tad bit embarrassing to the tower folks. We could tell they got the message when all hell broke loose. I'd never heard so many loud sirens and gunned engines. Safe helping hands were on their way.

The giant fire truck raced down the runway straight for us, and then – this was the second-best part next to the aircraft burning – it stopped. And I mean stopped, with screeching brakes, in the middle of the runway. It wasn't even within 10 fire hoses distance yet.

Now, I don't claim to know a lot about fire trucks, but it had always been my impression from watching movies that they stopped when they got to the fire. Then I saw the reason. Their fire hose, probably long enough to reach the North Pole, had uncoiled and been dragged down the runway.

Fire hoses don't generally function well in this kind of abrasive environment; it's a resentment kind of thing. A couple guys rushed from the fire truck and started reeling up (I think that's the technical term) the fire hose. I noticed there was more smoke coming from the fire in the plane and that, well, the fire seemed just a little larger.

Fortunately the F-4s, I guess, didn't have any immediate Russki incursions to intercept or their pilots were eating lunch. I confess I was curious how long a fire could burn a couple aluminum thicknesses away from Jet-A fuel in an airplane – a hot one, I might add – without the obvious consequences.

This is when it happened. Someone in our group ran to the plane, pulled out the fire extinguisher, and started spraying the fire extinguisher on the fire. Within seconds the fire was out. Shortly thereafter our Air Force friends rolled to a stop and slopped foam all over the plane and tundra.

Why the plane crashed was never clear to me. I was told that the propeller on the right turbine had reversed itself.

We eventually made our way back to Fairbanks. A new jump plane (used, of course) awaited us. I walked up to the chalkboard to see where we stood on the jump list. Only the tail number of the plane was scribbled in and next to this, where our names would normally have been, were the words “Crash Crew.”

The second airplane crash

By this time in my life, I’d figured out that it was better to jump into an airplane crash than be in the airplane crash. But once again, circumstances proved me wrong.

We were the first Volpar load on the chalkboard in Fairbanks. I was in the third stick (it seems like I was always in the third stick). It had been a hot jump season and being in the third stick meant that if we dropped the first two sticks we might swing west and have lunch in Kotzebue. I’d eaten there once before after we’d been dispatched to a fire burning on the North Slope.

Don’t ask me why we were jumping fires on the North Slope. Remember, this was in the 1970s when Smokey Bear was in full swing. Nevertheless, I rarely questioned the logic of jumping because I wanted the money for graduate school.

In all candor it didn’t bother me much to watch mountains burn; they were paychecks in the pipeline. Anyway, we made a low pass on the North Slope fire and our foreman deemed it a waste of time to drop any more guys. We kicked a load of food and water out, and that’s when we headed over to Kotzebue and a hot lunch.

That day in Fairbanks had blue sky and a few clouds. When the siren went off, we put our gear on, minus the chutes, and trudged to the Volpar. We did not know – at least, the jumpers didn’t know – where we were going, which, of course,

was common. We flew on into infinity heading north, pushing bladder-pressure extremes and crossed into the Arctic Circle.

The fire was somewhere west of Anaktuvuk Pass, which translates as “place of the caribou droppings.” Then a little handwritten note was passed back from the cockpit with three words written on it: “Possible airplane crash.”

I stood up and looked through the front windshield. A tiny column of smoke wafted upward from the Brooks (now designated as the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve). I said to myself, “A two-manner, four-manner at most. I can taste that lunch in Kotzebue.”

As we got closer to the mountains, the turbulence picked up and jolted the plane. Guys were bending over, putting chutes on each other and checking their harnesses, falling over periodically from the turbulence. Each of us, when we got the chance, looked through the cockpit window.

The small column of smoke was gone; a heavy, twisting column pushed by shearing winds had replaced it. The winds, totally unjumpable, immediately got our attention. I could no longer taste my lunch in Kotzebue. It was hard to hear anything with the jump door open. I’d long since become adept at reading lips and I deduced a second load of jumpers was under consideration. Turbulence continued to rock the plane.

The fire was in the bottom of a valley on the edge of a lake near a rushing river that fed the lake. A small patch of spruce was burning and some tundra.

The cause of the fire was a Cessna floatplane that had crashed into the edge of the lake on take-off. The fuselage, burning and bent, had separated from the floats and smashed into some spruce. The floats remained stuck in the tundra. The pilot had either run out of room on his takeoff or suffered a mechanical problem.

The Volpar started circling over the crash, and the spotter took his streamers out. He dropped the first set of streamers, and we watched them intently, mapping in our minds how we might maneuver to hit a jump spot between the river and the plane crash while missing the lake.

I most emphatically did not want to hit the lake or any water. I’d done this in Montana, and my memories were cold, dark, and darker as I’d

headed deep into the watery abyss.

As all of you will remember, the streamers ideally hit where the jumpers were supposed to land. The first set of streamers went vertically down for a while, then horizontally – in fact, a lot horizontally until they hit the middle of the river and vanished. We were turning again in our circle, lining up for another drop of streamers. Anything seemed better than the river.

The second streamers went out; the plane banked so we could monitor them, turning again. These went into the middle of the fire. They didn't even hit the edge of it.

I admitted to some curiosity as to what our next course of action might be. I turned left, watching the spotter's lips, trying to hear over the engine and wind pummeling through the door. He was holding on tightly to handholds, trying not to get bumped out the door. Our plane suddenly dropped a few feet into a sinker.

"It's an emergency. You have to jump," he said.

There was no backwash of discussion, no words. We just edged forward, analyzing odds and angles. Another airplane turn, more turbulence. Peaks looked down on us. Smoke blew sideways.

The first guy got in the door. He was **Everett "Sam" Houston** (MYC-71), a Vietnam vet – Special Forces and Air America – who later died of complications due to exposure to Agent Orange, a defoliating herbicide used in Vietnam to expose the Viet Cong.

Houston carefully put his foot in the Volpar step. The second guy, a fellow from McCall whose name I can't remember, was right behind Houston. Both looked through the door watching the fire pick up speed. Swoosh and they were gone.

We edged toward the door watching their chutes. They were like toys in the wind. Just like the streamers, they went vertical for a while; then the wind got them – and I mean got them.

The T-10 chutes were totally out of control. The slotted chutes pushed them backward at bone breaking, concussion speeds. The jumpers could not steer them nor see where they were going. Both jumpers vanished in the fire. Their chutes collapsed in flames.

The next two guys got in the door. Swoosh and they were gone. Then the third stick, consisting

of me and another guy, got in the door. The leg slap came and we jumped. The wind immediately wrapped its tentacles around me. Since I was moving backward, I couldn't see where I was going – just like everyone else.

Nevertheless, I had the faint impression that the fire, trees, and broken plane were to my right, so I pulled the left toggle trying to get farther left in hopes I wouldn't smash into them.

I hit very hard in a tumbling, backward summersault, and then got dragged because the wind was pulling the chute in the direction of the fire in front of me. I rototilled about 80 feet of tundra with my facemask, and then finally released the parachute, which shortly burned up.

When I got to the Cessna, no one was in it. I'm sure the first jumpers had already checked it, but they had their hands full now with another emergency – the eighth jumper.

Murry Taylor (RDD-65), author of *Jumping Fire*, was originally the eighth man on the jump load. He had removed himself from the jump list at the last minute to see a visiting family member. It was the jumper who replaced him, a rookie out of Fairbanks, who was the emergency now.

He had gone backward through a burning spruce tree in the fire, snapped his femur, and was hanging upside down. The other jumpers had rushed in, cut away his chute, and dragged him free of the fire.

Of course, it was not the rookie's fault. Skill had nothing to do with it. It was about luck. A stiff wind here, a fire there, a mountain there, a tree over there – that's the guise luck comes in. And luck didn't like the rookie that day.

A Huey helicopter flew in and picked up the injured jumper that day. We later found out that no one had been in the crashed plane because they had been picked up by another floatplane before we jumped it. A second jump plane did not come. Eight of us jumped this fire; four landed in it.

Epilogue

Bill Mader went on to earn a Ph.D. studying little known birds of prey in Venezuela, supported by *The National Geographic Society* and *The American Museum of Natural History*. He also received his private pilot's license and built two

tail-wheel airplanes.

Along with reaching his goal of learning to fly, he discovered seven previously unknown dinosaur track sites and several bone sites in the American Southwest. Some years ago he retired (and then re-entered the work force) and is now an associ-

ate professor of Environmental Science at Navajo Technical University on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. His wife, Penny, is a family nurse practitioner at a Navajo hospital. Reach him at P.O. Box 2072, Crownpoint, NM 87313 or bmader@navajotech.edu. 📧

Enough Excitement To Fill Several Lifetimes— Seethaler Part II

by Karl Seethaler (Missoula '55)

I was all set for school to start the following Monday. I enjoyed the woods and spent a lot of time picking and eating wild blackberries over the weekend. On Monday morning, on the way to my first class, I stopped by the post office to see if I had any mail. There was a large manila envelope; it was an offer to work for Air America in Laos. Once again I had to decide between Air America and continuing my formal education, in a setting that seemed very attractive. I thought it over for about two seconds and decided on Air America.

The kicker just drifted out of the aircraft

I later found out that I was the replacement for a kicker who died in an unfortunate mishap. For airdrops from a C-123, the cargo is tied onto plywood pallets that are lined up on two parallel tracks with rollers anchored to the floor of the aircraft. A cut-strap is run across the width of the cargo at the rear of the load.

When it's time to make the drop, the kickers put on parachutes, and the chains acting as rear restraints on the cargo are removed, the ramp door is opened and the cargo is pushed snugly against the cut-strap.

One of the kickers, who throughout the flight has on a headphone for communication with the pilot, kneels down at the rear of the cabin to the right of the load holding a knife. The second kicker is positioned in the front of the cabin to make sure the forward restraint chains don't create

an impediment for the exiting cargo.

Over the drop zone, the pilot noses the aircraft up. The load slides back tightly against the cut-strap and the pilot gives the order to drop. The kicker in back cuts the strap and the load goes rushing out. On this particular mission, the kicker up front wasn't doing things right. To begin with, he hadn't bothered to put on his parachute. Besides that, he must have followed the load back.

After the load was dropped, the pilot nosed the plane back down to its level flight position. The kicker was momentarily floating weightlessly with nothing to grab on to and drifted out of the aircraft. Whatever he was doing as the load went out must have been quite unusual for him to drift out like that, but if he had put his parachute on, as he should have, he almost certainly could have survived.

Jumpers greet me at Vientiane

Within a few days of receiving the job offer, I was on a plane to Tokyo, then to Taipei, where I spent a day or two, and on to Bangkok. I believe I was in Bangkok for a brief overnight stay. Then I was on a flight to Vientiane, Laos. Arriving at the airport in Vientiane in early October, I was very pleasantly surprised. There to greet me on arrival were **Tom Greiner** (MSO-55), **Bob Herald** (MSO-55), **Lee Gossett** (RDD-57) and **Lou Banta** (CJ-51). It was an unforgettable introduction.

It didn't take long to be introduced to some of

the unfortunate realities of the operation. A few weeks after my arrival, Tom Greiner was seriously injured on a C-123 landing at Long Tieng (Site 20A). Upon landing, the aircraft skidded into a karst at the end of the runway. A karst is a geological feature common to this region. He was cut up quite badly and required hospitalization, followed by a long recovery.

Not long after Tom's mishap and less than two months after my arrival, the C-123 I was working on stalled on takeoff. At Site 36, we had taken on 72 passengers. Shortly after lifting off the runway, the aircraft began to shake violently and came crashing down. The C-123 was destroyed and the accident was attributed to pilot error.

I don't know the fate of the passengers. I heard that one of them might have died, but that's not official. I wasn't seriously hurt, but was sent to a military hospital in Korat, Thailand, for evaluation. The next morning, I returned to Vientiane and was ready to go back to work. I had undergone my initiation into the club.

Hazards got worse as the war progressed

And for the next eight and a half years, it continued to be a hazardous occupation. I considered the greatest hazard to be flying below minimum elevations in the clouds with nearby mountains reaching higher elevations. Another frequent hazard was enemy fire, which got worse as the war progressed, and the Chinese started providing ground-to-air missiles to the bad guys.

There was always the danger of being shot down, as with what happened to **Gene DeBruin** (MSO-59) in 1963. However, most of what we encountered was small arms fire, which usually misses the mark. Still, it was not an inconsequential danger.

The first time I was on a plane targeted by small arms fire, I was unaware it was happening. The loud discordant sound of the aircraft smothered out the sound of the firing. One of the crewmembers asked me if I was hearing it. I hadn't noticed it, but when he called it directly to my attention I could make out through the din a sharp sound like crackling popcorn.

I quickly became sensitized to that sound and don't think I ever missed hearing it when it was there, which was not an infrequent occurrence.

On a couple of occasions, the skin of the aircraft was punctured, which didn't deter us from completing our missions that day. Sadly, there was an occasion when one of our Lao kickers, seated in the Caribou he was working on, was killed by a bullet that just happened to pierce the aircraft where he was seated. Mechanical problems also came up from time to time.

Odds for survival decrease over the years

There were other issues. There was one program where eight kickers rotated, two at a time, to a base in Thailand, where we flew on a C-130 for about two weeks between crew changes. On one of the changes, ex-smokejumper **Billy Hester** (MSO-58), whom I first knew in New Mexico in 1959, and another kicker replaced me and the one working with me.

A few days later, that C-130 (flying in the clouds below minimum elevation) crashed into a mountain in northern Laos. There were no survivors. It can easily be calculated that there was a 25 percent chance for me to have been on that flight.

Another ex-smokejumper, **Ed Weissenback** (RAC-64), was on a C-123 that disappeared over northern Laos, presumably shot down by a Chinese missile. There was perhaps a 1-in-10 chance that I would have been scheduled on that flight. There were several other incidents with similar odds.

Then there was the time I was a crewmember on a flight from Danang, South Vietnam, to Taiwan on a Caribou that had to feather an engine over the South China Sea. It wasn't all that unusual to have to feather an engine due to a mechanical problem; I had that experience a few times. Flying on one fewer engine adds an element of risk to the flight, but the chances were pretty good that you could make it back home or to a suitable landing strip if you are flying in country.

It could be very serious, however, to lose an engine at critical times. For example, a sudden drop in power after taking off in a bowl with moun-

tains all around could easily be fatal. Fortunately, that never happened.

Later, in Peru where the elevation was higher and the mountains quite steep, we landed in such a bowl. With our C-123 loaded to capacity on our departure, it was necessary to circle that bowl several times before clearing the mountains. We were quite aware that the loss of power from one of our engines would likely cause us to crash. We didn't do that often.

On the above mentioned flight over the South China Sea, we were near Hainan Island off the coast of China. We were not on friendly terms with China in those days. It's hard to know how an emergency landing at Hainan Island would have turned out, but at the very least it would have been an "international incident." That was not a good option.

We continued the flight on one engine, gradually losing elevation. We were barely able to nurse the aircraft into Hong Kong. These, and other instances with varying odds for mishaps, lead me to calculate my odds for survival during those eight and a half years at less than 50 percent.

It was purely luck that I did; for the most part, skill did not play a big role here. At the end, I thought I had probably been around long enough. Looking back, I don't think I would recommend this line of work to anyone. However, having survived it, I wouldn't want to have missed it. It was a great experience.

Peru sounded like an interesting project

Seventeen years after leaving Air America, I had the opportunity to work in Peru as a loadmaster on a C-123 and later on a C-46 as well. There were several ex-Air America personnel involved – pilots, mechanics and kickers.

After Air America closed down in Southeast Asia, efforts were made to hold the group together. American Legion China Post 1 became a vehicle for doing that. Annual meetings were held for a while in which ex-Air America employees would meet and conduct some business, but mostly it was just a chance to get together, have a few drinks and reminisce.

After a few years, the Air America component of the Post decided to go it alone and formed the Air America Association, and became a lot more active. I became a member and have sporadically attended some meetings. Newsletters were sent out to keep us abreast of events and other information.

Tucked inside one of these newsletters around the fall of 1988, Ed Adams, a former Air America pilot, wrote that he was looking for former Air America pilots, mechanics, and kickers to serve as crewmembers on a project that he had been putting together. Although that was the extent of the information about the project, I thought it sounded interesting.

I sent him a letter of inquiry. It wasn't long before he responded. He told me that the project involved living in Lima, Peru, and working on a contract with the U.S. State Department in support of the Peruvian Aerial Police and their drug interdiction program. We would be flying a C-123 over the Andes on a daily basis.

Over the next month or so, the details were worked out and by Jan. 15, 1989, I was on a plane to Miami, the U.S. corporate headquarters for the operation. The contractor was Corporate Jets.

After a couple of days of making further arrangements and getting briefed, Chuck Rodenhaver and I made the flight to Peru. I remembered Chuck as a Caribou crewmember in Laos. Throughout this narrative, I have listed the names of ex-smokejumpers, but avoided attaching names to most individuals who had not been smokejumpers as a way to keep the focus on the smoke-jumper experience.

Chuck is sort of an exception here. He told me that he had done some piloting for smokejumpers in Alaska, but he was never a smokejumper. I'm sure that I'm the only ex-smokejumper who worked on this Peruvian operation. There was one other Air America kicker who worked there and there were a fair number of AA pilots – both fixed and rotary wing – and mechanics.

We were provided funds for the rental of living quarters in Lima. Every morning we would be picked up and taken to the operational site of the Peruvian Aerial Police, located at the Jorge Chaves International Airport. Although pretty informal at first, we were provided with a traffic shed that I

organized later on.

Upon arrival at the airport, we would supervise the loading and securing of cargo and/or passengers. Then we would depart and climb over the coastal mountains and up to the Andes, which we would cross at an elevation of some 22,000 feet.

As we were climbing, we would open the valves on the oxygen tanks, assist the passengers with their oxygen masks, and put on our own masks. Normally, I don't think it would occur to people to use a C-123 for this kind of flying, but Ed Adams worked hard at convincing the State Department that it could be done.

Once over the Andes, we would descend and land in the Upper Huallaga Valley in the Amazon Rainforest, where a major portion of the world's cocaine is grown. We would then do multiple point-to-point trips transporting cargo and people throughout the day. In the late afternoon, we would load up with cargo and/or passengers and return to Lima.

Peru, the world's leading source of cocaine

At that time and probably still, about 65 percent of the world's marketed cocaine was being grown in Peru, 25 percent in Bolivia, and 10 percent in Colombia, making Peru the world's leading source of the drug.

Cocaine has been a part of the Peruvian culture since long before Europeans arrived. It is not illegal to grow it there, and they make what is called coca tea from it that many Peruvians and people of surrounding countries drink. They offer it to tourists who visit Cusco, the historical capital of the Inca Empire, located high in the Andes at over 11,000 feet in elevation.

Cusco is the gateway city from which you can take a day trip over and back by train to Machu Picchu, the "mysterious lost city of the Incas" rediscovered by accident in 1911. Coca tea dilates the arteries and has the effect of a mild stimulant that helps reduce altitude sickness. Its narcotic effect is quite small compared to the cocaine in concentrated powder form that is a major factor within the drug culture.

However, one cup of coca tea can produce a positive result on a urine test for cocaine. While it is legal to grow and harvest cocaine in Peru, they produce a lot more of it than what is necessary for the legal market.

You can easily pick out the fields from the air. There would be a shed and an open space where the coca leaves are being dried out in the sun. It is then processed into a paste that is transported to Colombia, where it is further processed into a powder. As a powder, it is highly concentrated and in the easiest form for smuggling. At its destination, it can be diluted and sold on the streets and elsewhere at a tremendous profit.

The process is certainly more involved than I have stated it here, but that's the general picture as I understand it. It would seem that the possibility for interdiction along this chain of activities would not be so challenging, but everything proceeds pretty well with no impediments that can't be overcome.

It is an extremely profitable business that is both corrupt and well-organized. There is plenty of money to buy cooperation from individuals, and if an individual's integrity is not for sale, there are ways to obtain that cooperation through intimidation.

We were warned to act prudently and avoid situations that could get us into serious trouble. I'm sure that the underground drug operators could easily have known who we were, how to find us, and to eliminate us with impunity if they chose to go after us for our involvement in the interdiction program. I'm pretty sure they didn't think it was worth bothering themselves about us. I don't think we had much of an impact on their operation.

Two terrorist organizations causing distress throughout Peru

To complicate matters, there were two terrorist organizations causing a lot of social distress throughout Peru. The situation was gruesomely reminiscent of Saigon during the war in Vietnam. Back then there were random bombings within the city. People just seemed to get accustomed to that and adjusted.



Karl Seethaler (Courtesy J. Kirkley)

The same was happening in Lima. These terrorists claimed to be communist, which seemed anachronistic – a conceptual relic of the cold war. One of these organizations was known as the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) guerrillas, a particularly cruel and violent Maoist organization.

The other was the MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru), a more traditional revolutionary organization less inclined to the most abhorrent forms of terrorism, but terrorists nonetheless.

I don't know what the relationship was between these terrorists and the drug trade, but they were involved. Both were active in the area where we were working, and it seems likely that some kind of relationship had been worked out between them and the illegal drug trafficking. To my knowledge, both terrorist groups are still in operation.

The work had its risks, and we lost people due to flying hazards. But on the whole, the odds

favoring survival were probably somewhat better than it was with Air America.

A close call

I will describe one serious close call. Late one afternoon as we were returning to Lima, we had entered a cloud as we were descending and preparing to land. We should not have descended into a cloud the way we did because we were below minimum elevation with higher mountains nearby.

It's amazing how often pilots think they know where they are while flying below minimum elevation in the clouds. It turns out that they frequently do not know. I think that attitude was probably responsible for more fatalities in Southeast Asia than any other cause.

Now the same thing was happening and out the window all you could see was fog. Then I felt a sudden jerk. We had been extremely fortunate to break clear of the cloud just as we were about to plow into the side of a mountain. The jerk we felt was a last-second maneuver that avoided a crash. The cockpit crew was as concerned as I was about the incident, but they were inclined to let it go since, in the end, no harm was done. I didn't want them fired over this.

The pilot was skilled and I had confidence in his ability, but he had allowed the co-pilot – who was still in training – to do the landing. I insisted that the pilot inform the other flight crews what had happened and to beware that it didn't happen again. He let them know, and that's as far as it went. I was OK with that.

I remained in Peru for four and a half years, resigning in June of 1993. The program was discontinued a few months later. The work in Peru and the work in Southeast Asia had many similarities and many differences. Both were great experiences that I would not have had without that other great experience of having been a smokejumper.

Looking back, I could have made many other occupational choices. Perhaps they would have been more prudent choices that would have led me in good directions. But these are the choices that I made, and I was lucky to have survived them. Things could have gone very much differently. Still, looking back from where I am now, I wouldn't change a thing.

Epilogue - Southeast Asia And The Cold War

I think it might be appropriate to say a few words about the Air America operation and the philosophical basis for supporting it. This is an attempt to place an experience in which I was involved into the context of the world as I saw it at the time.

I can't speak for everyone who was there. While I think my rationale could have been fairly representative, I make no claim that it was.

Further, I don't wish to judge the opinions of the many people in the U.S. and elsewhere who came to oppose the war and were in disagreement to our involvement in the conflicts going on in the region. I only want to try to explain what motivated me at the time and to say that I think there was some consensus on that.

The United States seems to have pretty good relations now with the countries in the region where we operated, but the world was quite a different place back then. We had been through two terrible world wars, during each of which there was a lot of destruction and tens of millions of people had died. We had intervened in those wars out of what was generally perceived to be a necessity if we were to preserve our freedom and way of life.

Our interventions came about only after conditions had festered and continued to deteriorate. We had continued to cling to the wishful thinking, known as isolationism, in the hope that it would allow us to avoid the negative consequences of involvement. Such isolationism came to be regarded as a discredited policy of appeasement.

After World War II, we were unable to disarm and go back to the way things were before. The Soviet Union was aggressively expanding its totalitarian control over many parts of the world. We were in a Cold War. Eastern Europe was completely under the rule of communist governments behind an "Iron Curtain." And things just got worse.

China went through a civil war and became a giant belligerent communist adversary. We had the Korean War. There was a nuclear arms race that made everyone justifiably very nervous. Other

countries fell to communism.

The Berlin Wall went up in 1961 and we had the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Colonialism was breaking up with many of the former colonies veering leftward, especially in Africa and Asia. The whole world was a mess. French Indochina had split into four countries: North and South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. North Vietnam was aggressively under communist control, fomenting revolution in the south and other neighboring countries. There was the concern that countries would fall like dominos if we didn't intercede.

The situation in Laos and Vietnam was complex and I won't get very deeply into it here. In short, it involved regular armies and guerrilla warfare that employed a lot of terrorism. Among other things, Air America was in Laos to provide needed logistical support to the Lao government, which was struggling under a communist insurgency.

This type of operation was needed because there was an international agreement on the neutrality of Laos in place that precluded our military presence there. The North Vietnamese were violating the agreement by providing overt support to the insurgents, while at the same time moving troops and supplies to the civil war in South Vietnam through Laos down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Air America was in effect a covert, quasi-military operation of American interests in Laos. However, in the process, Air America became the largest airline in the world in terms of the number of aircraft within the "company."

In this theater of operations, the distinction between "overt" and "covert" was pretty blurred. We also had an extensive operation in South Vietnam in a distinct way with many similarities. Air America served with great dedication and professionalism in support of our country's interests in Southeast Asia, a fact often overlooked and forgotten.

Yet, we were always there to provide needed assistance, from conducting search and rescue operations when our military pilots were shot down over Laos to evacuation efforts when our involvement came to a rapid climax at the war's end.

Had America's efforts served any lasting purpose during the long war? I think it did; we

bought time that quite arguably allowed other countries in the region to shore up defenses against the domino effect we were so concerned about, leading to the stability of the region and the good relations we now have there. 🕯

Part III in next issue of Smokejumper: It's interesting how forgotten events do come to mind as you dwell on a topic. This happens more frequently as you get older

and start to develop mild cognitive impairment. But dwell on it for a while and some of what you couldn't remember comes to the surface.

For what it's worth, I want to jot some of them down. As with the parable of the blind men and the elephant, one event may give a misleading perception of the big picture. However, piecing together a number of events might project a broader mosaic from which some of the flavor of the experience might be extracted.

What Do These Three Stans Have In Common?

by Leo Cromwell (Idaho City '66)

Stan Tate (MYC-53) will always be remembered as the one whose main chute failed to open on a training jump and his reserve chute inflated just before a very rough landing.

He was an Episcopal priest, a county magistrate, a college professor, and the author of *Jumping Skyward*. But most of all he was the "smokejumper chaplain" for many regional and national reunions, marriages and funerals.

Stan Ramsay (MYC-58) jumped for 21 years in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. He was a squad leader for many of those years. Great on the fireline but impossible to keep up with during after-hours partying.

Stan Bercovitz has to be rated as one of the all-time big storytellers. The closest Stan Bercovitz came to being a smokejumper was when he purchased his McCall smokejumper t-shirts at the McCall

base.

And so the only thing these three Stans have in common is they have the same first name.

Gene Hobbs (IDC-61) paid Bercovitz a visit recently at his "hub for recharging firefighting planes" at the Lewiston SEAT Base, to find out how the story got out about him being a smokejumper.

Those who knew Gene will remember his boxing days at Idaho State University, or how he survived being pulled through the side door of a DC-3 while on a spotting run in Alaska. Gene was rescued by a helicopter, along with the door many hours later, black with bruises, broken bones and covered with thousands of mosquitoes.

Stan Bercovitz told him that he didn't understand how the *Lewiston Tribune* could have gotten the idea that he was ever a smokejumper. That doesn't help one understand why Ber-

covitz has talked about his time as a McCall smokejumper for many years.

Stan Bercovitz did work on the Sawtooth N.F. helitack crew at one time, so there is hope that he could join the National Smokejumper Association or its new alliance. Some board members talk about expanding the organization membership by inviting helitack crews from around the country to join and become a new organization. Perhaps they'll call it NAFFA – the National Aerial Firefighter Association.

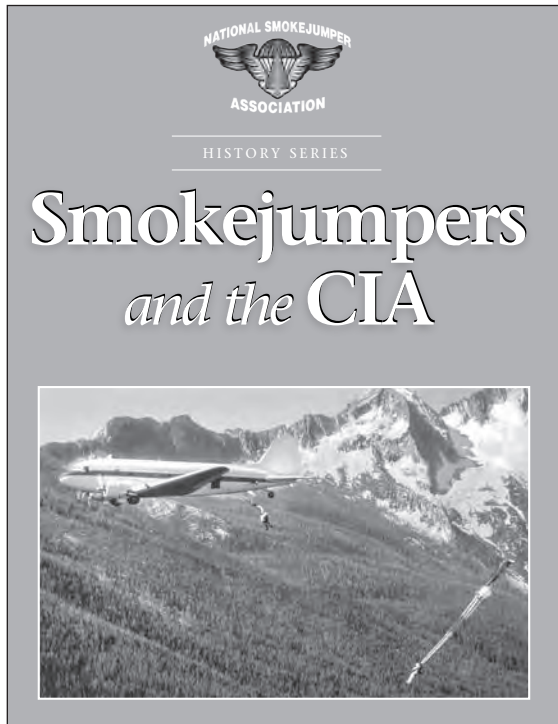
It's too bad the NSA did not think of other ways to keep their declining membership instead of using this method to increase membership.

Why not give a year's free membership to those leaving the profession instead of those first year jumpers starting a new career? The last thing these rookies think about is joining the NSA as they start this adventuresome career. 🕯

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Smokejumpers *and the CIA*

Over 25 Years of Service

Smokejumpers worked for the CIA (Agency) over a 25-plus year period. Beginning in the spring of 1951, the CIA sent two agents to the smokejumper base at Nine Mile, Montana, to be trained to parachute into mountainous and isolated terrain. The agents apparently reported back that there was a cadre of men already trained and willing to take on whatever the Agency wanted done. The CIA had realized in Smokejumpers men who were problem solvers and could get the job done under the most difficult circumstances.



Two-Manner In Cheney, Wash.

by Robert L. “Bob” Bartlett (Associate)

Just a metaphor

Who would have bet or guessed that a Triple Nickle guy and an NSA guy would team up like this? For the first time ever, the 555th story shared center stage with the Smokejumper Traveling Exhibit! What follows is not a story about a fire jump but rather a story of an unlikely two-manner and a leap of faith.

It started on a midsummer day in Cheney. While staring out the window of my office on the campus of Eastern Washington University, my mind drifted, as it often does, to a nearby trout stream and my favorite pursuit.

Yes, it was one of those days too nice to work. I decided to take a walk instead to our main campus library.

Just an idea and nothing more

Ever since Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) shared pictures of the traveling smokejumper exhibit with me, I have envisioned it on full display in our John F. Kennedy Library. Since fishing was out of the question on this day, I decided it was a good one to approach the library dean’s staff with the idea of hosting the exhibit. To be honest, I wasn’t expecting much – especially with just an idea in my head and nothing on paper.

A positive response

Amy, the dean’s office secretary, was the first to greet me and the first to hear the idea. Her response: “That sounds like a great idea.”

That led to a retelling of the idea to Carol, the second-in-command to the dean, whose response was equally enthusiastic. It was a “pinch me” moment! I called Chuck and shared the good news.

The meeting

A few days later, Amy, Carol, and Rose, the other member of the library administration team, and I met in the dean’s office. What started as an idea surprisingly grew into a fully funded event. Thanks to the offer of financial support from the dean of EWU libraries, the President’s Office and the Office



Bob Bartlett (Courtesy B. Bartlett)

of the Provost, Chuck and I were soon free to dream the dream of the exhibit.

This was going to be an unlikely Chuck-and-Bob two-manner of historic proportion. And, as the allocated exhibit space grew, so did our plans to include others.

The traveling exhibit and more

Chuck sent pictures of the display panels, their measurements, and the list of smokejumper gear he and K.G. would deliver – shovels, parachutes, a Pualaski, helmets, a supply drop box, a cargo chute, two pack-out bags, and a fully equipped smokejumper mannequin. All were allocated prime real estate in our library.

A short video clip provided by Chuck would show and loop all day, every day during library hours on a 90-inch flat screen located in the library entrance alcove. A plan to display the fully deployed parachute topped the exhibit plan. If you haven’t seen the exhibit, you should.

With the help of additional funds

Eleven large display panels were made in-house

that tell the 1945 fire season story and the mission given to the 555th. Those panels on tripods were also allocated library space next to Chuck's display. Next came the people to include and to invite.

What is an exhibit without people?

With funds secured, the next phase was similar to planning a wedding, and like planning any wedding, Chuck and I did not immediately agree on the guest list. Plans were made for the first week of the exhibit that included bringing together a mixed bag of unlikely characters ranging from retired smokejumper friends, an EWU alumnus of 1949 who rookied in Winthrop with his brother that summer, and two well-known authors.

Our guests

Our guest list included retired Missoula jumper and Triple Nickle Association member **Wayne "WW" Williams** (MSO-77) and his wife Dr. Irene Appelbaum, from Missoula; retired jumper and author **Pferron Doss** (MSO-77) and his wife, Wendy, from their home in Portland; author, lifetime member of the 555th Parachute Infantry Association, screenplay producer, historical fiction writer, and author of *Operation Firefly*, Liane Young and her husband Tom, from Virginia; and current jumper and author of *Smokejumper: A Memoir By One Of America's Most Select Airborne Firefighters*, **Jason Ramos** (NCSB-99) from Winthrop, Wash.

Our most honored guest was retired Franklin County prosecutor and EWU alumnus **Jim Rabideau** (NCSB-49) from Pasco, Wash. Other guests were invited but due to timing, health, distance, or all three, could not make the trip.

The setup and opening

Chuck and K.G. delivered the exhibit and with the help of library staff, a few student volunteers and others, the exhibit was unloaded and in place in short order – including the fully deployed parachute. Chuck and I opened the event the following day in grand fashion while standing side by side in front of our seated guests, students, some faculty and visitors.

The EWU Smokejumper Honor Roll

Together, Chuck and I presented tokens of our appreciation to our sponsors. Then we presented Jim

Rabideau with a large panel adorned with the names of EWU students, who in the early post World War II years went on to rookied in Winthrop. The panel reads *EWU SMOKEJUMPER HONOR ROLL* and includes a few familiar names to members of this organization, including **Roy Goss** (NCSB-46), **Donald Frank** (NCSB-47), **Howard Betty** (NCSB-48), Jim Rabideau and his brother **Philip Rabideau** (NCSB-49). A traditional ribbon cutting officially opened the exhibit.

A busy first week

The days that followed were filled with exhibit tours and speakers. Chuck and I gave our presentations on separate days, and our invited guests conducted impromptu exhibit tours and fielded numerous questions from visitors. It was the displays and their content that drew sometimes large and attentive crowds.

On Friday of that week, authors Young and Ramos drew separate but similar crowds as they talked about their books. It was an amazing opening week!

A win-win

Everyone involved departed by the end of the week, though the exhibit stayed, and curious folks continued to come and tour the exhibit for a few more weeks. To say that this event provided some proud moments is not an exaggeration. Matching Chuck's passion and energy level was a challenge at times, but the results made it all worthwhile.

The exhibit was a great collaboration and a labor of love. The library planning committee was truly amazing. As Chuck said on numerous occasions, "Your folks are top-notch." Without the unflinching financial support of the library dean, university president and provost, much less would have been possible.

In the end

Two-manners still work. The reunion of jumpers past and present and authors, sharing time and meals, sharing hugs, stories and laughs and watching visitors enjoy the exhibit provided some truly priceless moments.

Thanks to everyone involved for making this joint leap of faith such a huge success! And special thanks to my jump partner, Chuck Sheley. 🦅

A Word From The Dean Of Libraries And The Learning Commons

by **Suzanne Milton,**

Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Wash.

Eastern Washington University Libraries, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of the President proudly sponsored the *Firefighters from the Sky Smokejumper Exhibit* in fall 2016. This took place in close collaboration with **Bob Bartlett** from the Department of Sociology, an associate member of the National Smokejumper Association and a member of the Triple Nickle Association, and **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) of the National Smokejumper Association.

The EWU Libraries were afforded the opportunity to be the first university library in our entire state to host and open its doors to hundreds of attendees, who had an enriching educational experience about the history of smokejumping and the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

In addition to Sheley and Bartlett, who masterfully guided us through time, attendees were able to view firsthand how smokejumping, smokejumpers,

and their gear have evolved to present day. Author Liane Young of *Operation Firefly*, along with current smokejumper and author **Jason Ramos** (NCSB-99), concluded the opening week of this inspiring exhibit, bringing the audience full circle from the beginning of smokejumping in 1939 to the present day.

We hope this smokejumper traveling exhibition is the first of many to be held at other universities, schools, and museums throughout the Northwest.

The exhibit, speakers, and authors reinforced how important it is for all of us to know this history unique to our region. It is an account of the deeds of unsung heroes who receive little to no fanfare, because as Ramos stated when asked why he became a smokejumper: "... it was the right thing to do."

The stories of the men of 555th and *Operation Firefly* and of all smokejumpers – past and present – remind us that it isn't what you say that truly counts; it is what you do.

Huge thanks to everyone involved in bringing this joint exhibit and speakers to our campus. 🦅

A Fire Remembered And A Friendship Renewed

by **Pferron Doss** (Missoula '77) and **Wayne "WW" Williams** (Missoula '77)

Pferron Doss

Ever wonder how some things just happen and how much good they do for the soul? You walk through life and—WHAM-O—you run across someone from your youth, and it's as though the years of separation never happened. You go to a place so deeply etched in your memory that words aren't the first things that come to mind.

Firefighters from the Sky Smokejumper Exhibit

So it was the last week of October 2016, when I attended the "Firefighters from the Sky Smokejumper Exhibit" at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Wash. My wife, Wendy, and I were invited guests and made the drive up from our home in Portland.

The exhibit was put together by **Bob Bartlett**, senior lecturer at EWU and an associate member

of NSA and a member of the 555th Parachute Infantry Assoc., and **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59), managing editor of this magazine. Kudos to both of them for such a great week on and off the campus.

How stimulating it was looking at the smoke-jumper historical panels and the gear on display, watching the smokejumping video on a big flat screen, while simultaneously grasping the significance of America's first black smokejumpers, the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, known as the Triple Nickles.

As I stood there staring at the Triple Nickle jumper photos and panels, I couldn't help but remember that, as one of the earliest black smokejumpers in U.S. Forest Service history, I was their civilian counterpart. Surrounded by so much history, I also couldn't help but relive some of my own smokejumping experiences.

Youth remembered

It was June of 1979 and my third fire season in Missoula. I laid out in my mind a couple of places I wanted to jump into. One was the Bob Marshall Wilderness and the other was Alaska.

The Bob Marshall jump was pretty cool even though our jump spot had plenty of fresh bear scat in it. I didn't venture off by myself.

The Alaska jump was worth a bucket of laughs. We had mosquito-swatting contests to see who could kill the most in one swat.

There was plenty of campfire laughter and brotherly teasing like, "Pferron, you should sleep right here." I asked, "Why?" "It's bear country and we all know you can run fast, so I'm gonna have to cut your Achilles tendon to make the run from the bears more equal."

Some harmless "jumper bro" humor. I had never been to Alaska and I learned a lot on my first fire. I remember grabbing a knapsack and attempted to fill it over halfway with marshy grass only to be laughed at because I couldn't lift it – more "jumper bro humor" at my expense.

Fire on the Middle Fork of the Salmon

Back in Missoula we were dispatched to a fire on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. We left at sunup and filled the sky with planes and jumpers.

I was in the Twin Otter with seven other jump-

ers. Our drop spot was on a ridgeline above the fire. It was soon littered with jumpers and cargo chutes. I was really pleased with my landing spot even though I bounced between two stumps. I had just finished earning my EMT certification and in the back of my mind, I was hoping never to have to put it to the test.

There were jumpers chucking line and clearing trees. I remember taking in the sights in between Pulaski swings and feeling the bond between us. We were spread out across the mountain with our sawyers some forty to fifty yards below when I heard a yell from above.

"Look out!" someone screamed. We all eyed a log tumbling downhill and picking up speed toward us and the sawyers below. We all began yelling, "LOG! LOOK OUT!"

The log seemed to be moving in slow motion the closer it got. But it wasn't! A chunk of it broke off just above one of our sawyers who turned to see what the commotion was all about. The chunk went airborne and smacked him in the back of his hardhat.

We thought the worst

The impact was so severe it caused the chainsaw in his hands to jerk upward toward his body. From our angle it looked like he was going to be seriously, if not fatally, injured.

I dropped my Pulaski and started running down the slope. After a few yards, I realized that this was not a good idea. I was leaping over fallen logs and debris as I gained speed. I remember feeling a distinct pull on my lower torso, but I had too much adrenaline pumping to grasp my own peril.

I ended up landing alongside our sawyer who had been dazed by the blow, but surprisingly was not seriously hurt. My rookie class jumper bro **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77) and a couple of others got there soon after I did. We were all relieved to learn that our sawyer was going to be okay.

Something's wrong

We began to disperse again along the hillside. I attempted to stand up, but couldn't. After a couple of attempts, someone grabbed a buck knife and slit my pants up to my knee. It was already swollen to the point that I couldn't stand or bend



L-R: Pfferon Doss and Wayne Williams (Courtesy EWU staff)

it. I didn't even know I was hurt and I'm not sure to this day how it happened.

It was a hell of a long, steep way back up the mountain to the helispot and it was decided that I needed to be carried. WW was the first to volunteer. I will never forget being carried up that mountain. Besides, WW – some 37 years later – won't let me forget it.

Three of us were medevaced off the mountain and taken to St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula. That injury and the surgery that followed ended my days on jump status. I returned to the base and worked for a while in dispatch before transferring to human resources, and my career went

in a totally different direction.

The bond

I have always respected how quickly and selflessly smokejumpers are there to help one another. That's what the bond is all about. I haven't felt that level of camaraderie since I quit jumping.

Seeing WW at the "Firefighters from the Sky Smokejumper Exhibit" in Cheney after so many years is a feeling that only past and present smokejumpers can know. And in true smokejumper form, he quickly reminded me, yet again, how steep that uphill carry was. He hasn't changed a bit.

Wayne “WW” Williams – our rookie class

Our Missoula rookie class of 1977 started with about 48 “new men,” as we were then called. They seemed to work especially hard to wash us out that year. I found out later why. We were not washing out at the typical rate and our squadleaders were determined to have a normal-size class yield.

By the time training ended, the Class of 1977 had 32 guys, and Pferron and I were among them.

Fire season 1979 and a fire remembered

What I remember most about the fire season of 1979 was the number of large fires we had. We would often have three planes in the air full of jumpers. The fire on the Middle Fork of the Salmon was one of these.

We had a DC-3 with 16 jumpers, a Twin Otter with eight, and a Beech 99 with six jumpers on board. We started loading at 4:30 a.m. and it was wheels up by 5 a.m. We wanted to be over the fire by first light.

I was in the Beech 99, the fastest plane, so we arrived first. We were circling the fire and began dropping jumpers; then the Doug showed up, fell into our pattern and began dropping people as well. The Otter showed up and for a time all three of the planes were dropping people in the same pattern. Our jump spot was on top of the ridge above the fire. It was tight and dense with jumpers.

The fire was just below our jump spot. It had burned up from the river and was about 40 acres, but it was early and the fire was not active.

We split into two 16-man crews, working the opposite flanks of the fire, and tied in at the river. Then the men on the upper end of each flank – including Pferron and me on one flank – began working back up toward the jump spot to reinforce the line. Our goal was to meet up with the Targhee Hotshots, who were above us, working their way down to us.

We spread out to work: Pferron was closest to the hotshots. Another member of our group, **Wayne Cook** (MSO-77), worked as a sawyer below Pferron. The remaining three of us and were working below Cook on the mountain.

Round down, sawyer down

One of the hotshots above us was cutting up a dead log and at some point, a piece of it got away from him. We heard yelling from above as the log headed downhill in our direction – and straight for Cook, who was facing down the mountain.

As it passed Pferron, a piece of the round broke off and plowed into the uphill side of Cook’s hardhat, knocking the hat off his head. We were sure he was seriously hurt and someone radioed for a litter and a pickup at the helispot.

Pferron took off downhill to Cook. We went uphill and soon we were all in one place. We were relieved to learn that Cook had only been dazed from the blow. Pferron, on the other hand, we soon discovered, could not stand up. Without realizing it, he had seriously blown a knee on the way down the mountain.

The litter crew and uphill carry

The litter intended for Cook ended up being used for Pferron. In fact, Cook ended up helping **Floyd Whitaker** (RDD-65), me, and others carry Pferron up the mountain. When we got to the top, although Cook seemed fine, it was decided that he should also be taken off the mountain as a precaution.

A third injured jumper, already at the top of the mountain when we arrived, was also taken off the mountain. The helicopter took off.

We caught the fire that day and held it a second day. We demobed that second evening. I don’t remember seeing Pferron for a long time after that.

The unlikely reunion

It was great to see Pferron and his wife, Wendy, again at the smokejumper exhibit at Eastern Washington University. I admit that of all the places I thought I might see him again, an event honoring the first African American smokejumpers at a university in Eastern Washington, more than 30 years later, was not among them!

Jumper bros as we are, despite the years that had passed and the unlikely venue, we immediately started revisiting our younger days, telling stories about our rookie class and first jumps. We laughed, hugged, and talked about the fires we fought, especially that last one. He hasn’t changed a bit. 🦋

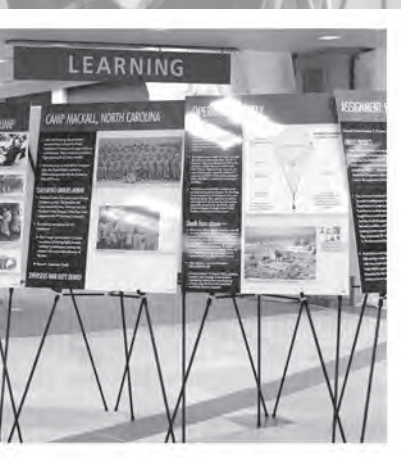


Traveling Smokejumper Exhibit

Photos Courtesy of [unclear]



Layout Design: John [unclear]



Army Kirkley (CJ-64)



SOUNDING OFF from the editor



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

Vision and Long Range Planning

One of my biggest concerns is the aging of our organization and the lack of preserving our history for the future. I'm currently 78 years old and hoping that I will be working with you for a few more years. I want to alert you as members as to what I am doing. I don't have a long-range plan, but I do go to work each day and attempt to make the NSA better.

NSA President **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) writes an annual President's Letter that I mail out in November. It is similar to what is written by many of the non-profit organizations asking for support and funding. I asked Jim if he would include an appeal in this year's letter for some extra funding for a "Historical Preservation" project that I'm working on. The response by you as mem-

bers has been overwhelming. We have never in the history of the NSA gotten such a positive response to any appeal. That shows me there are many of you out there who feel the same sense of urgency to preserve our history as I do.

What goals do we have in mind and what the heck are we going to do? The Mansfield Library at the University of Montana has been our official keeper of NSA and smokejumper "stuff." It is all cataloged and in boxes. None of it has been vetted. It is not available to you or the public over the Internet. If you want to see what is there or do any research, you must go to Missoula and go through the boxes. Not practical for an organization that has members all over the US and in a couple foreign countries.

We needed to go to Missoula and talk to the professionals, the Archivists that do the work. First thing though was to have a plan, something that would be acceptable to those in the academic world.

I've been working with **Stan Collins** (MYC-67), who has been a teacher and has operated a publishing business in Eugene, Oregon. Stan was instrumental in developing the Traveling Smokejumper



Exhibit. He's excellent at detail and negotiating. His efforts got us, the NSA, a \$14,000 smokejumper exhibit from the Springfield Oregon Museum for a third of that price.

I asked him to develop an outline for the preservation of smokejumper history that would, hopefully, be acceptable to the professional archivists at the Mansfield Library. Stan and I, along with BOD member **John Berry** (RAC-70), flew to Missoula December 6, 2016, to meet with the Univ. of Montana Archivists Staff. In addition to Archivist Donna McRae and her staff, **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77), **Charlie Palmer** (MSO-95) and **Dan Cottrell** (MSO-01) were in attendance.

Bottom line: the meeting was great. Mansfield accepted the preservation outline developed by Stan. Our goal is to fill in the blanks and, most of all, get our historical records online – on the internet so that this material is available to anyone in the world for years to come. Yes, good idea, and we, with your help, are going to do the job!

The Traveling Smokejumper Exhibit has been a major success in its first year. Showed at World of Forestry Museum

in Portland, Mt. Shasta Museum in Mt. Shasta (CA), Pybus Market in Wenatchee, WA, High Desert Museum in Bend, OR and Eastern Washington University in Cheney, WA. We've spread the smokejumper story to well over 200,000 people in the last year. It is still at High Desert. Two other exhibits have been retired to my extra bedroom for the winter – have a granddaughter who will not go into that room because “there’s a big man in there.”

I see the NSA as being a strong group of highly motivated and successful individuals. Even with our attrition due to age, we are a dynamic

and active group. I really thank you for your response to the Annual President’s Letter and the History Preservation Project. When we are dealing with the Mansfield Library, we have a solid financial foundation with which to help preserve our history.

You will see a page in this issue advertising the first NSA book published, titled “Smokejumpers and the CIA.” It is a collection of stories published in *Smokejumper* magazine over the past 16 years by our contributors. Thanks to all of you writers. The amount of work in putting together a book is enormous. More

thanks to Stan Collins for his organizational skills and doing the tedious work of figuring what we keep and what goes where. The material in this book is amazing and, in most cases, only published in *Smokejumper* magazine and this book. Such a small, important part of U.S. and smokejumper history unknown to most of the world. Publishing a book is preserving our history.

Not to overdo it, but a heartfelt thanks to all of you for your enormous financial response to our request for funding for our Historical Preservation Program. Thanks for sharing a vision. 📌

Some Memories Of Smokejumper Experiences

by Don Mathis (Missoula '55)

After completing my two refresher jumps at Missoula July 1, 1959, I elected to accept assignment to a small jumper base in Grangeville, Idaho, for the remainder of the season. My thought was that I could make more jumps and overtime payments while there rather than staying in Missoula. Three jumps out of Grangeville were remarkable.

On Aug. 4 a fairly large fire was spotted at a place called Isaac Lake in the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho. The fire was large enough that eight jumpers were dispatched. Ten of us boarded a Ford Trimotor along with **Ron Stoleson** (MSO-56) as spotter, the pilot, and the forest supervisor.

I was the senior jumper on this fire and was put in charge. The wind was gusting, somewhat higher than desirable for a safe jump, but I was impressed that we should get on the fire before it got any bigger.

Eight of us got on the ground without mishap, leaving the spotter, pilot, forest supervisor, and two remaining jumpers on the plane. I put out a signal for a pump to be air dropped to us since we had a good supply of water.

We retrieved our tools, which had been cargo dropped to us, and went to work on the fire. I anticipated the delivery of the pump once a patrol plane saw my signal. We were working that fire until Aug. 6 and during those days, several aircraft passed overhead, but a pump was never delivered. Needless to say, I was irritated at this.

When we left the fire Aug. 6, we hiked to a road and were picked up by a truck to be transported to Fenn Ranger Station for a ride back to Grangeville on Aug. 7. The driver of the pickup truck asked me if I had heard of the jumper airplane crash at Moose Creek. Of course I knew nothing about this, but could see that all the air-

craft activity overhead, while working the fire, was concerned with the crash and not the delivery of my requested pump.

It seems that after dropping my crew and tools on the fire, the airplane had gone to the Moose Creek airstrip to wait for the wind to die down. Upon landing, however, a tail wind caught the Ford and drove it between two trees at the end of the runway before the pilot could stop the airplane.

The trees sheared the wings and flooded the airplane with fuel, turning it into a raging fire. The pilot got out through a window in the cockpit and the spotter rolled out the door. The forest supervisor and two remaining jumpers were burned to death. *(Bob Culver was the pilot and survived with severe burns. Forest Supervisor Alva Blackerby died several days later in the hospital. Gary Williams (GAC-59) died at the site. John Rolf (GAC-57) died later that day in the hospital in Grangeville. Spotter Ron Stoleson (MSO-56) survived the accident. Ed.)*

Another remarkable jump was Aug. 11, 1959. This was a two-manner with **Thomas Dolin** (GAC-59) and me. The fire was reported by a lookout at a place called Silver Dome in the Nez Perce Forest. We jumped on it around 2 p.m. and had it out shortly thereafter.

We stayed on site until early the next morning and then hiked to the lookout. The lookout phoned the ranger station, asking that we be picked up for the return to Grangeville, but was told this couldn't be done for some time.

There was a man visiting at the lookout. He offered to take us down to the main highway in his Jeep, where we could hitchhike back to base. We had our jump gear with us, so we accepted. He left us on the side of the main highway, where we put out our thumbs to hitch a ride. Remember, we had our parachutes and jump gear bagged up with us.

Soon a car carrier truck came by. The driver said he could take us back to Grangeville, but there was no room in the cab of his truck for our gear and us. He did have an open Jeep on the top deck of his carrier and said we could put our gear in it and sit in the Jeep.

Can you see this image in your mind? Two men sitting in an open Jeep on the top deck of a

car carrier transport. The Jeep had a roll bar over the driver and passenger seats. We bumped our heads every time the truck hit an uneven spot in the road.

No problem; we just got our helmets out of our gear bags and rode into Grangeville with them on. We received lots of curious stares from passing motorists, but we made it back to base and were ready for another fire and jump.

A third jump out of Grangeville in late August 1959 was also unusual. The call came in to Grangeville around 2 p.m., Aug. 20. We were using a Travelair since our Ford had been destroyed at Moose Creek. In my mind I can still see Dean Logan hunched over the controls as he flew the plane between the clouds on our way to the fire.

It was a little two-manner with me and **Jim Elms** (GAC-59) on a cold, stormy day. The fire was near the top of the ridge near the head of Fry Pan Creek and was burning in a single, big dead snag. The snag was hollow, and the fire was burning like a chimney, throwing sparks and burning embers.

The area was relatively clear, so we jumped near the fire. As soon as we got on the ground without mishap and our cargo of hand tools had been dropped, it started to rain.

The fire was an easy one. We felled the snag, split it open, and let the rain put out the fire. We then built a shelter tepee with a parachute and settled down for the night. In the morning we awakened to heavy snow on the ground. The fire was out, so we ate some rations, bagged our chutes, gear and tools, stacked them near a big fir tree, and flagged everything to be picked up by a pack string later.

We left the site to hike cross country down to a trail at the creek bottom. Hiking in snow is no fun. When we got to the trail, it was approaching dark. We were wet, cold and hungry. Fortunately we stumbled upon an old log cabin along the Bear Creek trail. It had a good supply of dry wood stacked under the porch overhang and a tin stove inside, elevated on a soil platform that was built up about a foot and a half over the dirt floor.

There was also an old iron bunk bed frame with linked springs inside, but no mattresses or bedding. The chinking between the logs was long gone and cold air blew into the interior.

We pulled the bed frame over near the stove and started a fire to warm and dry ourselves. The question of who would get the bottom bunk near the stove was settled by drawing straws. I lost and was relegated to the top bunk for the night.

It was a fortunate circumstance for me. The bottom bunk was below the height of the stove and the cold air settled to the floor. My partner shivered the night away but he did keep the stove a cherry red all night.

In the morning it had stopped snowing, but we still had a hike downstream to Moose Creek for pickup.

Hiking without eating anything was not a pleasant thought. We found an old container of Quaker oatmeal and a pan in which to melt snow. A hearty breakfast of oatmeal was in the offing, but the mice had beaten us to it. Their droppings were scattered throughout the meal. When one is weak and hungry, this is not a problem. After all, we were smokejumpers.

We picked out what we could of the droppings, boiled the snowmelt, and found the breakfast to be quite satisfactory. We made it to Moose Creek in good time and were picked up the afternoon of Aug. 22. 🐿

Chicago Economist Issues Financial Challenge to NSA Members

by Terry Egan (Cave Junction '65)

Bob Aliber (MSO-51) is a professor emeritus of International Economics and Finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Bob received his Bachelor of Arts from Williams College, a second B.A. and an M.A. from Cambridge University, and a PH.D. from Yale. In 1965 he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago. An extraordinary number of Nobel Prizes and the Prize in Economic Sciences have been awarded to University of Chicago faculty members and former students. Bob has been the Houblon-Norman Fellow at the Bank of England, the Bundesbank Professor at the Free University of Berlin, the JPMorgan Prize Fellow at the American Academy of Berlin, and a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars in Washington. He has been a visiting professor at the Amos Tuck School of Dartmouth College, the London Business School, Williams College, and Brandeis University.

His current research focus is on the source of the shocks that have led to the large variability in the prices of currencies, bonds, stocks, real estate, and commodities since the early 1970s.

Bob returned to Missoula for the 75th birthday party and was impressed with the diverse careers and commitments of the smokejumpers that he met. In

a recent email he noted that, "I have been blessed, and initially got on a scholarship train when I left home at 18, (and received) scholarships to Williams, Cambridge, and Yale. I thought that many smoke-jumper alumni had the capacity to give more to the NSA Scholarship Fund, and thought a matching gift arrangement might be effective in stimulating gifts." He made two commitments to the NSA Scholarship Fund in 2015, each payable over five years: an unconditional gift of \$12,500 and a conditional gift of up to \$2,500 a year, dependent on match from other NSA members. The contributions to the NSA Scholarship Fund were \$25,000 in 2013-14 and \$6,500 in 2014-15. The gifts in 2015-16 appear likely to be slightly over \$18,000

There are MANY achievers in the NSA encompassing fields of business, medicine, education, government, forestry, agriculture, aviation, the military, and humanitarian thought and action. If just 24 achievers would join me in donating \$100 in tax deductible funds to the NSA Scholarship Fund, we'd have the match! How about it? Care to join me?

Please send your tax deductible donation now to the National Smokejumper Association, 10 Judy Lane, Chico, CA., 95926. Thank you! See next page for student information about the fund. 🐿

NSA Scholarship Program Expanded— Take Advantage!

At the October 2016 Board of Directors meeting in Seattle, some major changes were made to the NSA Scholarship Program. The addition of grandchildren to the eligibility list now opens the opportunity for at least 90 percent of our members to participate in this program. Up to this time, due to the aging of our membership, very few of the members who make up this organization and contribute 100 percent of the funding were able to participate in the Scholarship Program as their children were beyond college age.

Terry Egan (CJ-65), who was heading up the Scholarship Committee, is taking a break due to health issues. Terry came up with an excellent scoring matrix that awards points for NSA membership (only seven of the 27 past winners have been NSA members), serious scholars, and expanded evaluation of the essay. This year NSA President **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) will step in for Terry.

With the increasing expenses of getting an education, the NSA has increased the available scholarships to *six \$2,000 awards this year*.

Application packages are due by June 15, 2017. Last year we only had five applicants for the six scholarships. Let's triple that number this year.

The complete Scholarship document is online at the NSA website www.smokejumpers.com under "Outreach."

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, children or grandchildren), and
- currently enrolled in an accredited program that will lead to a college degree or other accreditation.

What is required?

- A narrative not to exceed one typewritten page addressing the criteria listed below:
 - a. Your narrative must describe your leadership

style, character, service potential, and explain how you intend to use your degree/training.

b. In addition, your narrative should contain a statement of financial need which is a short (1-2 paragraph) piece that explains why you would benefit from being awarded a scholarship. This will also give you an opportunity to explain any extenuating circumstances you may have.

- 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 Jim Cherry at: jimcherry@wctatel no later than June 15. If you have any questions, you can reach him by phone at (641) 927-4428. Mailing address: 2335 300th St, Ventura, IA 50482.

What are the criteria and what is the selection process?

- Scholarship applicants must demonstrate financial need.
- Applicants should be full-time students in good standing with a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 2.5 at his/her college or university or 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 NSA to the education institution of choice and are intended to be used for academic purposes - such as tuition, fees, room, board and/or books.

If you have any questions about the Scholarship Program, please contact Jim Cherry. It would be great if we had 20 scholarship applications this year.

Grizzly Mountain

by David Larson (North Cascades '71)

After Labor Day 1971, the North Cascade Smokejumper Base was reducing its personnel, which was not historically as fire active as the summers of '70 and '72. As the following describes, we did have some interesting events in addition to a decent number of fires. Besides my last fire, Grizzly Mountain, we had some experiences.

Smoke or dust?

A call came in to the base in the afternoon about a plane crash up near Washington Pass. The reporter could not discern if the wreckage was on fire or merely had created dust. Our overhead called it a "rescue jump."

The plane was a Cessna twin outfitted with photogrammetry equipment in order to cruise timber and estimate the amount of wood suitable for sale. The plane had flown into a dead end from which it could not escape. We loaded "The Doug" with 12 jumpers outfitted with stretchers and first-aid gear.

We flew over at a great enough altitude to avoid the same mistake. The crash had neither smoke nor dust. It did have two dead aviators lying in grotesque positions. Amazingly no gasoline, no blood. Both men had died on impact.

It was, perhaps, two hours after the crash. The main thing I remember is one man's leg was fractured just above his cowboy boot, poking out to the side at ninety degrees.

We gathered the deceased on the stretchers and hiked out downhill through timber and boulders a relatively short distance to Highway 20.

Smoke or oil?

On a patrol flight on a late afternoon, we were alerted by the pilot and spotter that a lookout had called to report there was smoke emanating from our port (left) engine. These were days where we had a number of lookouts in addition to aerial patrols.

On board was a guy who had been a helicopter

pilot in Vietnam. Our pilot, Ken Cavin, notified the spotter something to the effect of, "Get all the jumpers out!" Our veteran, having seen flights in 'nam disappear instantly, was first out. Then (and now) we utilized two-man "sticks."

Our spotter directed each of us to make our way to the door and hook up our static lines, one by one, to the overhead cable running the length of the plane. We all jumped out. Not nearly like D-Day, as it was daylight, no flak and state-of-the-art jump suits, but it was a definite happening.

The spotter told us to avoid electric lines and irrigation ditches in the Methow – the valley in which Winthrop resides – although I'm not sure if each and every man got the message.

We must have been quite a sight, flying back to base, a whole string of jumpers on no apparent fire mission .

The third memory was of a flight to La Grande, Ore., as a "booster" crew because lighting was en route to central Oregon. Once again, we were in The Doug.

It happened to be early morning, when the density altitude was most favorable for flight characteristics. Cavin was duly concerned about weight in the plane, as we had a maximum load of men and material. There was no wind at this time. The airport has a slight grade, the upper end closer to Winthrop.

Cavin made the decision to proceed downhill for airspeed and lift. Neither of our two planes (The Doug nor the Twin Beech) had seats or seatbelts. We were directed to crowd forward in the fuselage to get the weight above or forward of the wings.

Even though I was one of the smallest people (nicknamed "Short Crotch") and therefore scrunched under the mass of people, I could see some of the many hands grasping the arc of the door to the cabin. I couldn't see outside, but we must have used every inch of runway, clearing the barbed wire fence by inches.

My last fire jump turned out to be on Grizzly

Mountain, up the Methow Valley from Winthrop. NCSB utilized two aircraft, the DC-3 and the smaller Twin Beech. In this era, the DC-3 had nine-lung radials delivering 1,200 horsepower per engine.

The major terms that describe DC-3's are "venerable" and "iconic." There has never been a structural failure in a DC-3 airframe. Cavin was our DC-3 pilot.

Our Grizzly Mountain fire was going to be a six-manner, in the Twin Beech. Also a nine-lung radial but smaller, it had a Wasp engine that delivered 450 horsepower per side, a considerable engine for that weight. It had this mellifluous sound as it warmed up.

When pilot Dave Russell fired this thing up, it produced an unmistakable rising whine in the electric starter engine, followed by a shuddering cough or two before the pistons achieved the first hesitant ignition, emitting startling black smoke plumes. Then, the whole system would smooth out and harmonize.

As Dave tested the prop feathering, the plane would push the wheels against its chock blocks, ready to thrust its load aloft. With those engines and sounds, how could it not fly?

Bill Moody (NCSB-57) – Mr. Smokejumper, in my opinion – was acting as the spotter. It was his first summer as head of the base while **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40) was phasing himself out. There are many jumpers who would follow either his instructions, or him, into the middle of wind, rock and fire if he had said so or led them.

My jump partner was **Steve Wight** (NCSB-65), having many summers' experience. He had been one of my rookie trainers, several wonderful months earlier. He probably saved my rookie body from serious harm on a training jump when I was the first of two jumpers in the Doug.

I had somehow in my angst managed to get my left arm UNDERNEATH the static line attached to the upper part of the cable anchored vertically aft of the door. Yes, the static line is supposed to be above my shoulder so that the line will remove the deployment bag cover as I depart the plane.

Even in my anxiety, I felt this hand reaching up under my reserve very slowly and very firmly, effectively preventing me from exiting. If I had jumped, it would have traumatically shortened the

plane-to-body distance, with my shoulder in the middle, producing a violent twist of shroud lines at the very least; very possibly creating multiple tears in my rotator cuff.

(Steve, if you are reading this, thank you again.)

Steve and I were two of six jumpers tasked for this one. In September at NCSB, the days can still be very hot, attended by nights cooling off dramatically, creating the fire maxim of "uphill wind in the morning and downhill wind in the evening."

In this case, it was early afternoon and a front was moving in which created a distinct wind transiting up the valley.

When one is sprawled on the floor of a jump plane, one cannot discern enough about the wind, other than good old-fashioned turbulence.

We did fly over the fire, excited to see ground fire and a snag with its top on fire. Bill dropped streamers in order to determine how far down valley to release us. This is a typical spotter's dilemma – how far out to exit the jumpers?

Flying back toward the base, into the wind, required an agonizing amount of time and patience before Bill released us. Exiting a plane at about a hundred miles per hour does not pose a particular jumper-proximity issue. Steve was behind me so we were essentially on our own.

I immediately directed my chute into the wind, the fire well to my back. I was looking down at the rocks, intent on staying loose, waiting for my boots to touch so I could tumble backward and break my backward momentum. I was hanging loose, riding the wind, waiting for impact.

One can pull down on both gores simultaneously in order to spill air out the back and hasten descent – if one thinks of this.

Then, I came to an abrupt halt when I hit a tree – but I didn't hit the ground. "Getting the wind knocked out" is an effective term that means exactly that.

What with my back to the fire, facing the wind, I struck this pine squarely with my back. All the air from my lungs appeared to be gone. When one receives a blow like this, it effectively paralyzes one's diaphragm.

It's a helpless feeling. It classically causes one to groan and moan in an attempt to get some flow-

ing in or out. You don't really care which. That was the case with me. Even with the total lack of respiration, I don't think people pass out, although that might be a welcome feature. One cannot talk. The only sound possible is this "Uuunnnggggh-hhhh."

All the while, my chute had bagged the top third of the tree, which I found out later was a dead snag, a good two feet in diameter at the trunk, substantial enough to hold me suspended in the tree without breaking from my impact or blowing the chute off. As most occurrences of air being forced out rapidly, the spasm does gradually dissipate, no matter how much you groan or utilize relaxation mechanics.

Man, I hit hard. The center of my back, right behind my chest, hit the meat of the tree. I weighed, at the start of the summer, 145 pounds. With my jumpsuit, helmet, reserve chute and all, I may have weighed 180 pounds.

A sack of cement weighs about 90 pounds, so if you consider somehow throwing two sacks of cement from the bed of a pickup truck going 20 miles per hour at a frame building, it's going to do some damage.

What to do? Here I am, hanging in a tree, slowly coming to my senses, a parachute above me billowing out sideways when the wind comes up, banging my body up the tree trunk. Every time the wind would die down, the chute would deflate and go limp against the tree. Then, the wind would pick up, bouncing me up the trunk. No control.

Steve is below, asking, "Are you all right?" If I could have spoken, I would have to say, "No."

My back didn't even hurt at that point. Steve and I were hoping the tree would maintain its integrity. I'm going to say the wind was gusting 10-20 miles per hour. This went on, seemingly interminably, as Steve and I discussed a solution.

He was in radio contact with Moody, circling above with Russell. The only way out of this is to somehow tie myself off to the tree, pop the Capewells, and rappel myself down.

With great difficulty, and multiple attempts, I was able to bumble around the tree and lash a line from the tree to me when the chute pulled out and me up. It would not work when things went slack, as I wasn't close enough to the tree.

My other nickname is "Swede," which is a bit of a misnomer as I have half Norwegian extraction. Perseverance was a definite plus.

The other four jumpers were on the fire, throwing dirt, digging line, and chain sawing limbs and trees away from the fireline. Occasionally, one would wander by to witness the "yo-yo guy," now a new nickname.

I was told later some jumpers were disappointed I didn't yo-yo longer, that's the way us smoke-jumpers are. Even after I could talk, I couldn't engage in their "helpful" banter. Finally, miraculously, I was able to get a wrap on the tree and get to the ground. I'd been airborne more than an hour at this point.

My boots felt good on the ground, although my back was starting to hurt. My back hurt generally all over, but more on my left. I felt as if I'd been hit with a baseball bat without padded jumpsuit. Steve never left me and probably would have caught me if given the opportunity. The chute remained in the tree wafting spasmodically, gradually destroying itself over the period of the night.

Wight decided it was hopeless to retrieve the chute, and when we felled the tree in the morning in order to return it to the loft for last rites, it was unrecognizable as a parachute. It was truly shredded, not an easy thing to do with rip-stop material.

Over the night, I took a Pulaski and (kind of) improved the fireline, increasing the cup nature. My back in the cold had set in to a basic spasm such that every overhead hack with the Pulaski elicited so much pain I couldn't really lift my arms. I was reduced to little clawing strokes with the hoe end; the ax end created traumatic nerve bursts.

There were attempts by the team to fell a three-foot-diameter pine that was burning a little at the top – presumably the one initially struck by lightning. In the darkness and smoke, we had a difficult time guessing how to fell it – i.e., where is the limb weight differential; where is the lean; what is the integrity of the trunk, etc. So which way is it going to go?

As I recall, we had two different undercuts in it, but no back cut would take it down.

I dozed fitfully for a few hours in the wee time, although the ground contours were not conducive

to any body posture whatsoever. These were pre-ibuprofen days; aspirin was the analgesic du jour. Water was my major nutrition and lubricant.

Only when the wind died down early morning did the tree topple, independent and opposite our well intentioned undercuts, a truly spontaneous phenomenon. Somebody could have been killed.

When daylight permitted, fire contained, it was determined I could not hike out, even without an E-bag fire pack. The powers that be summoned the only helicopter in the county, a G3B, which flew me down to NCSB. I hobbled to our 1960 Chevrolet and drove to our rental house, which a traveling family had graciously given us the use if we drove the rattlesnakes from the hay bales.

Body bent to the left, my wife got my Whites boots and clothes off and into the tub. She did not find smoky clothes a romantic item. Later that day, I went to the only physician/clinic in town for observation, where without the benefit of x-ray it was determined I probably had a cracked rib.

At that time, therapy was a chest wrap. The

state of the art analgesic was Darvon Compound 65, a non-narcotic, which I was glad to have.

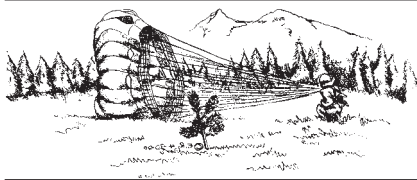
I hung around base for a few days doing errands and making artistic fire packs. I used Magic Markers to indicate "Insert Feet Here" on paper sleeping bags. I was generally filling time until us quarter-school college students were released for fall classes.

We packed the totality of our worldly possessions into the Chev – a lot can be crammed under the wings in the trunk of a '60 Biscayne – packing away carefully our cherished Carole King "Tapestry" album, and off to Seattle.

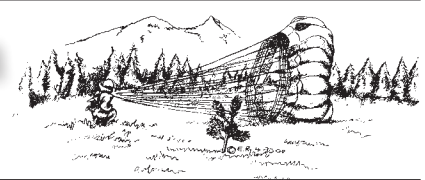
I finished my last year in college and entered the Army to which I had previously committed. Since I was now a one-year wonder smokejumper, I was unable to acquire the nickname "Yo-Yo."

When the Army examining physician (and I) saw this "callous" – a thickened, boney rim – around a rib on my left side, he asked, "Did you know you broke a rib?"

"Evidently. It's a long story." 🔦



Snapshots from the Past



by Jeff R. Davis
(Missoula '57)

Back Off and Hit'er On the Next Ridge

It was the summer of 1961 in Montana, and it was every smokejumper's dream come true - wall-to-

wall fires over every part of the northwest. By August though, the excitement was beginning to wear thin and the hard work was taking its toll. Jumpers were hiding under their beds in the dorm; rashes of "sore knees" and other "injuries" were starting to crop up among these normally healthy young men. Sometimes the only rest we got was on the way to yet another fire. I dropped load after load of these bone-tired men myself. As soon as a DC-3 was loaded, all sixteen aboard would fall asleep and show no signs of life until I shook them awake,

one at a time, as their turn to jump came up.

When my fire call to the Magruder Ridge Fire came, I was just about completely used up. It was August 19. I began work in the loft at 0500 repairing damaged canopies. I had a dry-run call at 0530 to the Arlington Ridge Fire on the Nez Perce - back by 0720. Then at 1135, we got a call for twelve jumpers to the Magruder Ridge Fire. Ten minutes later we were airborne. In an hour we were circling the fire. The jump spot was on a ridge top, about two hundred yards from the fire. The streamers

landed close to the spot, but they seemed to hang in the air an unusually long time. I was the only squadleader aboard. **Hal Samsel** (MSO-49), the foreman, and I were first up to jump.

We went out the door at 1300. We hit strong up-drafts over the ridge, and our hang time, usually less than a minute with those old 28-foot parachutes, lasted for a full ten minutes. Sam and I were both experienced enough to steer to the lee side of the ridge and finally sink into the ground. But the rest of our twelve men were less experienced, and many of them took far longer than we did.

The fire was blowing up as we jumped. It was already a re-burn, having had crews on it previously who were unable to control it. Sam and I frequently had time between descending sticks to roll a smoke and smoke the entire thing before that one stick landed.

We finally got on the fire by 1345. We couldn't do a damn thing with it. Every time we'd punch a new line around the running front, the fire would break out someplace else. It was becoming a rolling crown fire. At 1515 one of the jumpers, **Dan Schroedel** (MSO-57), was hit by a falling snag and taken off the line with an injured shoulder and a broken nose. By 1520 we thought we had 'er stopped, but at 1530 it blew again, crowning over the southeast side of the line and running up the ridge. We'd stashed our personal gear and some of our tools a

distance from the fire where we thought they'd be safe. Among the tools were several chainsaws, loaded with fuel. The fire caught up to them, and they started blowing up into the air on fire like bottle-rockets.

Sam was one of the coolest jumpers I ever met. I'd never seen him crumple under pressure, and we'd faced a lot of pressure together in this one season alone. But at this point, Sam lost it: "Shit! Fuck this shit! It's just no damn good!"

C-rations, ate the first meal we could remember for a while, slowly rolled Bull, and smoked and cheered that damn fire on. "Hooray!" someone would shout as another flaming chainsaw rocketed into the air and the fire made another run up yet another spur ridge outside our lines. We were too exhausted to care - the only time I ever saw a jumper crew reach the point they just didn't give a flying fuck.

It's a funny thing, we sat there cheering that fire on for

We couldn't do a damn thing with it. Every time we'd punch a new line around the running front, the fire would break out someplace else. It was becoming a rolling crown fire.

"Sam", I said, "I gotta suggestion." We hadn't stopped to eat since the last fire, the day before. We hadn't slept for several days, other than to catch hurried catnaps on the lines. We'd been together now for days, doing more firefighting and jumping than eating or resting, by a long shot.

Sam growled at me and asked what I was suggesting. I said, "Why don't we just say 'fuck it' and go rescue the rest of our C-rats and chow down and grab a smoke and watch 'er burn? Maybe after we've had a break, we can go back and catch 'er on the next ridge."

Rather to my surprise, Sam agreed, and we backed off, found what was left of our

only about thirty minutes. By 1600 we were back at it again, and by 1715 we had that baby lined, patrolled and contained. That small break from a going fire we could not stop enabled us to regroup and return to the blaze with fresh vigor and energy. By the next day, we declared the fire out and returned to Missoula by 0500 on August 21. By 1600 I was back in the air again, dropping cargo on a fire on the Clearwater Forest.

I think I learned something that day on the Magruder Ridge Fire. There comes a time in every man's life when it's better to stop shoveling sand against the tide; there comes a time it's better to back off and hit 'er on the next ridge. 🪖

A Call From Lieutenant Demmons

by Pat Harbine (Missoula '51)

It was 10 o'clock on a dark and chilly night in an Army camp just south of the North Korean border, 1954, when the call came for me. The name of the caller, Lt. Demmons (Jack MSO-50), rang a bell from my smokejumper past.

I climbed out of bed, donning a pair of white tennis shoes, and made the short dash from my tent to the orderly room. On the phone line, we agreed to meet the following day.

The beam of headlights caught my figure as I dashed for the warmth of my tent, but it would be some time before I reached the door. *Halt* – the voice had the tone of authority I recognized immediately. None other than Sgt. Stumble Bum had caught me out of uniform in the open compound.

The small man with the resounding voice was a recent transfer from stateside, and it was his mission to shape up the sloppy command he inherited. The faded marks on his sleeve indicated he had once been a master sergeant, but no longer.

He had just returned from his nightly drinking spree with the captain, who could no longer walk on his own. The wiry little sergeant had found his target and I was it.

While I stood frozen at attention, the dressing down began, his booming voice echoing from the surrounding hills. As I glanced to my right, I caught the vision of the Jeep driver, struggling to help the inebriated company commander to his tent. To his left, slits of light from every tent in the compound indicated most of the inhabitants were enjoying this rare show of entertainment.

"Soldier, how dare you come to my orderly room in those undershorts and those goddamned tennis shoes!" He fumed on and on as the cold air penetrated my body. Gradually the alcohol began to affect his brain, his words became slurred and he ran out of picturesque phrases to heap on the poor, shivering piece of meat before him.

I was ordered to my tent. Obviously, all my tent mates, who would taunt me with their memories of the event, saw the display.



Pat Harbine (Courtesy Pat Harbine)

Over the following weeks, I thought the incident would be forgotten, but I underestimated the man. My platoon was assigned the task of moving every outhouse and latrine in the area, because of me.

Digging holes is even more odious when one has very limited weekly access to showers and clean clothes. My subordinates reminded me of this often. The newly assigned tasks kept me from ever meeting Lt. Demmons.

Nearly a month later, I was surprised when Stumble Bum announced, as we stood in formation, he was replacing me as platoon sergeant with one of my squadleaders. Reluctantly, I relinquished my position and as my replacement took my spot in front of the platoon, I noticed he already had his sergeant stripes sewn into place. Those should have been my stripes, the ones I worked six months to earn. The injustice of it all!

Darn you, Lt. Demmons – because of your phone call, I lost my command and my sergeant's stripes as well. 🧐

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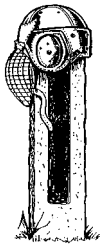
In Memory Of/Honor of

Dave/Dorthy Schultz (MSO-61)	Wilderness Canoe Base
Bill Moody (NCSB-57)	Jim Allen (NCSB-46)
	Dick Harnden (NCSB-58)
Doug Wamsley (MSO-65)	Joe Lord (MSO-56)
	Jim Phillips (MSO-67)
	Tony Percival (NCSB-54)
Squad VI	Bert Tanner (MSO-68)
	Willie VonBracht (MSO-68)
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Audrey Thorsrud	Shep Johnson (MYC-56)
John Berry (RAC-70)	Tony Percival (NCSB-54)
Terry Egan (CJ-65)	Scholarship Fund
Bob Shackelford (MSO-52)	Paul Wilson (MSO-50)
	Joe Wilson (MSO-52)
	Paul Wilson (MSO-50)
Charlie Rodgers (MSO-64)	NSA
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Jim Clatworthy (MSO-56)	Tom Uphill (MSO-56)
	Bill Murphy (MSO-56)
Jim Gordon (MSO-59)	Jim Anderson (MSO-58)
	Bob Hewitt (MSO-56)
Virginia Fitzjarrald	Keith Fitzjarrald (NCSB-63)
Anonymous	Jim Phillips (MSO-67)
Jim Snapp (MSO-65)	Jim Phillips (MSO-67)
Adam Lauber (RDD-99)	Chris Gunter (RDD-01)
"Smoke" Greene Jr.	Melvin "Smoke" Greene (MSO-42)
Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61)	Tom Uphill (MSO-56)
	Ed Bustamante (GAC-61)
Bob Gara (MYC-51)	Grant Gaeth (MYC-51)
John Manley (CJ-62)	Jim Allen (NCSB-46)
Snohomish Co Farm Bureau	Dick Harnden (NCSB-58)
Overby Mike (MSO-67)	Jim Phillips (MSO-67)
Angel Fire Rotary Club	Jim Phillips (MSO-67)
Steve Wilkins (RAC-65)	Tony Percival (NCSB-54)
Jack Atkins (MSO-68)	Jim Phillips (MSO-67)
George Straw (CJ-62)	Jim Allen (NCSB-46)
Anita Gassner	Dick Gassner (RAC-68)
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Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$92,540

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



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

C. Richard “Dick” Harnden (North Cascades ’58)

Dick died September 16, 2016. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1958 with a degree in Logging Engineering. Dick worked for the USFS before being called up in the Army Reserve. After being discharged, he returned to the USFS in Okanogan.

In 1963 he moved to Lynwood and started a landscape business with his brother. In 1975 Dick purchased the Clearview tree nursery, followed by a nursery in Everett and later one in Snohomish. He later quit landscaping and focused on growing trees. Dick jumped at NCSB during the 1958 season.

Keith D. “George” Seim (Missoula ’66)

Keith died November 2, 2016. He went to the University of Montana in 1961 on a track scholarship and graduated in 1965 with a business administration degree. Keith held the conference Track & Field Discus record for 24 years.

Keith owned and operated the Seim Dental Lab for 24 years. He survived a nine-year battle with multiple myeloma. He jumped at Missoula from 1966-69.

Charles B. “Chuck” Tribe (Missoula ’56)

Chuck, 82, died on November 9, 2016, in Missoula. He first worked for the USFS on a blister rust crew in Idaho at age 17. Chuck enlisted in the Marines at age 18 and went ashore in Korea in 1952. When he came back from his enlistment, Chuck jumped at Missoula 1956-58 while completing his degree in Forestry at the University of Montana. He then worked for the Forest Service in R-1 and was the Forest Planning Officer on the Lolo N.F. where he helped produce one of the earliest truly conservation-based Forest Plans in

the Nation.

Upon retirement, Chuck served on the Five Alleys Land Trust board of directors for 27 years. His fingerprints can be found all across the open and protected landscapes of the Missoula Valley. He was green long before green was ever cool. His politics were grounded in inclusiveness, our obligations to each other, and our duty to be good stewards of the earth.

Frank J. Smith (North Cascades ’48)

Frank, 87, died October 31, 2016, in Paonia, CO. He graduated from Winthrop High School and jumped at NCSB 1948-50. He received a football scholarship to Puget Sound College where he also pitched on the baseball team. Frank was drafted into the Army during the Korean War and was stationed in Germany.

After his discharge, he worked for the American Chrome Company in Nye, Montana, and later the Climax Mine in Leadville, Colorado, where he worked until his retirement in 1981

Harry L. Cummings (Missoula ’46)

Harry died November 25, 2016. He grew up in Orofino, Idaho, where he worked in the woods fighting fires and manning lookouts for the Clearwater Timber Protective Association and the USFS.

Harry was inducted into the Army in 1943 and was a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division. He jumped on “D” at Normandy and later in Operation Market Garden. Harry was with the 101st in the Battle of the Bulge and was wounded twice during his time in the Airborne.

After the war he started a plumbing and heating business in Orofino and went to work for the USFS in 1962 as a Fire Control Officer. Harry retired from the USFS in 1980 and went to work

for the Clearwater-Potlatch Protective Association.

Harry jumped at Missoula in 1946 and worked at Cave Junction during the 1947 season.

Melvin L. Greene (Missoula '42)

Melvin "Smoke" Greene, Colonel, USAF (Ret.), died January 20, 2014, at age 95. He worked for the Forest Service as a teenager in Montana before joining the Smokejumpers in 1942.

In 1943 he joined the Army Air Corps and was a Flight Engineer on the new B-29s. On his sixth mission in April 1945, his plane was hit by a kamikaze pilot over Nagoya, Japan. After parachuting from the plane, he was captured and spent the remainder of the war as a POW in Omori Prison near Tokyo.

Smoke continued his military career retiring as a full colonel in 1972 after 29 years of service. In 1986 he relocated to the Air Force Village in San Antonio, where he lived for the next 22 years before moving to Austin in 2008.

Ray F. Rubio (Redmond '95)

Ray died December 19, 2016, in Birmingham, Alabama. He graduated from Brawley Union High School (CA) and served in the 82nd Airborne. Ray jumped at Redmond from 1995 through the 2016 season.

Carroll A. Rieck (Missoula '46)

Carroll died December 24, 2016, in Hillsboro, Oregon, of cancer. He joined the Marine Corps during WWII at age 17 and took part in the South Pacific Island fighting. Carroll was part of the short-lived Marine Paratrooper unit.

After the war, Carroll attended Washington State University, majoring in Wildlife Management. He jumped at Missoula during the 1946-47 seasons and broke his back on a fire jump in 1947 that ended his smokejumping career.

Carroll joined the Washington State Dept. of Game in 1953 serving as a biologist and game protector. He worked with sportsman clubs and did public relations work for the department, including hosting a TV show called "Wildlife Bulletin." Carroll worked in the wildlife conservation

field in Zambia and later joined the Peace Corps, working in Chile as a wildlife expert.

Roy W. Wagoner (North Cascades '62)

Roy died December 30, 2016, in Hood River, Oregon, after a two-year battle with ALS. He grew up in Twist, WA, and attended the University of Washington and Wenatchee Valley College. Roy jumped at NCSB during the 1962-63 and 1966 seasons.

After graduating from college, Roy was drafted into the Army and served a tour in Vietnam from 1964-65. On his return, Roy was hired by a private telephone contractor and traveled the western states installing telephone switches. He continued to work for United Telephone after moving to Hood River, where he worked five acres raising cherries. 🌳

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 electronic mailing list (see page 44). Chuck's contact information is in the information box on page three. 🌳



ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to **Terry Egan** (CJ-65), **Jeff Shipley** (RAC-01), **Bob Wilken** (CJ-78), **Stan "Clancy" Collins** (MYC-67) and **Rick Blanton** (MYC-74) who just became our latest Life Members.

The NSA Good Samaritan Fund donated \$2,000 to help **Ray Rubio** (RAC-95) who was critically injured while on a fire assignment in Alabama in November. Ray suffered serious head injuries and a broken kneecap in an accident unrelated to his firefighting duties.

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "Hi Chuck, Wow! Another outstanding issue. I am about 1/2 way through. You keep outdoing yourself. In particular your personal piece on Jim Allen.

"Also I want to thank all of you for the article 'The Man in the Middle' (by Bob Bartlett). I have an insight into the task presented that Bob Bartlett has pursued. I have been working on obtaining photographs and obituaries on the CCC boys that were killed in the line of duty on the Blackwater Fire of 1937 on the Shoshone NF in Wyoming. I was able to get the Forest Service men honored without too much difficulty, but the CCC is difficult and we are still not finished. Due to their youth, about all we can find are possibly an old high school yearbook picture and mention in a local paper.

"As part of the cowboy culture, I thought that Bob should know that at least 1/4 of the American cowboys were either black, Indian or Latino. In our area, the large majority would have been American Indian. Stub Farlow, who graces our Wyoming license plates on Steamboat (the bucking horse), was a local cowboy and 1/2 Indian."

Roger Harding (NCSB-54): "Thanks for keeping the magazine going Chuck. I just finished reading 'A Smokejumper Story.' At the end, **Dick Kersh** (LGD-76) said, 'I believe I may be the only smokejumper in the history of the program who



actually got to make his first jump with a parachute he rigged himself.'

"Please let Dick know that I did just that in 1954. I was a Parachute Rigger in the Air Force 1948-1952. In the fall of 1952, I enrolled in the College of Forestry University of Washington. The summer of 1953, I worked for the USFS as a Fire Look-out/Trail Crewman. In 1954-55, I was a smokejumper at North Cascades working for **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40).

"I was the oldest (24) rookie in the class. They put me right to work rigging chutes, and I made sure I jumped a chute that I rigged every time I made a jump. After graduation, I went to work for the State of Washington Department of Natural Resources in the Forest Land Inventory (2 million acres). I retired in 1982 as Manager of the program."

Lee Gossett (RDD-57) concerning the newly-released NSA book *Smokejumpers and the CIA*: "I am finding the book one fantastic read. Thanks for offering me an early chance to read the proof copy. I find the Fulton Sky Hook of special interest as I had the pleasure of having dinner with Robert Fulton Jr. in North Carolina many years ago. He told about the post B-17 Sky Hook program he was working with in Ft. Bragg, NC, with the Special Forces. The project with the Special Forces Team involved a team pickup, all at once. The Army said only fully articulating dummies of the same weight and height could be used during the trial phase and required 100 consecutive, successful pickups before they would approve a live pickup. They could never reach this standard set for the system, so it was discontinued.

"I was in my last season of smokejumping in 1963 when the Intermountain B-17 arrived in Fairbanks on the way to pick up the sick scientist on the ice. This was the first time I met Jack Cahill, Jerry Daniels, Toby Scott and Bob Nicol.

"I left for Air America shortly after that and

on a flight into Udorn, Thailand, guess who I saw? Jack Cahill. Small world. Later on I worked with Jerry [Hog] Daniels in upcountry Laos when I was flying the Porter. Met Bob Nicol again many years later, and we would cross paths at smokejumper reunions.

"Other jumpers would cross my path in the Lao years, including Bruce Lehfeldt, Glenn Hale, Ken Hessel, Jim Barber, Don Courtney, Gary Hannon, Lyle Brown and 'Big Andy' Anderson. It was like old home week, seeing these fine specimens of former jumpers.

"The memories are flooding back, Chuck."

Walt Vennum (FBX-62): "This e-mail is mostly just a footnote for two articles in the January 2017 *Smokejumper* magazine. On page 23, Bob Bartlett suggests **Milford Preston** (RDD 74) was the second Black smokejumper. I underwent rookie training in 1962 at Fairbanks with a Black individual named **Barry McAlpine** (ANC-62). After our training was completed, he was stationed as a fire control aide at Homer, Alaska, which is hardly a hotbed of fire activity. I've no idea if he made any fire jumps that summer. He did not return for refresher training during the 1963 through 1966 seasons, but he did complete rookie training.

"On page 33, **Dick Kersh** (LGD-76) believes he is the only smokejumper who made his first jump with a chute he packed. During the spring of 1963, myself and several others, whose names I don't remember, were trained as riggers. Each of the first 20 mains and reserves we packed was torn apart, inspected, critiqued, and recorded in our rigger's logbooks. All of us jumped our 21st mains and reserves before we were allowed to pack chutes for others to use. This was standard practice at Fairbanks, at least through the mid 1960s."

Tom Hunnicutt (RDD-78): "Chuck - Thank you for such a nice article on 'The Passing of A Great Man' and the spirit of the Gobi. **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) was no longer part of the base in my time (1980), but the attitudes and work ethic fostered by Jim Allen were still the norm at the Gobi.

"I just got in under the wire, but I'm so proud that I can say 'I'm one of them.'"

Murry Taylor (RDD-65) on the passing of smokejumper pilot **Jim Pickering**: "One of my fondest

memories of him was on a flight in a Grumman Goose on the way back from McGrath. Our load had been having a rough time, not getting fires, having trouble with station overhead, little overtime, etc.

"On the way back to Fairbanks, we came up on Lake Minchumina and asked if we could land and take a swim. We did and I remember diving out the door, then swimming around under the wings with the bright colors of yellow and red reflecting in the cold water, laughing and happy. Jim slid his side window open and watched us, laughing also. It sort of cured all our problems and set us on a good track. A lot of us had a great time working many years at what we loved, and pilots like Jim made a lot of that possible." 🕯

On Visiting Mann Gulch – NSA Project, June 15, 2015

by **Richard Trinity** (Missoula '66)

We went there to see them – the sites where they fell
While racing that chasing fire from Hell.

The wind was there too, and not just a little,
Like the echo of an old man playing his fiddle.

A foot path led to each place of rest,
Where all had last run their dead level best.

The side of the gulch was rocky and steep
Where the dry flowing grass had grown up knee-deep.
Two markers – one old and one new – marked their
death.

And, gazing, some had a small catch in our breath.

We laid on the ribbons and said the Lord's Prayer.

But still, somehow, their deaths didn't seem fair.

Like His dying for us on the cross,

What they gave for our gain was also their loss.

We remember their deaths as we grieve and we mourn;

Though we knew not a one – like they'd never been
born.

Now we honor the fallen – it could have been us.

So remember the lessons, gear up, and get on the bus.



*Richard Trinity (MSO-66)
(Courtesy Jim Phillips)*

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

WE HAVE KNOWN for a while that the North Cascades Base was potentially going to have to be relocated due to several buildings being located in what the FAA refers to as the obstacle-free zone. Several other buildings are in need of extensive renovations. One option is to make extensive renovations to the existing Base. Other options include relocating the base to airports in either East Wenatchee or Yakima. The Base will operate out of Winthrop for the 2017 season. We have heard nothing about the status of the West Yellowstone Base, which also needs extensive infrastructure repairs. As we have reported previously, the Forest Service is considering various options for West Yellowstone, including making the needed renovations, closing the Base or relocating it. I am in hopes

that the National Smokejumper Association will have a place at the table when NCSB closes to protect historical artifacts, records, photographs and material culture from the Base.

Two bills have been introduced in Congress that effect Smokejumpers:

On December 9, 2016, Senator Steve Daines (R-Montana) introduced a bill in Congress that will allow wildland firefighters to remain on the 20-year retirement track if they're injured on the job. Additionally, Daines' bill requires that overtime pay be considered as income for purposes of calculating worker's compensation disability benefits since overtime pay constitutes a significant portion of wildland firefighter compensation. Currently, if injured and not able to return to a firefighting position, federal wildland firefighters must switch from the 20-year retirement track authorized for federal employees with certain hazardous jobs to the 30-year retirement track for other federal employees.

Senators Jon Tester (D-Montana) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced bipartisan legislation in January to protect the pensions of Federal responders who have been injured on the job. The Fair Return for Employees on Their Initial Retirement Earned (RETIRE) Act will help federal

firefighters, law enforcement officers, Customs and Border Protection officials, and other federal employees with physically demanding jobs receive their full retirement benefits if they are injured on the job.

Currently, federal employees who are injured in the line of duty and return to work for the federal government lose the early retirement benefits they had earned before their injury. Federal employees with physically demanding jobs, known as "6c" occupations, have a mandatory retirement age, and they pay an additional portion of each paycheck towards their retirement. If 6c employees, such as firefighters and law enforcement officers, are injured on the job and unable to return to work before they fulfill their mandatory 20-25 years of service, they lose all of the benefits they have paid into the early retirement system even if they return to work for the federal government as a non-6c designated employee.

The Senators' bipartisan bill will help these injured employees by allowing them to continue to pay into their 6c retirement accounts even if they don't return to work in a 6c-designated occupation. Additionally, the Fair RETIRE Act will allow those public servants who were hurt while performing a 6c-designated oc-

cupation to retire after 20-25 years of federal service and be eligible for a lump sum payment of the benefits owed to them from their 6c retirement

funds.

A tip of the hard hat to **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77) who has hung up his boots after 42 years in the wildland fire

business. We wish WW well. I have a feeling he is going to be plenty busy in the future.

Speed-Range-Payload. Aggressive initial Attack 🔦

COMMENTS FROM DAN OLSEN

(USFS Fire and Aviation)

At NSA October Board Meeting: “2016 Fire Season”

Involvement of Smokejumpers in this season's fires

Many of the jump bases are still compiling statistics for the season and they probably will not be done in time for your meeting with the NSA. In short, the 2016 season was considerably slower than last year for both Forest Service and BLM jumpers. Here are some highlights:

McCall jumpers partnered with the Great Basin jumpers to staff multiple spike bases across Nevada, southern Idaho, eastern Idaho, western Colorado, and across Utah. Thirty-one initial attack fires for 162 fire jumps (48% of the 10-year avg.)

Missoula hosted the first Ram Air transition class this year and trained all R-1 rookies on the Ram Air parachute system. The following statistics include fire activity from the Miles City and Silver City spike bases: Thirty-three initial attack fires for 225 fire jumps, and 10 fires supported by ground.

West Yellowstone completed the Ram Air transition this year.

Twelve initial attack fires for 80 fire jumps, and six fires supported by ground. Sixty-six of their fire jumps this year were on the Ram Air parachute.

Grangeville operated out of the Cottonwood, ID airport this season due to runway work at Grangeville. Grangeville supported the national effort by filling multiple booster requests to other bases. Three initial attack fires, and two fires supported by ground.

Redding jumpers staffed the Porterville spike base for the majority of the fire season. While in Porterville they staffed a fire on the Cleveland NF with 16 jumpers. This was the first time that smokejumpers were ever deployed on that forest. Eighteen fires for 139 fire jumps (32 of the fire jumps were

on a Ram Air parachute), and two fires supported by ground.

North Cascades Ten initial attack fires for 42 fire jumps, and two fires supported by ground.

Redmond had a slow season but provided multiple boosters to Redding and R-1. Eleven initial attack fires, which is well below the 10-year average of 70 fires.

Future plans for the Smokejumper Program

Continue with the current structure and near similar numbers into the foreseeable future. The last five years the number of FS jumpers has fluctuated between 285 and 310.

The transition to the Ram Air parachute technology will be a big focus for the jump program in the future. 2016 was the first official transition year and a lot was learned and achieved. During this transition the FS will work in partnership with the BLM to share ideas, equipment development, and personnel that will be beneficial to both programs. The first week of November, a Ram Air AAR will be held in Missoula. We will also be preparing for the 2017 season, and how we will incorporate what we learned this year.

Good progress was made in utilizing smokejumper spike bases this year. The plan is to keep the jumpers moving to areas of higher fire potential throughout the fire season. There was a lot of positive support on the use of spike bases this fire season.

The addition of the Sherpa SD3-60 to the smokejumper fleet will greatly help to standardize the program in the future. The future fleet will consist of SD3-60 aircraft and Twin Otters. The Twin Otters are essential to back country operations for

smokejumpers and multiple resource programs in support of the Forest Service mission.

The SD3-60 Sherpa will allow us to change how we deliver paracargo. We can utilize the rear ramp to deploy paracargo in much larger quantities. In combination with the state of art avionics in the SD3-60 with GPS-guided parachute systems, we will be able to safely deliver paracargo in a low visibility environment to support any firefighting mission.

Jumpers frequently fill crucial leadership vacancies to help staff all levels of Incident Management Teams. It also provides the jumpers a way to gain large fire experience, and helps them to develop career opportunities in the future. It is an expectation by many fire managers that when they order smokejumpers, they are getting highly qualified and experienced firefighters. In the future, we need to maintain a balance of jumpers supporting the large fire suppression effort and their critical initial attack role.

There will be a continual need to keep informing fire and land managers on the capabilities of the jump program. Building relationships across multiple agencies is key to success.

Assessment of the transition from round to square chutes including accident stats

There is a Ram Air AAR scheduled this fall that will provide an updated assessment. To date, a total of 109 FS jumpers have transitioned to the Ram Air. The R-1 smokejumpers began the FS pilot program in 2008 and have made great strides. As the transition continues, we will need to rely heavily on their expertise.

Where we stand with the transition today:

Washington Office has hired the National Smokejumper Program Manager, Ram Air Implementation Project Leader, Ram Air MTDC position, and provided for 120-day temporary promotions for both a Ram Air Training Specialist and SMS Specialist. The Ram Air Readiness Assessment and 2016 Ram Air Operation Plan are completed, and the Change Management Plan will soon be completed.

Missoula is nearing completion with 51 Ram Air jumpers and has approximately 16 round jumpers to transition.

Grangeville is almost complete with the Ram Air transition. Only eight round jumpers are remaining

and are planned to transition in 2017.

West Yellowstone has completed the Ram Air transition. Only one round jumper has not and does not plan to transition due to upcoming retirement.

Redding began the transition in 2016 and has eight jumpers that transitioned.

McCall has two jumpers that have transitioned. This year they have actively prepared for their transition starting in 2017.

Redmond & North Cascades are beginning preparations for the transition over the next several years.

Injury statistics are not yet compiled for this fire season by MTDC, but initially appear to be lower than previous years. This is not necessarily due to a slower fire season. There was an increase in training parachute jumps this year due to the Ram Air transition. 🔧

Get Smokejumper One Month Earlier

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): cnkgsheley@earthlink.net. 🔧

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Class of 1947 Graduates With Parachutes – Rugged Commencement

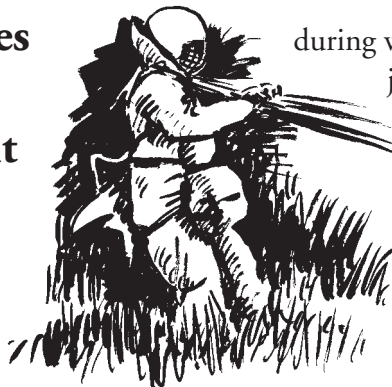
by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)
(From *The Daily Missoulian* June 7, 1947)

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES FOR 33 graduates of the first 1947 Forest Service class in smokejumping consisted of being dumped out of an airplane, smashing down through a growth of pine trees and walking home with heavy equipment, foresters said Friday.

While the next class was getting ready for training at the Nine Mile Parachute School, those who completed the course were being moved to jobs in the woods where they will await calls to fires in Region 12, Victor Carter, parachute project officer reported.

Only one crew of smokejumpers has been called to a fire so far this season. Several weeks ago several experienced men went to fight a fire in the rugged Seven Devils Mountains along the Snake River in Idaho.

The next class will open June 16 when 110 men report to Nine Mile, for a three-week course



during which they will make seven training jumps. Among them will be a number with Army paratrooper experience and 75 University students.

They will make their first three jumps into an open field and will have comments roared at them through a public address system as they float down.

The 5th jump will teach them to collapse the chute canopy to increase their rate of descent. This will enable them to reach their landing spots more accurately in times of heavy winds.

In anticipation of the day when the smokejumper gets caught in a tree, the 6th jump will land the firefighter in the midst of a wooded area. The 7th jump is the graduation jump.

The region will have approximately 150 trained men on call when the school closes for the summer. These will be stationed in the woods and will come in to Missoula as replacements as crews go out.

Carter said this year, for the first time, regions are conducting smokejumper schools of their own, though none of them are as large as the one here. Previously all smokejumpers were trained at the Nine Mile station. 🦋

Revolutionary Parachute Ideas Thought of Many Years Ago

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

At the NSA Board of Directors meeting in Boise 2016, information was given about the development and testing of a system that could guide air cargo to a

specific spot using GPS coordinates. Other projects that would aid and improve smokejumper operations were also presented and discussed.

I mentioned that this idea,

a very good one, was actually invented and put into use over 50 years ago by smokejumpers working at the CIA site in Marana, Arizona.

After a long and expensive

testing program, the Automatic Homing Aerial Delivery System was developed. The advertised goal was to deliver a bundle within 200 yards of the center of the DZ from 30,000 feet and 30 miles out. After several months, the figures were revised to 10,000 feet and 10 miles out from the DZ, still a remarkable figure. The program was canceled in part due to the high expense of the operation. Also, in 1964, the electronics needed were not ready for the physical demands of the guidance system.

On one test run, the parawing system almost took out the Road Runner Lounge, Intermountain's favorite watering hole. With a payload of a 500-pound block of concrete, the parawing took on a mind of its own just missing the roof of the lounge by about five feet

before crashing into a cluster of electric transformers. The lounge went dark and one half-lit customer commented that the lounge would have been safer in the center of the drop zone.

Al Boucher Developed A Radio-Controlled Parachute

Fast forward a few years to 1971. **Al Boucher** (CJ-49), working out of the Redmond Air Center, developed a radio-controlled parachute. The Radio Controlled Parachute Test Dummy (RCPTD) was a device that permitted testing of personnel parachutes without risking a jumper and still allowed control of the parachute.

The device consisted of a box suspended from the parachute and a transmitter that operates equipment in the suspended

box that works the parachute guidelines.

The USFS was updating parachutes and there were a lot of proposed alterations and configurations that needed to be tested and certified as being safe. At the time this was accomplished by dropping a weighted dummy or a live jumper. With the dummy it is not possible to manipulate the parachute. Using a jumper can only be done after the parachute is determined to be safe.

The RCPTD was designed to speed up the process of determining if a parachute is safe to live-jump.

Al tested the system on the FS-5A and determined that all systems functioned properly. The idea and plans were sent to the Missoula Equipment Development Center, where it apparently died. 🔧

2016 Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Awards Announced

by Bill Cramer (NIFC '90)

The selection committee for the Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award is proud to announce selections for the 2016 season.

- **Dan Booth**, McCall Smokejumpers, was selected from the USFS due to the leadership he has exhibited in loft operations. He has consistently demonstrated a commitment to improving the technical skills of the program through the obtainment of outside knowledge and the teaching of technical skills to other jumpers.

Dan made strong contributions to the McCall loft facilities in preparation for the ram-air transition and selflessly assisted other bases in both rigging and manufacturing.

Dan has risen to the top as a leader in the USFS smokejumper loft community, and his placement of the greater good of the smokejumper organization

over his personal needs is duly noted.

- **Porter McQueary**, Alaska Smokejumpers, was selected from the BLM due to leadership attributes displayed on a challenging extended attack fire during the 2016 season. Porter was nominated by a subordinate on the incident who commended his command decisions, his knowledge of the job, and his team-building approach in the leadership role.

His style of leadership valued the input and concerns of all forces on the fire and "... created a team that wanted to work hard for Porter because they felt they were being worked hard for."

Each has gone far beyond the requirements of the job and has demonstrated excellence in leadership for all smokejumpers. Please join me in congratulating them for this well-deserved acknowledgement. 🔧

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• **SMOKEJUMPERS** cap \$20 • **USFS Smokejumpers** cap \$16 • **75th anniversary cap** \$9 •



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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**



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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

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