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Smokejumper biographies for 1941 rookie class

National Smokejumper Association

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1941 Smokejumper Rookies

Roy A. Abbott (Missoula '41)

Roy died of natural causes November 11, 1986, in Clarkston, WA. He was born in Grouse, Washington, about 1908-10. He was orphaned by the age of six and lived with his widowed grandmother. As a young man he worked as a printer according to the 1930 census. He was in the second group of smokejumpers trained, at age 33, and jumped for one season and had a single fire jump. Roy jumped the Dean Creek Fire on August 8th and broke his leg according to Jim "Smokey" Alexander in an interview with *Smokejumper* magazine in 2004.

Roy enlisted in the Army in February 1942 and began training at Ft. Benning, GA with the Parachute Battalion. Roy was discharged in March 1945 and married in Seattle a week later. He settled in the Lewiston/Clarkston area and is buried at the Lewis-Clark Memorial Gardens in Lewiston, ID.

Fred O. Brauer (Missoula '41)

Fred died June 25, 2007. He was born Aug. 23, 1917, in Butte and attended Bonner School and then Missoula County High School, graduating in 1937. Fred then went on to the University of Montana, where he played football from 1937 to 1940. He joined the smokejumpers in 1941 at age 23 and, during a slow season, had a single fire jump. Fred was a squadleader during the 1942 season at Seeley Lake.

Fred then joined the Army Air Corp as a pilot and flew C-46s and C-47s in the European Theater where he was awarded the distinguished flying cross.

When the Smokejumper Center in Missoula was dedicated in 1954, he was selected to welcome President Eisenhower and present him with a painting of a Ford Trimotor, a jump helmet, and T-shirts for his grandchildren. During the day he had the opportunity to talk to the President and mention his role with the 439th Troop Carrier Group in World War II.

Fred returned from the war and entered a career that would make him a smokejumping legend. He was responsible for training the new recruits and often referred to the trainees as "My boys." Many of the recruits referred to Fred jokingly as "Good Deal" Brauer.

By 1950 he had been appointed the Director of Personnel at Missoula, where he remained until 1958 when he became Assistant Air Officer in charge of Retardant and Helicopter projects. He decided in 1960 to learn to pilot helicopters and transferred to Equipment and Development as Air Development Officer at the San Dimas, Calif., Development Center. He returned to Missoula in 1963 and built the Lolo View Manor mobile home park.

Fred was one of the true pioneers of smokejumping and made several appearances on the History Channel and various other documentaries. He was the second member of the National Smokejumper Association.

In 2002, Fred wrote that he still hears from many of his boys as far back as 1941-42. "We had the best firefighting organization that the Forest Service ever had. Many of the boys were recommended to the CIA and did a tremendous service to the country during the Vietnam War. I am sure all of my boys will agree with me. They came into the jumpers as young boys without much experience. They left with great work ethics, wonderful esprit de corps and a new confidence. I don't know of a one of them who was not successful in their choice of vocation. I am extremely proud of the personnel and the organization during my tenure."

Brennan, Robert J. (Missoula '41)

Pioneer smokejumper Robert Brennan passed away on June 9, 2004, at the age of 85. Prior to jumping during the 1941 season, he worked for the Forest Service for three seasons. Bob was one of the 16 rookies in the 1941 class and jumped one fire during the slow season. He and Bill Yaggy, both 22 years old, were the youngest in the 1941 rookie class. Fred Brauer and Wag Dodge were among that group.

Born in Hamilton, Montana, he moved to Priest Lake, Idaho in 1952 and worked for many years in the logging industry as a faller. A serious leg injury in 1975 almost ended his life and career. The doctors told him he probably wouldn't walk again but Bob proved them wrong and ended up walking 10 miles a day.

Howard B. Brist (Missoula '41)

Howard, 64, died January 10, 1980, in Whitefish, Montana. Howard lived in the Whitefish and Kalispell area his entire life. His primary residence was in Olney, Montana, from 1950 until his death. He worked for the American Timber Company from 1950 to 1970, when he retired due to ill health.

Howard, at age 26, was one of the 16 rookies in the 1941 smokejumper crew when smokejumping was in its infancy. In a very slow year, he got three fire jumps.

Louis C. Clark (Missoula '41)

Louis died July 13, 2003, of sudden cardiac arrest at the Montana Veterans Home in Columbia Falls, MT at age of 92. He was born in Chicago on January 1, 1911 and adopted by Fred and Margaret Clark. The family settled in northwest Montana where Louis completed high school and followed his father in working for the USFS. He married in 1941 and, at age 30, began smokejumping that summer and again in 1947 with the years between in the US Navy (1943-45) during World War II. Louis did not have a fire jump during the 1941 season but had five fire jumps during the 1947 season. Following jumping he worked in construction. Louis is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery at Columbia Falls.

R. Wagner "Wag" Dodge (Missoula '41)

Pioneer smokejumper Wag Dodge died January 12, 1955. He was in the second smokejumper crew ever to be trained and jumped in 1941 (age 25), 1943-49. Wag is often remembered as the smokejumper foreman at the Mann Gulch Fire August 5, 1949, when 11 smokejumpers lost their lives. He had been a foreman since 1945.

Spotter Earl Cooley (MSO-40) and assistant Jack Nash (MSO-42) dropped 15 jumpers on the fire. Dodge, 33, and rookies Walt Rumsey (MSO-49) and Bob Sallee (MSO-49) were the only survivors from that crew.

Running up the steep hill trying to escape the fire, Dodge stopped and started what later was known as an escape fire. Dodge laid down in the burned off area and survived. Rumsey and Sallee made it to the top of the hill and escaped through an opening the rocks. There has always been a question as to whether or not Wag "invented" the escape fire at this moment.

In an interview with *Smokejumper magazine* in 2004, Jim "Smokey" Alexander (MSO-40) tells about a conversation he had with Wag on the Dean Creek Fire in 1942.

"After we had the fire knocked in the head, we had time to talk, as guys do. We discussed a number of

times emergency exit procedures on fires.

“We both decided we could escape from a fire. We talked about going into a burn and scraping a spot down to mineral soil, because there’s a lot of oxygen in soil, and you could breathe it, and a fire would burn over you.

“He was a nice, kind person, very unassuming, and he was a good worker, and he was savvy about fire. He knew what he was doing.

“Wag had a soft voice, and even if he was the most knowledgeable guy, he wasn’t the sort who would have an authoritative voice. You’d have to listen, want to listen.”

Earl Schmidt (MSO-43) in an interview with *Smokejumper* magazine in 2001, also indicates that Dodge had considered this method of survival as early as 1943.

“You asked me to write you about what Wagner Dodge had said to us about using a small fire in which to stand in the face of a threatening blaze, and the ability to jump inside it. Inside the burned area a person would put his face to the ground where they would have scraped away the embers or ashes and thereby increased the possibility of survival.

“During that summer (1943) we had many conversations regarding firefighting. Wag discussed facing a threatening crown fire. He talked about carefully choosing the line of lightest fuel, running through it, dropping behind the wall of fire, and clearing embers to bare ground to find a small amount of clear air.

“A second approach he discussed was to choose a place of light fuel, light it and run into it after it had burned an area. This is interesting, six years later he would use this idea at the Mann Gulch Fire. I believe Wag would calmly pick the right time and spot and follow his plan without flinching.”

Wag lived for five more years after Mann Gulch and died of Hodgkin’s disease. He never jumped again after Mann Gulch.

Everett Ambler Flint (Missoula '41)

Everett died of cancer in Hamilton, Montana, on July 27, 1984 at the age of 79. He was born in Berwyn, Nebraska January 28, 1905 and came to Montana as a young man, working for the Forest Service. In 1941, at age 36 and the oldest in the rookie class, he became one of the pioneer smokejumpers when he made 2 fire jumps. In 1943 he married and during World War II he worked in the Seattle shipyards as a foreman. In the mid-'40s he returned to the Bitterroot Valley where he was a rancher and farmer northeast of Corvallis, MT. He is buried at the Corvallis Cemetery.

Karl (Nussbacher) Glades (Missoula '41)

Karl died August 3, 2006, in Louisville, Colorado. He was born January 28, 1914, on a ranch near Sheridan, WY, and graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in forestry in 1941. He was a Missoula smokejumper in 1941 and 1942. In 1941 at age 27, Karl was one of the 12 smokejumpers who participated in jumps for the “Forest Ranger” Paramount Pictures technicolor movie that was released in 1942. Karl had two fire jumps in 1941 and none during the 1942 season.

In 1944, he joined the U.S. Army and was assigned to General Patton’s Third U.S. Army Photo Intelligence Center. Shortly before shipping overseas, he married Vera Carol Cole and after the war, she joined him in Bavaria where he participated in the Marshall Plan as an industrial forester. In 1955, Karl began work as a forest ranger in Idaho and in 1958, he moved to Anchorage where he worked for the BLM, set-

ting aside land for state parks. He transferred to Denver in 1966 and worked at the Denver Federal Center until 1979.

Francis Leonard Link (Missoula '41)

Francis died in the Veterans Hospital in Spokane, Washington, on June 30, 1973. He was born January 10, 1912 in Washington. He received an eighth-grade education and worked in logging and for the USFS. At age 29, he signed on with the smokejumpers in 1941, 1942 but the records are not complete, and he was not named for any fire jumps in 1941. There are several fires in 1942 that lack jumper names. Both years were low-fire years. Francis enlisted in the Army on September 17, 1942 and served in the 280th Ordnance until his release on January 5, 1946 at the TEC3 grade. He married following the war, living in the Colville, Washington area. He is buried at Calvary Cemetery in Colville.

Lundrigan, Merle E. (Missoula '41)

Merle, 84, died February 4, 1992, in Missoula, Montana. He was born in 1907 in Farlington, Kansas, and moved to Puyallup, Washington, at one year of age. After graduating from high school, he went to work with the USFS as a seasonal employee and moved to Missoula in 1927 and received a permanent appointment in 1933.

Merle rookieed in 1941 at age 34 and also was the Smokejumper Project Leader that season and the 1942 season. He was involved in the smokejumper program in 1940 but not as a jumper and was "assigned as a squadleader for the group." Earl Cooley, in his description of the first fire jump on July 12, 1940, said that "Merle Lundrigan asked me to go on a fire at the head of Marten Creek." Rufus Robinson and Cooley spotted themselves and Lundrigan dropped the cargo. It was reported that Merle almost fell out of the aircraft during the cargo drop.

Merle served in the Navy 1942-45 and went to the Siskiyou N.F. in 1946 to head up the smokejumpers at the Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction, Oregon. Cliff Marshall and Bill Green assisted Lundrigan with the 20-man crew made up of all veterans, the majority having been paratroopers. He returned to Missoula in 1947 and retired from the position of general supply officer at the Aerial Fire Depot in May 1962 after more than 30 years of service.

Roy Mart (Missoula '41)

Roy passed away of natural causes on May 23, 2001, in Missoula at the age of 85. He was born in Miles City, MT, at his family homesteaded at Big Dry Smokey Butte near Jordan, MT. He graduated with a degree in range management from the University of Montana Forestry School in 1940 and jumped during the 1941 season before entering the Army Air Corps. He was 26 years old in his rookie season.

During World War II he served as a recruit trainer and navigator. After the war he was employed by the Forest Service for 10 years, then worked for a railroad as a civil engineer.

Robert L. Martin (Missoula '41)

Bob, 98, died October 25, 2015, in Polson, Montana. When in high school in Oregon, he left home and

walked and rode the rails to Montana where he finished high school in Missoula. Bob worked for the Forest Service as a lookout and smoke chaser before joining the smokejumpers in Missoula in the second year of the program. He was 24 years old in his rookie season.

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

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

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

Roy Charles Mattson (Missoula '41)

Roy died September 3, 1974 in San Diego, CA. He was born June 10, 1910 in Missoula, MT. He worked for Lighter Water Co. and Emma Mine ACM Co. in Butte prior to beginning work with the USFS about 1940. He jumped in 1941 with 2 fires and 1942 with no fire jumps listed but several fires were jumped with no names recorded. Roy was 31 years old during his rookie year. He was one of the jumpers that had a role in the filming of "The Forest Ranger." He was married for two years before entering military service. His service in the US Navy took him to San Diego, CA where he served as a parachute rigger. Following his service, he remained in the San Diego area and married again.

William F. Musgrove (Missoula '41)

Bill was born in Hecla, South Dakota, on May 27, 1917. In 1919 he moved with his parents to White Sulphur Springs, Montana. Following high school graduation in White Sulfur Springs, he worked as a Forest Guard on the Lewis & Clark NF and began attending the University of Idaho. In 1941, at age 24, he was as a smokejumper in Missoula, Montana, making three fire jumps. In September of that year, Bill and three other smokejumpers and a doctor, after weather prohibited them from jumping, hiked 20 miles from the Big Prairie Airstrip into a wilderness area to successfully rescue a young woman who had been shot in both knees in a hunting accident.

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

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

After smokejumping and military service, Bill returned to the University of Idaho, teaching science at

Arco, Idaho, and earning a MS degree in science in 1953. In 1954 he relocated to Kingman, Arizona, and continued his career as a science teacher. While in Arizona, Bill was a Major in the Arizona National Guard.

Bill lived for a while in Farmington, New Mexico, but died in Kingman, Arizona on December 25, 2006. He is buried at Mountain View Cemetery in Kingman.

William “Bill” Bramwell Yaggy (Missoula '41)

Bill died February 21, 1946, at the age of 26 near Dixie, Idaho, when his plane crashed. He was born in Hutchinson, Kansas, on June 18, 1919, and came to Missoula in 1939 to attend Montana State University in Missoula. During his time at MSU he earned his private pilot license through the CAA Student Flying Course in the spring of 1940. As one of the pioneer jumpers he recorded three fire jumps in 1941. Bill, along with Bob Brennan at age 22, were the youngest in the 1941 rookie class.

Following his rookie year, he was employed by Johnson Flying Service as a pilot. He married in 1944. The fatal plane crash occurred while he was sowing grass seed over a burned area in the Nez Perce NF and he was caught in a storm. His death left his widow and an infant son. He is buried at the Missoula Cemetery.

F. Ward Zehner (Missoula '41)

Ward, 65, died September 1, 1982, and is buried in the Mount Idaho Cemetery near Grangeville. He was born November 1, 1917, in Grangeville, Idaho, attended two years of high school participating in athletic sports instructing and officiating.

Ward, at age 23, was a member of the second smokejumper class in history that trained in 1941 with a fire jump on the Knoll Fire, Bitterroot NF. Ward enlisted in the Army in 1942 in Tacoma, Washington, and served with the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion until January 1945. The 551st was disbanded and he was transferred to the 82nd Airborne Division. He was discharged as a sergeant.

Ward was a career farmer in the Grangeville, ID area.