2011

Book of Gobi, Book 3: Mountains and Desert

Stan Collins

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumping_pubs
Book of Gobi

Siskiyou SmokeJumper Base

1943 - 1981

Book 3
Mountains and Desert
To the Reader,

_The Book of Gobi, Book 3: Mountains and Desert_ is likely the last in this series. As the two previous books, this one continues to answer the _what_ and the _why_ of the Gobi. In so many of the stories throughout the three volumes, a young person arrives at the Gobi and undergoes a transformation, and in later years tries to explain what happened in those mountains and on that desert.

Interspersed in this volume with the stories are several newspaper articles reporting on the Base, its individuals, and its characters.

As in the other books, presentations are in rough chronology. In addition to the stories, a Glossary, an Appendix, and an Index are provided. And as a highlight, inclusion of a photos section centers the stories.

All submissions, as before, have been reviewed and, when needed, edited for suitability or length.

DO
JR
JK
CC

Copyright © 2011
All right reserved.
CONTENTS

To the Reader

Al Boucher (1949)
  Random Remembrances 7

Mike Cramer (1959)
  Paid Vacation 10

Gardner Smith (1959)
  *The Register-Guard*: Hustling Smokejumpers 12

Jerry Schmidt (1962)
  Little Granite Fire 15
  Meeting the Cackleberrys 18
  Installing the New Line 19

Steve Johnson (1962)
  The Gobi 20

Charley Moseley (1962)
  Meeting My First Jumper 21
  Four Fools on the Rogue 25

John Manley (1962)
  My Gobi Days 29

Tommy “Gravity” Albert (1964)
  Rookie Year Memories 33

Johnny Kirkley (1964)
  Gobi Blessing 36

*Grants Pass Daily Courier*
  Parachute Master Rigger: She is One of a Kind (1965) 41
Terry Egan (1965)
Eats
Parasailing
Dee

Lonny Oswalt (1965)
Pranks

John Robison (AKA Juan Rubisow) (1965)
The Gygose Modicker
Cheatin’ Death

IV News: Cabbages and Kings (Summers 1965 & 1966)
Photographs

Trooper Tom Emonds (1966)
How I got to the Gobi
The Wager
Twilight Zone Pack Out
World’s Tallest Pine Tree
Hypothermia in Northern California

Gary Thornhill (1968)
Buck Salmon
Can I See Your Green Card?

David Oswalt (1968)
The Great Turkey Caper
Why I Loved the Gobi: Things I Will Never Forget

Roddy Baumann (1970)
Why I Became a Smokejumper

Clancy Collins (1970)
Father Farinetti

Steve Baumann (1973)
A Few Short Memories

Bill Floch (1973)
Gobi

Ray Osipovich (1973)
Making an Exit
Contents

Ed Floate (1975)  
Chainsaws on a 2-Man Wilderness Fire 113

Anon Wag (1975)  
A Sense of Humor is Common Sense Dancing 116

Greg “Gonzo” Gonzales (1976)  
As the Story Goes... 118

Allen Owen (1970)  
IV News: Report from the Gobi (1977) 120

Mike Apicello (1979)  
Flipping the Gobi 122

Paul Williams (1979)  
SJ Base Ahead of Its Time 128

Smokejumper Base Closed Out 129

Chuck Sheley (1959)  
Smokejumper Quarterly: ...from the Editor (2003) 131

Glossary 133

Appendix 143

Index 149
IN 1948 I WAS HIRED as a “cookie’s flunky” and worked at the smokejumper base mess hall behind the Redwood Ranger Station in Cave Junction. I talked Cliff Marshall into hiring me as a smokejumper in 1949. Through the years, a lot of things come to mind. Long, tall stories could be written about some of these events, and some of it would be true, but you have to remember the rules. If you jumped in the 40’s, 40% of your stories have to be true, 50% for the 50’s, 60% in the 60’s, and so on.

Hearing about the tough pack-outs, I wasn’t looking forward to that part of the job. First fire jump in 1949, a helicopter ride out.

Flying to the Sequoia N.F. in a Tri-Motor Ford and jumping on a back country fire. It was the first time jumpers were used that far south. We were treated like kings including a nice ride out on horseback.

Cliff Marshall telling us that there was a bus going south and bus going north every day, take your pick or shape up (although not in those exact words).

Walking home from Cave Junction late at night or morning, because the jumper who said he would give you a ride home thought it was more fun not to show.

Going to Patricks Creek Lodge for a few drinks and wondering who was going to drive the car home at 2:00 AM.

Jumping on a fire on the Siskiyou N.F. with Cliff Marshall and others and you could see the Pacific Ocean surf from the door.
Jumping on several two man fires with Orville Looper. Never a dull moment.

The summer the jumpers wrote a congressman about late paychecks and how the s*#& hit the fan.

Living in the old parachute loft in Cave Junction for a while, in the winter, as the “caretaker.”

Getting to build cargo parachutes for Region 5 in the winter instead of planting trees in the cold rain.

Cliff Marshall telling me he wasn’t going to harm me or fire me. He was going to make me quit. He had told all of us not to yell as we exited the jump plane. I did while he was spotting.

Trying to help others throw Bob Nolan into the ditch and becoming the “walking wounded.”

The satisfaction of hitting the jump spot on a practice jump and not paying any fine.

The satisfaction of a fat paycheck.

The satisfaction a spotter gets when the jumpers are safely down and the cargo lands on the ground near the fire.

The year the Forest Service wouldn’t pay time and a half for overtime.

The great food. Remember steak night?

The evening runs to the Oregon Caves for some jumpers and the complaints the next day from the Ranger at the Caves.

Pilot Red Myler’s landings in the Twin Beech. We told him his landing times were, like 9:38, 9:39, and 9:40.

Watching the base softball team playing the local teams. Can you pitch? You’re hired!

Living with my family on the base for 7 years. Which jumper told our 2 sons to wash beer bottles in our washing machine?

The gear collapsing on the Twin Beech on landing and skidding off the runway and Ralph Williams and Larry Wright getting out with Larry running the fastest 100 yards in history.
Random Remembrances

Taking loads of jumpers to Redmond for several years before Redmond Air Center was built.

Walking from Bear Camp to Fishhook Peak with a crew to clear an airstrip. Supplies were dropped. Had 4 days to clear it and get flown out or pack our gear out. We made it.

Going to Southern California in the fall to be a hopper tender on an aerial seeding of burned areas. Brought seed back and seeded Fishhook airstrip.

Riding in a contract Twin Beech north of Redmond and the right engine started coming apart. Safe landing in Madras and the pilot telling us: “That was my good engine!”

Flying to the other bases during fire busts and comparing their operations with ours at Siskiyou. No question, our base was the best!
ON MAY 27TH, 1959, I made my last dive on a submarine before being discharged on May 30th, 1959, at 10:00 AM. I then drove 16 hours to my parent’s home in Cave Junction, Oregon, and went to sleep for much needed rest.

My Mother woke me at 7:30 to say that if I wanted to watch my brother, Jim Cramer (CJ ’58), make his qualifying jumps, I’d best get up and go with my sister, Sandi Cramer, to Seats Field in CJ to see Jim do his requalifying jumps. My brother was in the second load with Mike Leamon, Larry Wright, and Ron Price. Jim and Mike Leamon were in the first stick and both landed close to the target in the field.

My brother Jim introduced me to Jim Allen the Project Air Officer and also to Al Boucher, his assistant. While watching the other jumpers make their requalifying jumps, Sandy (later Wessel) the office secretary drove up with a telegram for Jim Allen. It said that two people who were to report in as trainees on Monday following had been in an auto accident and would not be able to jump that year due to broken bones.

Jim Allen then asked Al Boucher, “What do we do now?” My brother said, “Well you’ve hired my brother Fred to start training, why not hire Mike, too, as he just got out of the Navy.” Jim Allen then asked me, “Are you interested?” Foolish me, I said, “Yes.” He said, “This is Friday, check in Sunday, then training starts Monday.”

On Monday morning, I began training with 20 others at the Gobi. I believe that only 3 people did not complete the training and practice jumps. My first practice
jump was on June 27th, exactly 1 month after my last dive on a submarine. I had
gone from one element to another.

At the end of June, everyone got a paycheck except me. I got a note to see Jim
Allen. Jim was all sympathy when he said, “When you got out of the Navy, they
paid you for 32 days of leave that you had coming. The government can’t pay
you twice for the same time period. So, your Smokejumper training was paid for
by the US Navy Submarine Service.”

I thought this had been one of the toughest months of my life, in one of the
hottest and driest places in Oregon, and Jim Allen told me I had just had a paid
vacation at a summer resort.

How many jumpers have had their training paid for by the US Navy Submarine
Service?
EDITOR’S NOTE—
Smokejumpers on call throughout the summer are ready to pounce on fires that break out in isolated parts of the Emerald Empire’s forestland. Gardner Smith, one of the crew at Cave Junction, has written this account of what the job is like for Register-Guard readers.

By GARDNER SMITH

CAVE JUNCTION—
Dry, windless heat presses in around this southern Oregon community from early June to late September, making it an appropriate spot for our summer’s trade.

Some of the men call it the “Gobi Desert.” Here is where the U.S. Forest Service Siskiyou Aerial Smokejumpers, headed by Jim C. Allen, hang their harness. From here, calls take us deep into the lightning-struck back country of Oregon.

Thirty men from as far away as Waterloo, Iowa, and near as the local city of Cave Junction, assemble here each June 15 for a month’s training before the regional fire season begins sometime in July.

The 30 days of training cover intensified physical preparation to weed out idler-drones, simulated jumps practice to fit jumpers’ minds with automatic split second timing, map and compass reading, and review of fire suppression technique.

KEEP BUSY
Once the training is over, the new men are put on a rotating jump list and wait for a fire call. Wait? I mean prepare. Thirty minutes of strenuous calisthenics each morning after breakfast, then to work on the various 99 odd tasks that face a run-and-ready unit like this.

Sew, shape and pack some 50 fire kits, cargo and personnel parachutes; sharpen, mix and fix...tools, rations and crew-type living quarters. Some of the personnel have dubbed their stand-by duties as ‘busy work.’ You remember, like writing your name on the school blackboard 100 times to keep your hands busier than the horseplay.

They drink twenty gallons of Cool-Aide and 30 gallons of milk each day. They are close to work and that Gobi heat.

...Just a moment! A four man fire request for the high Cascades has been received over the two-way radio. A sneak summer storm has struck in Oregon’s Willamette National Forest east of Eugene.

FIRST FIRE DROP
“Yahoo!” yells a new man as he runs for his equipment. He’s yahoohing because he is one of the four men on top of the jump list and this is his first
You better hustle. Smokey. You have the usual five or ten minutes before take-off. You get your gear from the loft cache and start suiting up, half trotting toward the twin-engine Beechcraft. Padded canvas pants and high-collared jackets, helmet with wire face guard, one hundred feet of let-down rope, two signal streamers, cargo sack and work gloves in your right handy-leg pocket, a twenty-eight foot main chute and a twenty-four foot reserve chute, plus harness.

Your arrival at the door of the warming up airplane warrants a quick, but thorough, equipment check by the spotter, Al Boucher. All clip-hooks, buckles and bulges are in order and the spotter asks if your head is screwed on straight. You crawl aboard the waiting aircraft.

It has been eight minutes between request and get-away. It’s not a record, but 900 bawling horses pulling you down the asphalt apron into the air assure you that you are not going to be late.

THE REAL THING

You can tell by your extra dry mouth and that jeering tug in your stomach that his is the real thing. Remember you must have a good plane exit and body position, so as not to foul the lines; check the canopy, then start steering the chute for a hole in the timber...boy, if you hang up in a 200-foot snag tree with only 100 feet of let-down rope—

Your thoughts are broken off by the spotter’s shout, “First man in the door.”

You drag yourself and the sixty pounds of jumping gear over to the opening. The spotter hooks your static parachute line to a fixed cable and points out the door indicating where the fire is and where he plans to leave you in the sky. The plane banks and straightens for the jump pass. You ease your feet through the opening onto the step outside and sit hunched over the edge of that hole in the side of the airplane.

The pilot, Dick Foy, slows the craft down to a respectable 90 miles an hour jump speed and even so, the air blast produced by the engines make you breathe in gulps...but who is breathing?

SLAP ON THE SHOULDER

“Find a hole in those trees down there. Good hunting and GET READY!” the spotter announces to you through cupped hands, then turns to look through his glass window in the floor of the plane for your pinpoint departure. Just about the time you start wondering, the spotter slaps you hard and yells, “Go, Smokey!” And you leap.

You can feel the lines tearing from their rubber keepers on your backboard. One, two, three seconds snap by. Suddenly, your freedom fall is arrested by a brutal neck-slamming jerk. You can almost taste that opening shock. It reminds you of this morning at breakfast, when you bite your tongue over a burnt piece of toast. You check your canopy overhead for any malfunction...
and start steering downward for a hole in what looks more like a dumpy carpet of weeds from up here, except for that irregular coil of boiling smoke over to your left.

**HIT THE TREES**

Within 60 seconds you are crashing through the trees. You are just lucky enough to graze by that 200-foot fir giant and hang up in a cedar some 40 feet off of the forest floor. Letting down and recovering your chute will be hard work. But, at least you are saved from that uncertain air-to-ground collision.

You snap out of the harness, rope down and take off your jump suit to stand by for the low flight fire equipment drop. One at a time the spotter zeros them in through the trees. You leave the jump gear to rally with fire packs and crew. Then to head for the smoke.

The fire is not too bad. About 60 square feet of duff (ground moss) is burning under a lone, smoldering fir tree. You begin suppressing the open flames first. Good mineral soil thrown vigorously on the flames will cool down the hot spots. Then a twelve-inch soil path is dug around the perimeter of the burnt area.

Some three or four hours later, the fire is under control and cooling. The ground crew has just arrived to relieve you. The outbreak is in sufficient hands, so the crew boss releases you jumpers to pack up and return to the stand-by base in Cave Junction for some more of the same.

**READY TO GO**

You retrieve your chutes and snug-up some 90 to 100 pounds of paraphernalia for the journey out. You take a directional map, check and urge yourself into the packstraps. Your obstacle is one-half mile of wind fallen trees and wilderness, plus five miles of overgrown foot trail.

The ground crew boss has arranged for someone from the local ranger station to pick you up where trail meets road. If your compass is load-ready, you end your hike six or eight miles later.

You are met and driven ten miles to the local station, where the ranger has provided for a carry-all to trip you back to the aerial base. As you leave the station, the ranger waves you off with a, “Drop in and see us anytime…and thanks for the help.”

Sure, we'll be back. We will help save some $100,000 worth of natural forest this season in the Oregon reserve alone.
S EVEN DEVILS AREA OF THE SNAKE RIVER CANYON, Idaho, August 1963—
Lightning, on August 4, in an area that is very inaccessible and with very
steep terrain, started the fire. The fire was a few hundred acres in size and
in Little Granite Creek, a tributary within the Snake River Canyon. The canyon
ranges 3000 to 5000 feet in depth and has the fuel continuity and the vastness to
keep one or more fires going all summer. Apparently, somewhere between 80 and
100 smokejumpers were dispatched to this fire. We, from Cave Junction, Oregon,
traveled to McCall, Idaho, on August 5 in a DC 3, arriving there shortly before
bedtime. Early the next morning, August 6, we arrived in the DC 3 over the fire.
We jumped two man sticks when the temperature inversion was still set in and
the smoke was hanging in the canyon. Our jump spot was an open timber ridge
above the fire and the air was very hazy with smoke. There was no wind. There
were other crews ferried in by small helicopter and at least one 25-man BRC crew
(Blister Rust Control) walked over 25 miles to the fire. (Blister Rust Control crews
chopped and pulled the Ribies shrub, also called Squaw Current, out of the ground
all summer to help stop the spread of White Pine Blister Rust which was wiping
out the stands of White Pine. White Pine Blister Rust needed the Ribies shrub for
an alternate host during its life cycle and eliminating Ribies was a way to stop it.
After a couple of decades trying to control the blister rust with this method it was
determined to be somewhat ineffective and was discontinued. The old white pine
stands that once existed in the Northern Rockies are greatly diminished, but the
species is still around and probably will recover in some future century.)

Because of the narrow, steep canyon and the need for safe pin-point targeting
of hot spots, small aircraft were used for dropping retardant. There were TBMs,
F7Fs, and Stearman bi-wings used for dropping retardant. I do not know how
may aircraft there were but between the sound of the aircraft bringing in retar-
dant there was the whirl of the one or two small bell helicopters from Riggins,
Idaho, and occasionally the sound of larger planes bringing in more smokejumpers or parachuting supplies for our fire camp. The aircraft noise was constant and lasted all day, every day.

Our fire lines were built on very rocky, very steep (over 60%) slopes. We often felt like we were almost moving on all fours because it seemed like our knees were about to touch the slope as we moved uphill and while moving downhill our butts were almost touching or often touching (or is it crunching against) the hillside. Initially we constructed our bottom fire line along the mid-slope directly beneath the fire. This fire line segment needed to be cupped to catch rolling debris, such as burning pinecones and loose chunks of logs from above. The cupping was not adequately done in all places and the rolling debris tended to bounce as it built momentum down the hill, consequently the fire spread below our original lines causing dangerous slop-overs. To insure the fire did not cross over to the other side of the drainage, we had to go to the creek bottom and build new lines and “burn out” to stop the fire’s progress. We may have created as much or more burned acreage from our burning out activities as was originally being burned from the lightning strike. However, if we had not employed this indirect tactic we would have been in Little Granite Creek all summer.

When this fire occurred the humidity was low and probably reached levels of 10% or less. The temperatures probably reached into the high 90s by mid-afternoon. The fuel on this fire was primarily open stands of Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir interspersed with grassland and stringers of small-sized but dense timber cover. There were pockets of dead and down woody debris scattered underneath the green canopy, probably from insect activity, that created a ladder for the fire to move up into the crowns and make fierce but short runs up the slopes until the canopy continuity of the stringer dissipated.

Because the fire was manned by jumpers from at least six different bases, there was a lot of inter-rivalry between base crews with uncomplimentary and as well as complementary stories being passed around about some of the base crew characters and base crew heroes respectively. I heard things about “Paperlegs Peterson,” they heard things about Mick Swift. Base policies and equipment differences were also compared, like the length of let down ropes and like the type of aircraft normally used and what it was like to jump from them.

The fire camp operation was set up southeast of the fire on an open bench about half way between the elevation ranges in the canyon. I remember that finding a tree to sleep against was easier than finding a flat spot. No matter where one slept rocks had to be cleared.
The camp was set up to prepare meals from groceries, including fresh produce, dropped by parachute. However, because of the canyon terrain with churning air flows and the high vertical distance of the drop, the parachuted supplies drifted all over on both sides of the Little Granite Creek canyon with some parcels out of range of the camp crew and everyone else. Some of the fresh meat landed in trees and was not retrieved until the next day. Some of it was never retrieved and is probably still there. I remember seeing a few parachutes with large parcels, like a quarter of beef, still hanging from trees when I flew out the last day. The camp was run fairly well but some of the food spoiled and should not have been prepared or served. Consequently, several jumpers, including me, suffered from food poisoning after 2-3 days on the fire. I spent 1-2 days, seemed longer, at the McCall jump base barracks with severe diarrhea missing another fire. This fire was on August 8 and I think my replacement was Jerry John. Jerry ate the same food I did but I figured he must have a very primitive gene for digesting bad food that I didn’t have.

After the fire was controlled all jumpers were ferried out one or two at a time via small Bell helicopters to Riggins, Idaho. We were then shuttled by vehicle up to the McCall jump base for air transportation home. However, we did not go home immediately, because there were new fires to man and some of us were beginning to feel sick, like me. Therefore, the contingent from Cave Junction stayed in McCall for two or three days, sitting by the can or going to new fires, depending on the kind of genes each had. After 2-3 days we returned to Cave Junction and to our normal routine. I don’t believe any of us felt that we left anything in the Snake River area that would warrant our return.
IN 1963, ONE OF THE WOMEN WHO WORKED IN THE OFFICE at the Siskiyou Aerial Project was named Joetta, a local gal and a very attractive and pleasant young lady. My friend Jerry John, from Oklahoma, had been on a few dates with Joetta and, for all of us young bachelors, he was envied. One day Jerry offered me the chance of a lifetime. Joetta had offered to line me up with an attractive local girl named Pam Holzhauser, who worked in a doctor’s office, and we could go on a double date. The plan was that I accompany Jerry to Joetta’s house to pick her up and then we would go to my date’s house where Joetta would introduce us. Then off we would go.

At CJ, the jumpers couldn’t let an opportunity go by to mess with someone’s name or to give them a new name. We had Turkey, Pig Pen, Bear, Tex, Okie, How, Colonel, Laughing Landis alias Boil Butt Landis, “Chicken” Schmidt (me), “Horse” Schmidt (Jim), Mose, Chawabee, and many others. Granted, in this environment I was sometimes “slow.” I thought, because it was all I heard, that Joetta’s last name was “Cackleberry.” It sounded different but not that bad. I had heard weirder names. Anyway, when Jerry and I arrived at Joetta’s house her father let us in. As we entered the living room Jerry introduced me to Joetta’s father and mother. I stepped forward with my hand out and my best gentlemanly manner and greeted these two fine dignified people, “I am pleased to meet you Mr. and Mrs. Cackleberry.” Jerry died or at least his skin turned, but he did not say much. Mr. and Mrs. Castelberry were very hospitable and gracious and gave no hint to my screw up. After we got back out into the car Jerry explained my error. I died and my skin turned for sure, then all three of us had a good laugh. It took the edge off of my anxiety for meeting my date. In fact it may have done more than that because she would never go on a date with me again.

Jerry and Joetta and (me) Jerry and (my wife) Jeanetta have since been life-long best friends who keep in regular contact and have enjoyed several excursions together. I will never live down the Cackleberry incident, and I shouldn’t.
ONE TIME IN 1963, while on a project to replace the aging telephone line that passed through the Siskiyou Aerial Project base, I had an ugly experience, which I still regret. Three or four of us were to transfer the phone line from the old poles to the insulators on the new poles. The poles for both the old line and new line were about 8 to 10 inches in diameter and about 12 to 15 feet tall. The new line was parallel to the old line and the poles (old poles and new poles) were in pairs. Tommy Smith, a fun guy to work with and a hard worker, and I were the pole climbers transferring the line. Chuck Mosely and someone else were helping with the tools and equipment on the ground. We had transferred the lines on about 2 or 3 sets of poles when we arrived at the pole nearest to the northeast corner of the east bunkhouse. I climbed the new pole and Tommy climbed the old pole despite cautions and protests. Tommy disconnected the line at the top and when he handed it to me his pole began to fall with him on the top part of it. Tommy road the pole falling backwards toward the rock covered ground that the entire Gobi base is known for. I was horrified as was Chuck Mosley and others. Tommy hit the ground on the only spot within a mile where there was not a head-sized cobblestone surface. He lay there, with a shocked white complexion, the pole on top of him and his climbing rope still secured while the rest of us ran around in a panic summoning medical help and transportation to the hospital. I thought he was going to die for sure. Tommy was rushed to the nearest hospital, and we were relieved to know that his injury was limited to a broken pelvis, no fractured vertebra, no internal injuries, and no fractured skull. I never worked with Tommy again and a couple years later I heard he drowned while trying to cross the Illinois River during a pack out from a fire.
In 1962, Jim Allen and Eldo Swift made the Gobi go. It was those two great guys that gave it its soul. (That dumb shit Mick, I wish he was still here, I miss him.) Life on the Gobi at times could be a bitch. I remember doing push-ups in an irrigation ditch. With the jump tower, the torture racks, the rope climbs and the heavy packs, it is no wonder we all have bad backs. Good times were also had by all! Playing the townies in a game of softball. Eating great chow at the mess hall. Playing morning jungle rules volley ball. Fun to visit the neighbor’s snake farm, or try for a little of the cave girls’ charm. Lots of busy work on the Gobi. Mowing lawns short, painting logs white. Chutes to pack, they had to be tight and right. Deep holes to dig, move rocks, the little and big. The bosses could be tuff and hard to please. The best job of all was carrying all those keys. Flying in a plane without a door, no seats, just sit on the floor. We jumped a Twin Beech and DC3s. Not very high, just above the tallest trees. The Gobi was our youth and summers of fun! We miss our flat tummies, thick hair, old friends. We miss the purpose, excitement, a job well done. But mostly we miss the part about being young. For most of us our first summer on the Gobi, was where we grew into who we would be.
Meeting My First Jumpers
CHARLEY MOSELEY
‘62

IT WAS A SLOW 1961 JULY MORNING IN THE GOLD BEACH, OREGON, Forest Service bunkhouse when one of our Foresters rushed in and said, “I need three guys to go on a fire with me, and there is going to be a lot of walking.” He was sure right there, but walking was what we all did who worked in the Siskiyou, and very little of that on level ground. Everything was steep to STEEPER.

Three of us quickly volunteered and within a few minutes we were on a Jet Boat headed up the Rogue River to the isolated lil’ town of Agness. The Jet Boat trip up thru the many whitewater rapids was always a thing of beauty and joy for this Pineywoods Boy from the slack water of Southwest Alabama, also known as LA, as in “Lower Alabama.”

At Agness somebody gave us a quick ride up a gravel road along the Illinois River to a trail head just past the mouth of Indigo Creek. It was all uphill and tough from there. All afternoon and throughout the night, we had only one brief water stop at a too warm spring which smelled like rotten eggs, tasted worse, but was at least wet. We had springs like that back in my home county, usually associated with nearby petroleum deposits.

Soon after daylight we started hollering for the supposed Smokejumpers we were going to relieve. Finally they answered up above us about a half-mile, but that was a true hellish half-mile of Tan Oak and Manzanita. The Tan Oak was in full bloom and would coat you with yellow pollen if you even looked at it a little crooked. We had to go up thru that maze, and we did, with more than a little cussing. Most of our traveling was up off the ground maneuvering thru the stiff limbs that seemed to always be trying to push us back downhill. The south side of Siskiyou ridges sure could be a taste of hell.
Finally we part the bushes at the very top of the razorback ridge, and there are
two really tough looking young men in typical work clothes and hard hats. They
were dark and lean and well over 6’ tall, and seemed to be all about the business
of putting out the three smoldering snags behind them. The fellow with a gold
tooth, Tony Percival (NCSB-54), did all the talking. He quickly briefed us on the
situation and that they were expecting an air drop with a misery whip (Crosscut
Saw) real soon.

Little did I know what an important part of my life Tony and one of his brothers,
Roy (CJ-57), would play in my later years at NCSB and Alaska. They are both re-
ally something. Over the years I came to the conclusion that Tony was the best
Spotter I ever worked with. He had an incredible feel for the job.

The other Jumper was a Mexican named Ray Rivera (NCSB-61) from Silver City.
He would also play an important role in my life as we jumped several fires together
and went bar hopping one time—only one time, because he proved to have a dif-
ferent personality after a few drinks, and always carried a big Jim Bowie type knife
with which he was quite adept.

Anybody who has traveled with Cliff Hamilton (CJ-62) very much knows quite well
of what I mean. The Jeckyl and Hyde personality of sometimes wanting to fight
with somebody—anybody—and he takes some pleasure in recounting that it took
six coppers with billy sticks to finally take him down one night in South Mobile,
and that a whole passel of Taxi Drivers could not do it in Udorn, Thailand, one
late night. Their knives did some handy work though. Rivera finally did a similar
trick by deliberately getting into a shoot-out with the Silver City Police. Guess
who won? Moving right along.

Soon after we arrived a beautiful, and loud Twin Beech aircraft suddenly roared
right by us and dropped our saw plus some good hot food, sleeping bags, and big
water containers. We really needed that water to put out the snags after we felled
them. The fellows in the plane door made a big scene of giving us ‘The Bird’ with
both hands. I thought to myself, “That must have meaning to somebody.”

Not very long after that Tony announced that he and Ray needed to hurry back
to the Jump Base at CJ, so we helped them gather up and pack all their ton of gear
into those ‘Elephant Bags.’ They sure had a method to their madness and after a
while everything miraculously fit into those things. I picked one up to check out
the weight. I just could not believe that anyone was going to carry that bastard load
anywhere, much less down thru that awful maze between them and the trail—and
then out the several miles to the trail head. They had other “Hard Headed Jumper
Ideas” about the route to take out, to avoid that thicket of Tan Oak.

Somewhat like that famous Cajun Comedian, Justin Wilson, telling about catch-
ing a plane from Atlanta to New Orleans and across the time line from Eastern
to Central time. The plane was scheduled to land in New Orleans a few minutes
before taking off from Hotlanta. “Hell no Lady, I don’t want a ticket. I just want to watch that SOB takeoff.” I too wanted to see these tough looking Smokejumper Dudes ‘take off’ with those loads.

Now this was the final selling job from Tony and Ray for me. I actually helped one of them struggle up off the ground, but then they left us whistling, as if they did not have a care in the world. Pure bravado as I later learned, but it was impressive to someone who had never seen that act and effort before.

But, that bravado was soon to reach a bad end, because those typical independent hard headed Smokejumpers ignored our map and route instructions. They took off down the ridge top which was like a fine Park right there, but the map showed it was soon going to turn into almost vertical rock walls, where they had to turn either left into the Tan Oak or right down into the Indigo Creek Gorge. Unfortunately for them, they turned right and an awful saga ensued which Tony still recalls as his worst nightmare ever.

The Gorge got steeper and darker as the almost vertical ridges blocked out the sunlight. They eventually had to go into the clear, but ice cold water—sometimes wading, sometimes floating, sometimes swimming—with those expensive White Boots on. Not easy. Not easy at all with their teeth chattering continuously, and their privates shrinking up to their belly buttons. They began to shed stuff from their packs—and also began to develop new cuss words for CJ and the Siskiyou and the bona fide crazy folks who claimed they loved to work there.

I don’t think either one of them ever came back to ‘The Gobi’. Tony told me it was off limits to him. Very typical for out of town Jumpers, especially those candies from Missoula. Mick just loved to issue them 200’ let down ropes as soon as they stepped off their planes—and watch the faces lose color. He definitely had a hidden mean streak.

Two days later we called our snag fires out and hiked out to the road and on down to Agness, arriving after dark. Everybody got upset when they learned that the Jumpers had left the fire two days ago and were still not out to civilization. Something had to have gone wrong.

Early the next morning we trucked again up to the trail head and for the first time of many times in my career, I managed to put myself into the mindset of the lost Jumpers and to figure out what had happened to get them lost—and, most importantly, how to put my hands on them. I convinced our Rescue Party Leader to let me go right up the stream bed of Indigo Creek with my pack of food, water and hot coffee in a thermos bottle. My mind said:, “Those hard heads hated that Tan Oak.” Sure enough, I soon came upon an old abandoned miner’s shack. In checking it out, I found Tony and Ray wrapped up in all their clothes, and chutes (even the reserves)(no sleeping bags), shaking like Red Bone Hounds trying to pass peach seeds, and trying vainly to stay a lil’ warm. It was a losing effort, because
everything was wet and they had had no food for two days—and the struggle through that cold water had just about totally sucked out all their strength and bravado. They went after my food and coffee like two starving wolves, no chewing, and never bothered to talk with me at all. Probably embarrassed. I would have been. Wouldn’t you?

I would later learn that far too many Jumpers had too much contempt for “Ground Pounders,” and any advice at all. I never did that bit. Everybody has a place, and many other folks have good brains and experience.

Even with the tough end to the fire, I was still very impressed with my first Jumpers, and immediately came to the conclusion that I wanted to be one. Luckily I did and it was an extreme honor and pleasure.
Four Fools on the Rogue
CHARLEY MOSELEY
‘62

IT WAS A TOO DULL FRIDAY EVENING with many of us Jumpers out on the well manicured Gobi lawn when somebody announced some real future trouble. “Hey, why don’t we go over and shoot some whitewater rapids on the Rogue River tomorrow?”

That was enough said to get three of us 1962 rookies and ol’ Firedog, Dave Towers, to quickly acquiesce and go into action. There was Jim Roberts and Doug (Hoppy) Hopkins to furnish some muscle for the paddling and me to furnish some stimulating conversation and stories from back deep in the Pineywoods of Alabama, where I was from. Towers had married the ‘then’ prettiest girl in the Illinois Valley and that gave him some good insight into and clout with the local folks so that he could con somebody out of a rubber raft, plus some paddles and life jackets.

We real to life Smokejumpers would furnish the beer and sleeping bags, the beer and food, the beer and matches, and the beer. All set, except for the ride over there, which had to be real early, because somebody said you were not supposed to run the Rogue without a Registered Guide. A guide? For us, bona fide elite Smokejumpers? Somebody’s got to be kidding. A quick look at a map and we were prepared for whatever—and, whatever came with the Rogue—and lots of it!

Gary “Tex” Welch drove us over in a big Station Wagon well before daylight so that when we arrived at the eastern entrance to something called ‘Hell Gate Canyon,’ it was just turning a little light. Certainly too early for normal River Rats. As we got ready to push off, somebody said, “You know, we need a name for this boat.” Tex quickly answered with a “Hell Yes” (Nice Version), and looked around for a can of spray paint. Thereby christened our worthy craft the USS Hell Yes. We were quickly off and almost immediately into tough whitewater which was a mite scary and a mite exhilarating.
As the scenery rushed past us I could look up at the high rock walls and see scenes which I had seen in several movies. Many other people before us had seen and liked this canyon and river.

After Hell Gate Canyon the river was relatively quite for a long ways on down past Galice and the last bridge we were to see on this trip. We were all in agreement that the most dangerous spot on the river would be the famous Rainey Falls, which all sane people like us would portage around. But, just where were they located? The beer was beginning to kick in and we got more and more relaxed. It was kinda becoming boring until somebody said, “Hey, I think I can hear the falls.” And he could! A very faint roar, but most definitely a roar! We tightened up and paid a little more attention. But not worried. Yet!

But, the roar seemed to never get any louder, and our efforts to stand up and look on down the river did not yield any evidence of danger. We even pulled into the north bank a couple times to climb up a little and look. No sweat! It must be around the next bend. Not!

I finally noticed that the bank was whizzing by and that the water flow had really increased in speed. We all tried to paddle into shore, but it was too late and the roar suddenly hit us like the sound of an Alabama Tornado. Jim Roberts was up front and he stood up to look, turned around and with real big eyes, declared, “It’s right there.” And Dear Buddha, it was, and it had our USS Hell Yes firmly in its draft. WE WERE GOING OVER! And we did. We were all probably going to die. Dammit boy!

At the end I hollered to throw paddles away while I kept the raft straight, but it did no good at all. Jim suddenly disappeared as the front of our raft bent and went over the edge. I threw my paddle and reached one hand under a flexible seat and latched on with the other hand.

When all the tumbling and churning was mostly over I realized that I was under the overturned raft. I quickly pulled myself out and up to the top side which had recently been the bottom side. As I quickly looked around, there were no other Jumpers to be seen. Aw hell. This is not good.

Suddenly Jim popped up within reach of me, but with his eyes in the other direction. I reached out, grabbed his shoulder. He spun around with almost true love in his eyes. Hoppy quickly followed Jim to the surface, but he was a long ways off—but, OK. Still no Dave. He must be trapped back under all that undertow, or backtow, or whatever Real River Rats call it.

Finally, something semi-naked hit my legs and I knew it had to be Dave. I ducked down under the overturned raft, put on my Lifesaver’s hold and dragged his floundering body to the surface. He was definitely at the edge and was coughing up water, but we were all alive and uninjured. Maybe even getting more sober by the second.
We were able to salvage two paddles, but everything else, including the matches and my 23 Jewel Bulova watch were gone. I had worked a construction job for a month to pay for that toy. There was a $20.00 bill in my swimsuit, but no other money and no shirts. How much further to civilization? We did not know.

The fun was mostly over by now except that when we finally spotted Novelist Zane Gray’s famous cabin on a pretty bluff, the other threesome would not let me stop for a visit. Smokejumpers???? The need for food and cover for the night had not sunk in yet. It finally did as darkness rapidly descended into the canyon and the potential of having to sleep tight with other almost naked Jumpers became a real bothersome idea to all of us. It was not even a joking matter as the hunger pains started working, and we actually began to paddle with the last two paddles.

It was way too dark and dangerous when we hit a hidden rock in a rapid, and Jim went airborne and quickly out of sight. We struggled hard to get off the rock and go after him. No fun at all now. Everything was gloom as we kept yelling and looking for him in the now dark water. Suddenly there he was right in front of us, and he quickly swung back up into the raft. Very lucky for all of us. Some real relief there, but we knew we had to give it up and go to a bank for the night, and just do the best we could until daylight.

Suddenly somebody yelled out, “There’s a boat dock,” and by cracky there was, with a small boat attached. We quickly paddled in to the south bank and rushed back to the dock and up the trail to the top of the bank where electric lights greeted us. The Black Bar Lodge. Man, it looked like a lil’ piece of heaven, if you so believe. They were not glad to see us and were actually trying to figure out how to close the door when Ol’ Salt Dave Towers turned on the charm—and he might well be the fellow they invented the term ‘Charm’ for. That woman had no choice but to put us up, and to feed us T-Bones and all the trimmings. We did promise to send back full funds for the wonderful treatment—and did.

The couple rousted us out at daylight and sent us on our way. The water was actually warmer than the air, but neither one was very buddy like.

We made it into a little community called Illahe where we spent my $20.00 on junk food, but it was real good. With the sun now well up in the sky, we got brave again and despite warnings not to, decided to make the run down thru Mule Creek Canyon and Blossom Bar. Mistake! Big mistake!

That was no place for young’uns like us, with only two paddles. I bent mine double in a hard effort to keep us out from under a bad cave-like overhang. That was the scariest and most dangerous place I had ever been in and promised myself to never do it again—if we made it thru this time.

We finally finished up the two-mile run with a huge drop and we thought we had it made with only that line of big rocks across the river to navigate. Blossom Bar,
and it looked like a baby after what we had been thru. Wrong again! We were on the north side of the river and realized too late that the only opening big enough for our raft was way over on the south side. Awww! Damn! We almost made it with our last two damaged paddles, but it was not to be. The river finally grabbed the USS Hell Yes and plastered it to the last big rock before the good channel. Like a postage stamp! Lost Boat!

I jumped up onto the rock, Hoppy and Jim went totally under and out onto the other side. But, no Dave! Now where is that sucker? I was thinking about jumping off and following them downstream when a muffled moaning finally reached my ears and led me over to the other edge of my rock. Dave was trapped in a very narrow opening between the two rocks, holding on with a death grip as the water lapped up and over his face. He really needed a buddy about now, I was most proud to call me Buddy—I think!

The suction was awful and it really took some pulling to finally get him out up to his waist where I turned loose and looked down the river to see where Hoppy and Jim were. Dave began yelling again and was about gone under by the time I could latch on again and bring him totally out of the vacuum. Really no fun!

A small super cub finally came up the river, noted our problems and sent a boat back up river to rescue us. No more whitewater for me. I had better things to do for the rest of my seventy years.
Looking back 50 plus years, not much has changed in my thinking about the time I spent as a smokejumper, beginning at Cave Junction in 1962. It all started in 1960, my freshman year in college at the University of Portland. That winter I was looking for a job for the coming summer more interesting than returning to my past in Tacoma. There I had certain employment washing cars, yard maintenance, and pushing caskets around at the local mortuary. Additional work was available at Bob’s Shoprite checking out customers, stocking shelves, mopping, floors, etc. To me, that all seemed like going backwards, not suitable for a college man.

One day, on a University bulletin board, I saw a contact for summer employment with the U.S. Forest Service. It seemed like that posting was there just for me. Before long I had an offer to work on a summer survey crew on the Siskiyou N.F. out of Gold Beach, Oregon. The day finals were over, I jumped on the bus to Tacoma. At home I threw my books in the closet, told my mom what I planned to do, gathered up my work clothes, and was soon ready to depart in the morning. When my dad got home, he said, “What’s up son?” I told him my plans. “That sounds like a good opportunity,” said Dad. Anything I can help you with? A $50 dollar loan and a ride to the bus terminal in the morning were quickly arranged. I remember a big Saturday morning breakfast at home, a care package from mom, saying goodbye to the folks and whatever siblings were around, and out the door Dad and I went.

The bus travelled the familiar route south on I-5 from Tacoma to Portland. I slept through that part. At Portland, it was overcast and raining and we continued south to Eugene. There we turned west and I was wide awake, eager to see new country. Soon the sun appeared and it was a perfect early June afternoon the rest of the trip. As we approached Gold Beach, crossing the Rogue River, the sun was just setting. Gold Beach looked like paradise on the shores of the Pacific. The bus driver dropped me off in front of the Ranger Station, just south of town. It was my
first on-site visit to a Forest Service facility, and I was soon enjoying hospitality I
never would have imagined. The first person I met was the ranger, Dan Abraham,
who spotted me getting off the bus. He showed me to the bunkhouse to unload
my gear and then walked me over to his house to join a Saturday barbecue with
his family, and other people living on site. That was the beginning of my Forest
Service experience. It only got better.

On Monday morning, Steve Smith, showed up at the bunkhouse and introduced
himself as the survey crew chief. He laid out the work schedule, responsibilities, etc.
That day we did the administrative details with the office, learned our way around
the compound, loaded up all the gear on Steve’s list in two crummies. By quitting
time, we were ready for departure the next morning. It went like clockwork. That
summer I learned that everything Steve did seemed to go that way. He already
had the tents, kitchen gear, and other heavy stuff packed into the campsite by Cy
Woods, the USFS mule skinner from Agnes.

The next day, the route to work was out of the Ranger Station, north on 101 through
town, east on the road adjacent to the Rouge River, probably about 15 miles, to
the end of the road. There we loaded up our packs and set off on the 10 mile hike
to the campsite on the Elk River. It was the first of many hundreds of miles we
hiked that summer in a beautiful part of Oregon. Rain or shine, it was wonderful.
Steve was twice our age, at least, and not exactly lean, but he soon showed us we
wouldn’t be stopping and waiting for him to catch up. We made it to camp, with
heavy packs, in 5 hours on a trail that was neither flat nor straight.

On Friday, after lunch, we hiked out to the crummy and drove back to Gold Beach
for the weekend. After that the schedule was 10 days in the woods and 4 days off.
Sometime in July, when we were back at the bunk house, a guy named Charley
Moseley appeared. He was my first encounter with a country boy from far off
Alabama. It was an experience I will never forget. He talked and moved most of
the time, and usually very fast. If he was quiet, he was either reading a book or
studying a map. Then he entered a trance-like state that only Keene Kohrt’s very
loud bagpipe music could disturb. Occasionally Charley would sleep a little while,
but always up at dawn, or before, and out the door to welcome the day.

Charley was assigned to another survey crew that was working a valley or two over.
I never did visit their camp. Life was too good at ours. Charley soon figured that
out too and would often come bounding into our Elk River camp, just in time for
dinner. He would usually stay until dark and then take off into the forest like a
mountain lion. Like the rest of us, he enjoyed Steve Smith, his personality, and
wilderness skills. By the end of that summer, we were all journeyman fly fisher-
men, gold panners, rock hounds, and survey crew members.

**SUMMER 1961**

Same job, same location, same Steve Smith, with some new crew members. The
highlight of that summer was a fire near Agness. It was on our time off and they
came to the bunkhouse looking for a fire crew. I was gone at the time but Charley and a few other guys jumped at the opportunity. When I returned they put me in the warehouse for a couple of days putting fire gear together. The next time I saw Charley he told me about his fire adventures, and the smokejumpers he met. I am not sure whether they invited him to visit the Gobi or he invited himself. Never the less, he asked me to go along with him. I was interested because the previous year at the University, I shared an off campus apartment with Bill Knight (aka Bear). I soon learned that he was a jumper at the Gobi and what a smokejumper’s purpose in life was. I had never heard of such a job before. So, bright and early one morning, Charlie and I were standing beside Highway 101, our thumbs pointed south towards California and the Smith River route to Cave Junction. Rides, and the weather, that day were in our favor. Before long we were standing in front of the Snake Farm looking into the jumper base. The first guy we encountered was Gary Welch. As soon as he asked us what we were doing there, I deferred to Charley. It was apparent to me they spoke a similar brand of English. Gary provided us with a very fine tour of the facilities and an introduction to Jim Allen. There weren’t many jumpers on base that day but the “Bear” was there, and we had a nice visit with him. Late in the afternoon we were back on the road to Gold Beach. Soon the summer was over and back to school it was. I think Charley submitted a Smokejumper application right away, before returning to Alabama. I took one with me and didn’t fill it out for awhile. That winter I learned more about what smokejumper life was really like from the Bear. I didn’t hear anything negative, even rookie status and repositioning gobi stones sounded well worth enduring. So, with much appreciated support and advice from the Bear, I submitted my application. I was lucky again. The Forest Service said, “Come on down to Cave Junction, boy.”

**SUMMER 1962**

My usual approach to a new situation is to keep my mouth shut, eyes and ears open. It didn’t take me long to see a very unique scene at the Gobi. All the guys, rookies and veterans alike, were from diverse backgrounds all over the country, often college students or graduates. The squad leaders were the same. Tolerance for others, and their individuality, seemed to be the prevalent mood. The result was a very comfortable atmosphere; even for rookies once they adjusted to the training requirements and grunt status. I was expecting a much more regimented and military like approach to training, and operations in general.

A good sense of humor is invaluable at times and it was available in abundance on the Gobi. I saw that soon after I arrived, in Al Boucher. He always seemed to keep things in balance that way, with an ever-present joke and smile. Chuck Sheley had humor in abundance too, sometimes even a little sharp for a rookie that might be dragging his ass a little on a training run. I appreciated his organization skills most of all. There was never any question with Chuck about when, where, how many, how fast. He always made the ground rules very clear up front. No excuses allowed. Perform, and life was easy.

One day after training for a couple of weeks, Mick Swift came up to me and said,
“How ya doin’ Manley?” He spoke in that unique deep, soft, quiet voice of his, looking at me with those sleepy eyes with droopy lids. It was the first time I had a one-on-one talk with him and I wasn’t sure what to expect. The conversation went something like this. I answered his question saying, “Ok, I guess. I am still here. I should be running a little better.” “Yeah, I noticed you can’t keep up with your buddy Moseley, and some of those other greyhounds that show up here every year.” “That’s for sure,” I said. “Don’t worry about it; you are in the same class as me and your friend Bear. We don’t run like those guys either, but we are still here too. I think you will catch them all when we get to tree climbing. With those strong shoulders, long arms, and short, bowed legs you are designed for climbing trees. In fact, you make me think that there might be something to that theory of evolution.” I almost fell over laughing. I thanked Mick for his vote of confidence and watched him stroll off, his sleepy eyes taking in everything. It was the same with all the squad leaders. They just seemed to know when it was time for a pat on the back, or whether an ass chewing was more appropriate. I think, in large part, it was that atmosphere that made the Gobi so special. Once rookies had a sense of that, and the camaraderie of working together, training became a small inconvenience necessary to qualify for a wonderful job.

It was also the lure that brought the veteran jumpers back year after year. Speaking about veteran jumpers goes back me to Mick Swift. He was a special edition, certain to rank high on anyone’s list of the best smokejumpers of his era. His native intelligence and multiple skills were the complete package necessary to succeed in his chosen career. His natural gift to us all was his natural leadership ability. It just seemed to come easy to him and, on the Gobi, we all enjoyed generous helpings of it. I treasure every adventure I shared with Mick over the years. The last was on a cool, clear day in the Fall of 2001. I drove from Fairbanks north to Central where Mick was closing down a BLM summer station and preparing to return to the Illinois Valley for the winter. We walked around the little village, had lunch with his lovely lady, loaded up boxes, talked about the good old days, and said “adios amigo”, see you in the Spring. A couple of months later his number was called. He was gone, literally in a heartbeat. Now I see him, peaceful and content, with answers to all the mysteries of life, sharing stories with happy souls in a heavenly Gobi. God bless you Mick. Thanks for the memories.

It took me more than one season, more experience, visits to other bases, and other jobs to appreciate just how special the Gobi really was. I came to realize that it was the leadership at Cave Junction that made the difference, not the individual jumpers, pilots, and support staff. I hardly knew Jim Allen the first year. He was a quiet presence that I seldom encountered. Later, as I came to appreciate his role in the operation, I realized that he knew his people, understood their needs, and provided more support, behind the scenes, than most of us ever imagined. He was the maestro who set the tone for everything, who made the hot, dry Gobi so fertile and satisfying for those people fortunate enough to have played a part in it. For me, Jim, and the environment he promoted, set the gold standard by which I have judged all jobs I have had in the many years since. There have been none better.
THE YEAR 1964 HAD TO BE ONE OF THE SLOWEST for Region 6 Jumpers on record. I personally ended up with two fire jumps that year, one out of Cave Junction and the second, out of LaGrande. One remembers his first fires, these two for distantly different reasons.

The first fire out of CJ is unforgettable because we caught a going fire, much to the surprise of the Klamath fire staff. Mostly though, it was because of the people involved: Chuck Sheley, Mick Swift, Truman Sandlin, Randy Towers. And then five of us rookies, four of whom transferred to Redmond; Ed Wisenback, Ray Farinetti, Dick Zedicker, Mike Johnson, and myself, Tommy Albert.

The second fire was a two man lightening fire in the beautiful Elkhorn Mountains. My jump partner was Billy Mosley. Now I’ll tell you, drawing Billy as a jump partner produced some true trepidation. Billy was a hard person to get to know when back on the base. He wasn’t exactly unfriendly but a guy one couldn’t get close to. Its hard to put it into words, he was... just different. Maybe he was like that because he lived under the shadow of his older brother, Charlie Mosley, who was a big track star at the University of Alabama. But then, Billy played on the often nationally ranked University of Alabama football team, coached by the legendary, Paul Bear Bryant. So who knows why he was like he was.

We were on a detail to La Grande, which was a spike base in those days and the home base of the infamous Twin Beech that later earned the nickname, “Silver Coffin.” This airplane was a Call When Needed (CWN) contract bird that the Forest Service picked up during high fire activity. Forest Service pilots, who drew the short straw, flew the plane. I believe the last time the Forest Service used it,
John Cowen was flying and Garry Peters was the spotter. Mick Swift was in the right seat observing. They had dropped a fire or maybe it was just a practice jump and were returning to Cave Junction. When John put the gear handle down, the sworn testimony has it that the gear went down and then retracted without John or Mick knowing it. Yes, they landed gear up. Later, the malfunction couldn’t be duplicated. John and Mick took the truth to their graves and Peters just isn’t saying. So, you be the judge.

An interesting little tidbit, the plane then went to Medford Mercy Flight and was stationed in Lakeview where it retired. The infamous Silver Coffin now hangs from the ceiling of the Museum of Flight at Boeing Field in Seattle.

Back to Billy’s and my story. We suited up and boarded the Silver Coffin. I can’t remember who the spotter was. It was a short flight up to the fire and from the air, looked like a typical two manner. We had a nice alpine meadow as a jump spot. It was pretty high and I was a little worried about the thin air as I was fast on my way of earning my nickname, Gravity. We jumped single man sticks and the trip down was uneventful.

Now, here I was in the middle of nowhere with Billy Mosley. I didn’t know how he would be on a one-to-one basis but just knew this wouldn’t be much fun. I couldn’t have been more wrong. Billy Mosley was a delight. Maybe what I mentioned earlier was correct. Once he got out from under the shadow of his older brother, he could relax and be a real person. Hell, I’m not a psychiatrist but all I can say is, it was like being with a different person, truly, night and day.

The fire turned out to be a holdover that appeared to have crept around for a number of days. It was close to half an acre in size and had eaten down into the roots of a number of trees. We spent three full days and a large part of the nights mopping the thing up. If you don’t believe me, look at my time reports.

Oh yes, the nights. The fire was around the 8000-foot elevation and the nights were cool. Cool enough that one had to stuff the paper sleeping bag with a cargo chute to sleep comfortably. Remember when you slid in against that cool nylon, it had a tendency to make one fantasize a little.

Mid morning of the 4th day we packed our gear and started down the mountain. Now, this is a true story. We hadn’t traveled more than half a mile down the mountain when we came across a camp where two beautiful, and I mean beautiful, girls were camped. Ol’ Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde-Billy put on the charm and had those girls hanging on every word. Come to find out, he spoke their language. They were coeds at the University of Alabama and one knew Charlie. The story has it she turned out to be Susan Nuranburg who later became either Miss
Alabama or Miss University of Alabama. Can’t get in touch with Billy to verify or deny. Charley had tried to date her but to put it in his words; he didn’t have the money to turn her head.

Wouldn’t you know it; they had been there the whole time. Seems one of the lady’s Dad had a mining claim there and they were investigating it. You ask if anything happened, the answer is, not a damn thing. Fantasizing, the possibilities of what could have been, dominated our thoughts all the way down the mountain. Oh to be young again.
Dawn on the Gobi. Muttering cooks putter in the kitchen preparing breakfast. The aroma of fresh brewed coffee and frying bacon drifts through the crisp morning air. Early risers flutter and clutter, perching on white washed poles separating the barracks from the mess hall. First light of a tangerine sky outlines the Siskiyou coastal mountain range neighboring the airport. A saw’s piercing high-pitched shrill activates the nearby lumber mill, shattering the tranquility. The smokejumper base awakens to the challenges of a new summer day.

Nicknamed for its dusty barren landscape, the Gobi was the Siskiyou Aerial Project, a U.S. Forest Service smokejumper base five miles south of Cave Junction, Oregon. In operation from 1943 until 1981, I jumped there during the turbulent sixties for the 1964 and 1965 fire seasons. The experience qualified me for employment for the next four years with Air America, in which to participate in the not-so-secret war in Laos.

Now, I chase through the mist of 40-odd summers. Caught in a dream of yesterdays I become twenty years old, replaying what I first experienced back then, when I shaped the core of my being.

June 1964 was my rookie jump season. On arrival, the Snake Farm operating near the entrance to the Gobi offered a carnival sideshow atmosphere. I was instantly struck by the diversity of eccentric characters in camp. They ranged from athletic champions to chess masters. Animated personalities varied, from the vainly full-of-themselves to humble and down-to-earth souls. Within the mix of physical sizes, backgrounds and hometowns, there were lovers and fighters, introverts and
extroverts. Then, there was the occasional individual who could be described as an enigma rolled up in a conundrum. One purported to be so disliked by family and neighbors, that when he dies, an out-of-town newspaper ad will have to be placed in hopes of hiring pallbearers to carry him to his eternal resting place.

During the course of a jump season, there was ample opportunity to exhibit and prove one’s mental or physical talents. And, when it came to wagers, benevolence was lacking. Arrogant, conceited, fumble-bum statements about anything and everything were challenged in a flash by alert opportunists. It was Put Up—or Shut Up. Boasting was useless and unprofitable unless backed up with success.

Beer comprised the stakes for most bets: a six-pack to a case, depending on the impertinence and audacity of the braggart. Competitions varied. There were wrestling matches on the front lawn, rope or tree climbing races, jungle rules volleyball, eight-ball at the Kerby Tavern, and attempts to land closest to the designated spot on practice jumps. Contests were educational. Witnessing others ability in mastering certain tasks helped awaken those capabilities within one’s self. If you couldn’t win, then you paid attention while losing to avoid embarrassment in front of your peers.

Smokejumping is an indiscriminate profession. It spotlights personality traits, the best or worst in equal fashion. There is nothing vicarious about smokejumping. No pretending or faking it. This exotic vocation is firsthand, up close and personal. With a carefree attitude, this band of gypsy moths searched endlessly for the flame of a unique experience. This kindred wanderlust for living on the edge of adventure formed a bond as strong as forged metal.

Jumping from an airplane into blazing high timber on secluded mountain terrain guarantees exposure to danger. Hazardous conditions conspire to result in personal injury. Obstacles range from widow-making dead snags to hidden boulders on landing areas thick with poison oak inhabited by rattlesnakes.

Injuries vary from minor scrapes and bruises to the more serious: broken arms, legs, necks and backs. During the 70-year history of smokejumping, the Grim Reaper has notched a few tombstones among 5,000 smokejumpers on his fatal scythe. Physical conditioning and training are geared to prepare for most contingencies, to reduce the risk of injury. Additionally there is the mental aspect. One’s worst fears will come to fruition if one is afraid of being hurt.

Smokejumping is about being in the present, having the courage to work past the fear by doing what needs to be done. No dilly-dallying. Focus must be on the task at hand. There can be no uncertainty in the performance of duty. It is imperative to be confident when challenged by unpredictable circumstances fraught with jeopardy. Spur of the moment decisions inspire character and self-confidence.

We rookies learned to be aware, awake and trust our instincts. With experience
came calmness under pressure allowing logical decisions to avert unpleasant consequences. When living on the fringe there is a fine line between success and failure. Events unfold unpredictably, precariously. Occasionally, upon realizing you survived yet another danger unscathed, relief comes with an outburst of spontaneous laughter.

Most smokejumpers agree that tree climbing is a defining moment during training, with exception to jumping in interior Alaska. There, the squatty Tamarack, Birch and Cottonwood trees are hardly a match for the Tan Oak and Manzanita bushes in the Oregon Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area. These bushes are almost as tall as Alaskan trees. Navigation through their snarly patches, while carrying a one hundred pound backpack is nearly impossible on the steep terrain. On the Gobi, we cynically referred to jumping in Alaska as being, “The old smokejumpers rest home.”

When smokejumping into a Pacific Northwest forest it is essential to know how to get down out of a 250-foot tree, since there is a high probability of landing directly into one of them. Then, if you are unfortunate to land in one of these giants, it is necessary to be able to climb back up the tree after the fire has been extinguished to retrieve the parachute. Because the chute was worth considerably more than the one hundred eighty-one dollars we were paid bi-weekly for eighty hours of work, retrieval was essential from the Forest Service’s perspective. Additionally, one would be sent packing if returning to base from a fire without toting their nylon chute.

In the Heart of Dixie, where I grew up, there are a wide variety of trees. Pines get quite large, but they grow more like White Oak trees: the older ones are fat and branchy with the first limb being about ten feet off the ground. The Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and Redwood trees of southern Oregon are impressive in their own way. There, the first limbs start about eighty feet from the ground. For many of us, ascending these trees with climbing spurs and rope was like sailing into uncharted waters.

This climbing became “up close, in living color,” when ordinary levels of awareness spring swiftly to a higher degree. Tree climbing in the Siskiyou, Umpqua and, Willamette National Forests challenged the cusps of courage. Blood pumps though the veins, quickening the pulse, reminding the brain that what the body is attempting is potentially quite threatening to longevity.

Prior to 1967 when a safety measure was invented, one of the more difficult ordeals of tree climbing with spurs and rope was a “limb over.” When encountering the first limb of a tree, to perform a “limb over”, it is necessary to untether the climbing rope from the belt and around the tree before free climbing up through the limbs. Upon reaching the entangled chute, retrieving can take more than an hour before releasing it to fall back to the ground.
Descending back down the tree to the first limb, a “limb under” is required to reattach the rope around the tree below the first limb to resume spurring down the tree. After reattaching the rope above the first limb, you dig in your spurs on the trunk of the tree below the limb. Then, you clasp the rope with your left hand above the limb while unhooking and attempting to reattach the rope below the limb with your right hand. After reattaching the rope you had to turn loose of the rope and fall back so the slack created by the limb could be taken up. This is done with nothing between your butt and mother earth but 80 feet of thin air—and it clarified the term “death grip.” The process isn’t that difficult, but doing it for the first time was a wide-eyed, sweat-popping, ass puckering experience that washed out more than one rookie. A “limb over” tested your nerve; a “limb under” tested your resolve. Tree climbing in old growth timber of the Pacific Northwest is one of those Zen moments of the here and now, placing you immediately into the fullness of the present.

On completion of rookie training, it was time to go airborne. Being first in the door of a Twin Beach, with the first load of rookies, on my first airplane ride, on my first parachute jump was exhilarating. The weeks of vigorous preparation do not relieve anxiety, or uncertainty of the reality of the moment. While waiting in the door, as the deafening roar of the engine’s prop blast flaps your jump suit, anticipating a 1000 foot jump—it all makes you wonder: What the Hell am I doing here?

The command to get ready and then, the tap on the back triggers a pounding pulse into an automatic reaction. Leaping into the cool morning air, followed by a big jerk verifying the chute had opened, brings a welcome sigh of relief. Riding the wind to the jump spot was invigorating, leaving you on a natural high the rest of the day. Yee-Ha!

During weekends when fire danger was low there were activities of recreation and amusement to refocus one's energy. Outings included: romancing the ladies at the Oregon Caves, watching a drive-in movie in Grants Pass, pizza at Shakey’s in Medford, and attending plays at the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland.

One of my more vivid memories was an excursion a group of twelve of us took to Galice for a whitewater-raft trip down the Rogue River. Rafting down the Rogue gave new meaning to its name. Thundering and unforgettable Rainie Falls descends into a frothing hole. It creates a bubbling boil line and is well known for flipping boats, sending its occupants under, only to pop up further down the river. Mule Creek Canyon is the breathtaking, boulder-strewn rapid at Blossom Bar. The river has several different lines and is known for crushing boats in the notorious “Picket Fence.” The intrepid individuals that go over Rainie Falls and
thru Blossom Bar have a heart-hastening experience with little lag time between actions and consequences.

Also, there was Rough & Ready Creek, located about a mile from the base. It supplies the local swimming hole at Seats Dam. This pool of cold, crystal clear mountain water drained from the Kamiopsis Wilderness area. We were rough and ready after working on the torrid Gobi to kick back and relax. There was nothing better to ease the intensity of the job than a perfect escape to youthful passion. Sitting on the creek bank, listening to Gale Garnett’s “We’ll Sing In The Sunshine,” while drinking Olympia beer with a lovely young goddess was a summer afternoon’s delight.

My memory has compressed over the years. Yet, exposure to events and people of my Gobi days remain vibrant. To this day, my dearest and most trusted friends are ex-smokejumpers. First time experiences challenge character, imprinting a mental and emotional tattoo permanently on consciousness. Thus was the era of my youth, those bulletproof years when all things seemed possible and disappointment appeared remote.

Smokejumping was my first encounter with a paradox of life; in order to gain control you must let go. Smokejumping was my rite of passage, my transformation into manhood. Personal, mental, and physical traits were revealed, in no uncertain terms, as were my deficiencies. These lessons remained with me as my quest for adventure carried me to unknown horizons.

The Gobi was a magical place, the holy grail of self-discovery. Possibilities and limitations were both defined there. After every fire jump came feelings of fulfillment and accomplishment. Smokejumping taught everything needed to transition a young, superficial ego to an authentic, mature human being. I acquired a broad base of self-confidence enhanced with the feeling I could do anything I wanted to in the future. All who shared the experience became part of the Spirit of the Gobi, receiving a blessing for life covering everything needed in this world to Go Be.
She’s one of a kind. She’s Glenda Merchant, the only woman in the Pacific Northwest to hold a master rigger’s license for smokejumping.

Mrs. Merchant has been a rigger at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base for 17 fire seasons. At first, she worked only during the summer and then when called. She recalled how she couldn’t go anywhere during this time, but just spent her time waiting for the telephone to ring.

Normally, it takes five years to get a master rigger’s license. It took her longer because she worked only during the summer, although she now works year around and has for the last several years.

Recalling her experiences in domestic arts at Illinois Valley High School she said, “They figured that if I could sew, I could rig,” she laughed. And that’s how she got her start as a parachute rigger.

Because a jumper base’s parachute loft can function only when there is a master rigger present, Mrs. Merchant has been sent to the jumper bases at Redmond and Redding on a substitute basis.

Her job as master rigger includes keeping parachutes in good working condition and instructing and supervising the smoke jumpers in the proper care of their parachutes.

Besides working with parachutes, Mrs. Merchant is also responsible for keeping the jump suits in good shape.

During the winter she and two other women spent about two months making jump suits. One person working alone can make two suits a week, she said, while more working on an assembly line procedure can turn our one suit a day.

Making the suits is not an easy job, Mrs. Merchant commented. For example, she noted that the material used, Nomex which costs $12.50 per yard, ravel easily. Approximately eight to ten yards of material are used in each suit.

After the suits are made, upkeep presents still another problem. Since the fabric is white, it shows dirt quite easily. Presently she is experimenting with ways to get them cleaned. Laundering was tried, but failed to get all the spots out. Now, dry cleaning followed by laundering is being tried on some of the suits.

Mrs. Merchant commented that her work as a master rigger at the base isn’t hard for a woman, but she finds it challenging.

“It’s interesting work…. I’d miss it if I didn’t do it, she concluded.
“Are you going or coming?”

“Ma’am?”

“I said are you going or coming?”

“A bit of both I guess, Ma’am. I just came down on the bus from Seattle and I’m trying to get to the Smokejumper base at Cave Junction.”

“Well, I live in Cave Junction. I’ve been visiting my husband in the hospital here. He’s a faller and had a tree barber chair on ‘im and he’s pretty broke up. Git in and I’ll take you to the Jumper Base.”

“Great! Thank you, ma’am!”


And thus I arrived for training at Cave Junction in my 19th year eager, broke, and hungry. I was pleasantly surprised to find a fully functioning mess hall on the base. My previous year, I had been working on the Glide Ranger District of the Umpqua National Forest along with Jerry Katt (CJ 66). The Glide District’s 12-man fire crew was based at Wolf Creek and while there was a mess hall there, it wasn’t staffed as an economy measure. Instead, we purchased a meal ticket at a greasy spoon diner called Cappy’s about a half mile from our base. The food was pretty awful and we tended to live out of the refrigerator in our under-utilized mess hall.

Thus, it came as indeed a pleasant surprise to find that for breakfast, lunch, and dinner we smokejumpers would be taken care of. Our cooks, Ruby Brewer and Lila Trammel were not exactly into haute cuisine. Their food was pure American country - - hearty and a lot of it. I remember crisp fried chicken, mashed potatoes
and gravy, Wednesday steak day, and Joe Buck (CJ 66) eating a gallon of ice cream all by himself!

The Forest Service largesse didn’t stop at the mess hall. Nestled in with the base tool shed was the ration shack where each jumper was allowed free reign to take up to two days of canned food for his personal jump pack. At first, the ration shack contained pretty pedestrian fare. I filled my jump pack with Nutriment (both chocolate and strawberry), chili, Boston baked beans, corned beef, canned fruit, and other things that could be eaten straight out of the can (preferred) or cooked a little using the “bleep” method. The bleep method was simple - - you just tossed your can of chili or whatever on to a pile of glowing embers and waited until the can made a “bleep” noise as the contents heated and expanded. Once you heard the bleep you scrambled to get the can out of the fire because very often your second bleep, and surely your third, was instead a “pow” as the contents exploded out of the soldered seam side of the can.

The epicurean standards of the ration shack soared to new heights when David Oswalt (CJ 66) took over running the ration shack. David’s previous claim to fame was as the celebrated former company thief of the Military Police Company, First Division (Big Red One) in Viet Nam. As company thief his job was to care enough to steal the very best for his troops. As the new lord of the ration shack he maintained those same humanitarian sentiments for smokejumpers and soon we were loading our jump bags with gastronomic delights such as smoked oysters, cashews, and tins of Camembert cheese. Unfortunately, on my last fire with Tommy Greiner (MSO 55), we ran out of food and all we had to eat was Camembert cheese - - it was several days before our bowel movements got back to normal!*

Occasionally we had to jump with so-called standard jump packs that contained the ubiquitous paper sleeping bag, two-part shovel, Pulaski, canteen and boxes of standard Forest Service rations. The Forest Service rations were the Department of Agriculture equivalent of the old U.S. Army “C” rations that had been used in World War II and Korea and was probably as old as them. A typical meal would be stew, canned bread, and canned fruit.

Over the years the Forest Service realized that food is fuel for fire fighters. The caloric intake of a fire fighter is astonishing - - but, so is the output and so the Forest Service has experimented with various types of rations. Region 1 was experimenting with freeze dried rations back in the late 60’s. They would drop a five gallon container of water to each two-man crew and a similar container filled with freeze-dried food. The idea was to boil the water, pour it into the freeze dried food and in a few minutes, voila! Dinner was on! On one Montana fire I feasted on a dinner of braised sirloin tips, vegetables, and egg noodles with gravy. The next morning my breakfast was Canadian bacon, tater tots, and French toast with maple syrup. That was stepping into tall cotton. Yum!

In August of 1966, a number of us jumped out of McCall, Idaho, on a fire called Ebenezer Creek. This fire was in the Salmon River breaks (Indianola District of the Salmon National Forest) and I had never seen such steep terrain before. We had
dropped an entire C-47 load of jumpers on the fire so McCall dropped us a hot meal that included ice cream. It was a wonderful picnic until the rains came in a sudden torrent that turned our meals and paper plates into soggy, glutinous mounds of caloric intake. Lonnie Oswalt (CJ 65) suffered the indignity of the wind blowing the mashed potatoes right off his paper plate.

Perhaps the most unique food drop I ever experienced was on a jump to build a helispot on the Siskiyou National Forest. The night before the jump we had participated in a rite of debauchery known as a rookie party and as a result, we were suffering from pounding in our heads and thirst in our throats. A while after we had landed and commenced building the helispot, the Twin Beech came back and kicked a cargo chute out. It landed near by and as we opened the package we sang the praises of the unknown, sainted jumper who had made it up and dropped us a six pack of “Hairy the Dog.” May his children people the earth!

Leaving jumping meant leaving fire fighter food until July, 2001. Then, as a senior manager with the Washington State Emergency Management Division at Camp Murray, Washington, I was the only one in the Division with wild land fire experience. Perhaps because of that, I ended up detailed to accompany Washington State Governor Gary Locke and his press secretary on a trip to visit the 30-Mile Fire near Winthrop where four Forest Service fire fighters had just been killed in a burn over. I skipped breakfast because I had to leave early in order to meet Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland (CJ 56) at Boeing Field where we were to be picked up by the Governor in his State Patrol jet. I met Doug and we were trading jump stories about the time the Governor’s jet arrived. We then flew to the North Cascades Smokejumper Base at Winthrop where we transferred to a Washington State National Guard CH-47 Chinook which took us to the 30-Mile Fire Base Camp just in time for lunch. By this time my stomach was pretty sure that my throat had been cut—I was plenty hungry. I got hungrier as I watched lines of fire fighters walking by with huge plates of food crammed with steak, baked potatoes, and fresh garden salad. Those plates were bigger than a grizzly’s paw! I was sure the Gov would sit down and eat with the fire fighters. Hell, it was the friendly thing to do! Governor (now Ambassador to China) Locke was a scrawny little runt and there’s a reason for that. He was so busy pressing the flesh and kibitzing with the firefighters that he didn’t stop to chow down, so I didn’t get to either. After a quick visit we jumped back in the helicopter to Twisp, then transferred to the jet and flew back to Olympia where we blew a tire on landing and had to walk half a mile to the State Patrol Operations Building. I was ravenous by the time I got home.

Unfortunately, I’m now at a point in life where there is no way I can eat now the way we did then on the Gobi. Then, we were stoking fuel into fire-fighting machines that worked long, grueling hours in order to preserve forest land. Today, I can crank on the pounds just reading a recipe, but such is life! Bon appetite, bro’s!!

*The Siskiyou National Forest Supervisor’s Office sent an inquiry to the base about the new purchases of cheese and cashews. David replied with an “analysis” of the higher caloric quality about his food choices. The Supervisor’s Office did not respond back.*
Parasailing

TERRY EGAN
‘65

I believe my 1965 Rookie Class was the first to use the ascender parachute or parasail with the idea being that we could gain the experience of landing in a parachute without the expense of actually having to fire up a Twin Beech. The first towed parachutes were developed by Pierre-Marcel Lemoigne in 1961. Lemoigne is the developer of parachutes known as “ParaCommander” or PC-canopies that were derived from free fall parachutes. No one is exactly sure when the first parachute was towed, but there is a record of a flight by Colonel Michel Tournier from France flying behind a tractor, also in 1961. In 1963 Jacques-André Istel from Pioneer Parachute Company bought a license from Lemoigne to manufacture and sell the 24-gore parachute canopy he had developed for towing which was labelled as a “parasail.” Since we jumped both Pioneer and Switlik parachutes, I can only assume someone from Pioneer Parachute Company talked the Gobi crew into buying a parasail as a training aid.

And thus, one day we headed off to Seats Field and spent the morning doing all-en rolls out of the back of a pickup. What impressed me was how hard packed the earth in Seats Field was - - there was just no give in it. In the afternoon we made some “jumps” in the parasail. It was hooked to the back of the same pickup we had been jumping out in the morning. We didn’t go very high - - maybe a hundred feet or so when the pickup stopped and at that time gravity took over. A good all-en roll was a must because we came whistling down like a sack of lead shot onto the hard, unforgiving soil that was Seats Field. We each made two or three “jumps” with the ascender chute, then bruised and sore we were sent back to the base where we would later make “real” jumps with “real” chutes. It did not break my heart to think that I had made my last jump in a parasail - -or so I thought.
Fast forward five years and as a young Air Force Officer I would be “loaned” from the main Air Force Survival School at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane to the Air Force Water Survival School at Homestead Air Force Base near Miami, Florida. I was detailed as a Safety Officer to ride on a converted Landing Craft Medium (LCM) that was used as a launching point for - - you guessed it - - parasail riders. The Air Force used them to teach aircrews how to safely land a parachute in open water. To qualify as a safety officer I first had to go through the Water Survival Course where I learned that the parasail launch sequence started on the flat top deck of the LCM. Survival instructors kept the canopy inflated while the student was hooked up in a harness to the chute. The harness also was attached via a quick release to a cable that was attached to the back of a powerful Bertram boat. When my turn came I stood in the center of the deck while one instructor hooked the chute up to my capewells while another belayed the tow rope to a drop-down pin in the deck and then to my harness. At a signal from the deck monitor, the Bertram gunned its engine, the retaining pin in the deck dropped down and I was quickly airborne. In short order I was up about 250 feet and then doing something the instructors had told me NOT to do. Seeing that the Bertram was slowing down, I hit the quick release that separated me from the tow line so I could make my descent into the blue waters of Biscayne Bay. The problem was that the Bertram still had weigh on and there was still tension in the tow rope so when I hit the quick release it hit me back in the face cutting a two inch gash in my jaw. So now I’m headed for a landing in Biscayne Bay which is presumably populated with sharks and barracuda and I’m bleeding like a stuck pig!

Fortunately, I didn’t encounter any nasty marine life, the Bertram came equipped with a first aid kit and an instructor who knew how to use it, and I was none the worse for wear–just glad I wouldn’t have to ride that damn parasail again. Fast forward to about three years ago when Ginny Mangum, my soul mate, and I were sitting on the beach in Puerta Vallarta, Mexico, watching gringo tourists get launched from the beach on parasails attached to fast runabouts.

“So Terry,” Ginny said while gesturing in the direction of the parasailers, “Isn’t that something that you would want to do?”

“Nooooo. I don’t think so. I’ve done it before.”
IN LARGE MEASURE IT WAS THE LEADERS of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base that made it special and Delos “Dee” Dutton was no exception to that rule. He came to us from Missoula in 1966 and although we were initially unsure about him it wasn’t long before we realized that Dee had high expectations about our professionalism, work performance and honesty. In return, he gave us steady, professional leadership coupled with an aggressive fire fighting style. Dee took risks, but they were very carefully calculated risks. Let me illustrate with a couple of examples.

Late in the afternoon of July 22, 1966, we were dispatched to the Tool Box Springs Fire on the Klamath National Forest. We had two twin beeches so the first one left well before dusk and dropped four jumpers on the fire without incident. I was in the second ship with Dee who spotted, Leroy “Lead Hook” Cook (CJ 64) and Jumpin’ Joe Nieson (CJ 66) and one other, but I don’t recall who. We arrived at the fire shortly after dusk. Nevertheless, Dee threw streamers out and displayed every intention of putting us on that fire. Unfortunately, Dee couldn’t see the streamers because it was too dark. There was, however, a lot of light from the fire as flames were kicking up all over. Leroy was the most experienced jumper in our load so Dee pulled him to the door and had him hook up, saying:

“I can’t see the streamers, Leroy - you’re a streamer.”

Dee lined the aircraft up to where he thought things looked good and slapped Leroy on the shoulder and sent him out of the plane. At this point the three of us who were yet to jump were real curious about how the Lead Hook was doing, so we had our noses glued to the twin beech’s windows. Actually, Lead Hook was doing very well indeed. We watched him make a flawless jump and equally flaw-
less landing and set out his double “L’s” indicating he was fine. I was next in line and Dee repeated the jumped sequence with me. Once my chute opened I looked down and there was so much flame coming off of the fire that I didn’t have any trouble seeing at all and steered my way to a nice open spot. I easily landed and got out of my equipment and proceeded to the fire. Forest Service procedure was to not jump in the dark, but Dee’s aggressive fire fighting style coupled with calculated risk taking showed us that we had a boss who we had better pay attention to.

Dee demonstrated this about a week later when, on the last day of July, the siren went off and we went scrambling to the loft to suit up. Within minutes we had rigged up, been checked out, and loaded up in the twin beech heading to the Lost Euchre Fire near Gold Beach. What made this fire unusual was that it was on Oregon State land, the only time I remember jumping a state fire. Another thing that made it unusual was that the wind was terrific, faster than the Forest Service limit which I believe was around 18 miles an hour. We had made a pass over the fire and Dee threw out streamers that just whistled across the landscape. Now the average spotter would have radioed the fire boss with his apologies and got the heck out of there. Not Dee! He wanted us to jump that state fire, save the day for Oregon Forestry, and gain additional business for the Gobi.

He studied the situation very carefully then turned to us and explained that the wind speed was over limits, but that we were going to jump the fire anyway. The obvious place to land was on a dirt road leading up to the clear cut on the ridge where the fire had broken out, but if we landed on the road we would very likely break bones – the wind was that fast. Dee had spotted a stand of reproduction trees—“reprod”—not far from the fire. The reprod was about 50 or 60 feet high. He explained that we were to head for the reprod and to hang up in it where the young, springy trees would cushion our landing. Not one of us would have thought of questioning the wisdom of this ad hoc plan which was certainly not without its risks. Instead we moved to door in sequence of single man passes, hooked up and jumped.

As soon as my chute opened I could tell this was a jump very different from the 21 others that I’d completed. It was a hairy ride and I prayed that contact with terra firma wouldn’t cripple me for life. As I descended to around the 300 or 400 foot level I did what Dee had told us to do. I turned into the wind to slow my forward speed a bit, but I was now moving backwards at a very rapid rate and unable to make corrections to my direction of travel. I needn’t have worried because Dee’s spotting was superb and I hit squarely into the stand of reprod where my canopy settled over the tops of some trees that gently slowed me down. It was an easy thing to slip out of the harness dropping a foot or so to the ground. All of us made it safely to the ground except Jerry Howe (CJ 65) who hung up in the granddaddy of all Port Orford cedars. Jerry used all of his 150 foot rope to get down and had to jump that last 10 feet to the ground! We all then headed to the fire, made initial attack. I believe we were released that night as state crews moved in.
Over the years, Dee put up with a lot from us and I’m sure covered for us despite a wide variety of smokejumper transgressions. On the other hand, I think we gave him the job performance that he was looking for and along the way a lot of Dee rubbed off on us. If I’m willing to take calculated risks in life then I have to hand the credit to Dee for showing me the way. I just hope that today’s young smokejumpers have as good a leadership example as we had.
PRANKS WERE AN INTIMATE PART OF GOBI LIFE..... Maybe it was boredom, maybe it was the thrill of planning & pulling them off, or maybe it was needling someone to get a reaction—but they were generally not mean spirited.

There were the “let’s make the rookie jump through hoops” kind.

- My rookie year I overheard Doug Hopkins tell BG that he was going to tell me to manually haul the generator for the electric welder (it was on a trailer) from the saw shack down to the mock-up. He said it was too fragile for a pick up to haul it. I agreed and did nothing.
- We were starting a brush clearing project at the end of the runway, and someone couldn’t get the chain saw started (having conveniently left the switch still on “off”). So a rookie was dispatched to “run, not walk” back to the saw shack to get a new battery for the chain saw.
- Pat McNally was on his first fire....... After it was over, I helpfully aided him as he put his chute into the seamless Bemis. I quietly added about 30 pounds of river rock within the folds of the chute while doing this. He moaned and complained loudly all during the pack out. He failed to understand that I did it for his continued physical conditioning and that would pay off in the long run.

Then there were the spontaneous “I think I see an opportunity deal” type.

- Oliver went on a backup trip to another base. Somehow the key to his beloved Fiat ended up in the ignition of his car that was parked at the Base. Out of a spirit of helpfulness and love, his car was then driven daily. No one wanted the oil to settle in the engine, or the battery to drain, but the gas tank sure did. Upon exiting the plane when he returned, he noticed his car was not where he left it. He also noticed that the front tires of his car were resting on the top of the Elephant Fence. He immediately dropped his baggage
where he was standing, and ran to the office and phoned the County Sherriff. He pleaded, he explained, he cajoled, he told his story to each member of the Sherriff’s office that he got transferred to…….. but no one would come out to investigate the situation.

Loft Lizard McNally was “in the door” while BG was spotting. BG of course was paying more attention to placement of the Beech than to what McNally was doing. Satisfied he had a good spot lined up, BG reached back to give McNally a slap on the shoulder that was the signal to jump. McNally quickly turned to BG, and handed him a fake static line that he had pulled from his leg pocked, and yelled, “I forgot to hook up,” as he exited the door. BG grabbed the line and held on as tight as he could…. And he may still be gripping that line.

It was a quiet evening. Clancy got tired of watching TV in the day room, and got his paper kite from his room, and went to the airstrip to investigate the air currents. GT watched him leave his buddies for a few minutes of solitude…. And formed an idea. He secured his gun, close by as skeet shooting was popular that year. GT dodged between the evening shadows, the bushes and the flag pole, and even low crawled to a position near the kite. He jumped to his feet, yelled “PULL” and fired a great load of shot right through the kite. For the rest of the season the kite hung in honor in a corner of the day room, right next to the plastic Hamm’s Beer sign and its parachuting bear.
The Sound of the Wailing Siren was welcome relief from the daily grind of project work. Suiting up we learned that the fire was on the Klamath National Forest in the Marble Mountain Wilderness Area. The top three jumpers on the list were Mewhinney, Rubisow, and either the Eeg or Jumpin’ Joe (both vividly remember this story).

As we soared over the border into California and crossed the Salmon River we could see the small town of Happy Camp below. The sight brought thoughts that maybe there was a “cold one” waiting for us after we extinguished our raging holocaust.

Suddenly the plane dove and banked to allow us to see our fire out the door of the Twin Beech. The terrain had changed from steep to vertical and there on a knife-back ridge with a single snag in the middle of nowhere – yep... definitely a jumper fire!

Streamers tossed, wind and drift calculated, and the welcome slap on the shoulder by the spotter and we were on our way. They chose to drop three jumpers because of the size of the snag and the fact that it would have to be felled with a “misery whip.” Better to spread the “misery” around than to have just two jumpers be miserable.

When we retrieved the cargo and arrived at the snag, we realized just how big this snag was. It was a Gygose Modicker... about 8 feet through at the butt and at least 200 feet tall. We soon realized that there would be plenty of “misery” for three jumpers to share. We proceeded to gnaw on the tree with the crosscut saw making minimal headway. After about 6 hours of taking turns sawing and pouring...
kerosene on the blade to make it pull easier...all this interspersed with a modicum of cursing...the snag began to creak and groan. We had already extinguished the small amount of ground fire around the snag and had prepared a bed to drop the snag onto. The only remaining fire was in the top third of the tree.

As we continued to saw we heard the telltale “CRACK,” as the wood fibers began to pull apart. We hit the wedges a couple of times with the axe and headed up the ridge away from the intended path of the falling tree. With another mighty “CRACK” that gygose modicker teetered and began to sway. Suddenly the snag began to lean down the hill exactly where we had intended for it to fall. The air had been still. There was a “swoosh” as it cut a swath through the air followed by a huge “CRASH” as it hit the ground. This was followed by another “CRASH” and another “Crash” and another “Crash” and another “Crash”...each successive sound was getting fainter and fainter until...there was total and complete silence. This event had taken about 10 to 15 seconds, but it seemed like it went on for an eternity. That Gygose Modicker had vanished. We each looked at the other and shrugged our shoulders and decided: no snag, no fire, no reason to hang around any longer. We packed our gear with an eye down the canyon anticipating at any moment a fire storm raging up the hillside. But...nothing.

After returning to the Gobi, I popped into the Admin Shack each subsequent morning to inquire if the Klamath had any new large fires. After three days of this, either suspicions began grow or my paranoia. In either case, I dropped the subject like a “Giant Modicker”...it vanished.
WELL...IT WAS NOT ALWAYS ABOUT CHEATIN’ DEATH. When the “Maximus Cumulus Overtimus” clouds shunned the Gobi like parents with teenage girls, smokejumpers had plenty to do. First there was standby – or as we were wont to call it – preparing to prepare. Standby was pretty cool in that you got paid overtime or “oats” for reading, working out, playing ping pong in the day room or simply watching TV. The saying was, “You can’t eat jumps, but you sure can eat oats!”

When a jumper was not high enough on the jump list to be in the first plane load, there were no oats and your off duty time was spent in a variety of activities – some of which were far more dangerous than “jumping out of perfectly good airplanes.”

The Oregon Caves – There was always a fantasy about the young ladies who worked at the Oregon Caves. In the spring when jumpers arrived for refresher training, the casual conversation always included, “Have you been to the Caves yet? I wonder what this year’s ‘crop’ looks like?” This was a fundamental error...assuming that the young ladies were a “crop” awaiting harvest. Soon the conversation had a bit more of a frenzied tone to it: “We have got to get to the caves and check things out!” This was shortly followed by an excursion to the Caves –whereupon we were rebuffed and rebuked by the “Cave Jockeys,” and looked upon with horror and amazement by the Cave maidens. The outing typically ended with a skirmish between Cave Jockeys and Jumpers. This was shortly followed by the mandate that the Caves were once again off limits to Jumpers.
Motorcycles – There were a variety of “crotch rockets” owned and “operated” by Jumpers. There were AJS and Bultaco and Ducati, as well as the more mundane brands such as Triumph, Honda, and Kawasaki. While these were (for normal people) a means of conveyance, for Jumpers they were means to escape the bounds of gravity. They were used to jump things, ford streams, and climb impossibly steep hills—anything to determine just “how much bike” a person had. Fortunately this resulted in more broken bikes than broken Jumpers.

Let’s go into town for just “one” – This single phrase probably had more to do with “cheatin’ death” than any other activity on or off the Gobi. Whether it was riding to town in Gravity’s Dodge with the aluminum “floorboards,” in the rear seat or Cliff Hamilton’s Pink Pile or Farinetti’s VW or Leroy Cooks Ford, the issue was obviously not getting to town, but returning alive. The Chit Chat, Sportsman, and Stoney Front all had their own “ambience.” Whether it was the live music at the Sportsman with Chief playing the crosscut saw, the “click” of the billiard balls at the Stoney Front, or the “clink” of ice cubes at the Chit Chat there was trouble a-brewin’. Again the “Great Scab-in-the-Sky” looked over the Jumpers and provided nothing more than the usual morning phrase on the volleyball court, “I’m never going to town for just one ever again!”
Cabbages and Kings

Cabbages and Kings was a weekly column in the IV News featuring local color. These two columns accent the jumpers’ refinements of rodent control and civic duty ...and also accents their roles as Kings, maybe.

Had to go out to the Aerial Project the other day after work to consult with Mick Swift over some darned thing or other — I forgot it completely when I found him and two of his crew in the food locker.

There they were, the Terrible Trio, Swift, Chuck Mansfield, Johnny Kirkley, all three poking around among the canned goods after a snarling ferocious man-eating mouse they had spotted. Ol’ Mick, the foreman of the crew, was armed with a 14 gauge yardstick, Chuck a 25 caliber bench brush, and Johnny a 22 caliber ruler—and they were just barely a match for the rodent.

While they tripped over their own feet, each other, and spilled cans, the little rascal would scamper back and forth, smiling at antics, and occasionally pausing long enough to sneer a bit and maybe chuckle before diving out of range over a can of peas.

The Jumpers wouldn’t give up tho’, and with cries of “Head him off at the peaches!” or, “Hit him in the asparagus and I’ll get him when he comes through the corn” they stayed on the chase for at least 20 minutes before the mouse tired of it all and came out with his paws up.

Yes, he’s up there in Mouse Heaven now, but I’ll bet he still remembers the Great Hunt, and smiles—or sneers—as he flutters over to plunk on his harp, after all, didn’t he keep three mighty hunters busy going in all directions at once?

—Summer 1965

Heard there was a fire in a house just behind the Chit Chat last weekend. Naturally, being so close to a dispenser of moose milk there was bound to be someone nearby—this time the someone’s included smokejumpers. I was told the story by a few of the jumpers (being such shy, modest, retiring...men, they specifically requested that no names be mentioned).

Seems a few of them were making the arduous trek from the Chit Chat to the Sportsman when they realized a fire was in progress — and not a tree involved. First, the group looked the situation over carefully to decide how best to hoedag a fire break around the structure when one of the smarter suggested maybe a house fire was different from a forest fire. A couple of them grabbed a garden hose, another ambled over to the Sportsman for reinforcements — more smokejumpers, not a bucket of suds — and an even thoughtier fellow strolled over to Joe Tellvick’s Diary Queen and allowed as how it might not be a bad idea for the Volunteer Fire Department to be called. They were, and with the assistance of the jumpers on the scene, the fire was out in record time.

—Summer 1966
Photographs

Phil Clark & Al Boucher

Jim Allen

Roger Newton, Don Basie & Orville Looper
Jerry Schmidt & Jim Roberts

Al Boucher & Cliff Hamilton

Jim Roberts, Bill Denton, Tom Petigrew, Chuck Mansfield & Gil Boundy
Rookies First Jump 1962
Photographs

John Manley

Chuck Sheley

Charley Moseley, Steve Johnson & Hal Ward
SISKIYOU SMOKEJUMPER BASE 1943 - 1981

Book of Gobi 3

Pete Landis & Bob Henderson

John Manley, Max Allen & Steve Johnson

Standard Fire Pack

Jim Schmidt & Jerry Schmidt

Tommy Smith & Hal Ward
Photographs

Shock Tower Training

Jerry John, Mike Johnson & 1965 Rookies

Pete Landis & Doug Hopkins

Let Down Training
Butch Hill, Chuck Mansfield & Pete Landis

Chuck Mansfield

John Cowan & Hal Ewing

Charley Moseley

Paul Boyer
Photographs

Doug Hopkins, Cliff Hamilton, John Manley & Johnny Kirkley

Ed Jones

Doug Hopkins
Smokejumpers Call In Reserves
For Sunday’s Thunderstorm

Sunday night’s thunderstorm once again caused the Siskiyou Aerial Project to “pull all the props” in its effort to keep large forest fires under control. With reports coming into the station faster than men could fly out, a call for reserves went out.

The Redding California jumper base reported with 30 men and a extra Beechcraft airplane. Missoula, Montana sent down ten more, bringing local jump strength to 68. The extra strength was quickly put to work Monday alone, 52 men jumped on 23 fires an aftermath of the lightning. Tuesday, 28 jumpers bailed out over three fires, bringing the total to 26 fires in two days, with no injuries, and no fires getting away.

A near-accident occurred Monday when John Cowan, Grants Pass, piloting a twin Beech, returned from a Siskiyou fire drop with Spotter Gary Peters and foreman Mick Swift aboard. Cowan dropped the gear, but a malfunction kept the warning light from informing him the wheels had not fully gone into position. The Beech came in for a belly landing, damaging the propellers, flaps, and rudder assembly. (In their retracted position, the wheels extended down far enough to hold the aircraft off the ground so the hull damaged was done) The Beech is now waiting parts for repairs. —IV News, 7.29.1965
Photographs

ParaSail Training

Practice Jump

Practice Jumps 1965 Seats Field
/SISKIYOU SMOKER JUMPER BASE 1943 - 1981

Lightning Strike Winema Forest

Siskiyou Forest Fire

Johnny Kirkley

Butch Hill
Photographs

John Manley, Jay Decker & Ed Weissenback

Butch Hill

Cliff Hamilton & LeRoy Cook
Douglas Beck

Cargo Drop
Photographs

Jim Allen

Mick Swift

Betty Stoltenberg, Administration
L-R: Ralph Williams, Mick Swift, Johnny Kirkley, Cliff Hamilton, Doug Hopkins & LeRoy Cook

Practice Jump

Water Practice Jump
Photographs

Rookie Class 1967
L-R Front: Doug Bucklew, Skip O’Dell, Gary Sharp, Bob McCray, Dale Garner & Bob Remly
Back: Dan Casey, Lee Smith, Skip Bunn, Jerry Katt & J.D. Scott
Ray Farinetti

Gary Dunning, Ron McMinimy & Doug Bucklew

Torture Rack Training

Reserve Parachute Training

Hal Ewing
Photographs

Joe Niesen, Dave Ward, Wes Brown & Troop Emonds

Gary Thornhill, Allen Owen, Steve Mankle, Larry Owen & Mick Swift
I T WAS BACK IN THE 50s. My folks dropped my twin brother and me off at the Cranberry Theater in Bristol, Connecticut, for the Saturday Matinee. I figured it was going to be a cowboy movie. I had my cap gun tucked under my coat so I could help out if bad guys came up behind Roy, Gene or Hoppy.

I was a bit disappointed when it wasn’t a cowboy movie. My brother told me it was a nature film. It was “Red Skies Over Montana.” After the movie my brother said, “Hey, Brother! That would be fun to be a smokejumper.” From that point on, all I ever wanted to be was a smokejumper. I learned something important from that film – I’d pack a handgun for bad guys who’d attack with Pulaskis.

As I got older I lied about my age and started fighting fires in the Eastern Hardwoods in the eighth grade...kept doing it in high school. When I went off to Forestry School, I kept writing to all the jump bases trying to get hired on. Most wrote back saying, ”We only hire people with Western fire fighting experience.”

One summer after all my usual rejection notices, I sold LOVE TREES to home owners and college students to give to their girl friends. As the tree grows, so would their mutual love. With money earned, I took a boat to Europe and got a job with the Austrian Forest Service. My vague plan was to head East, out of Europe. I didn’t have a map or any idea what countries I had to go through in order to get to the edge of Asia to hop across the small body of water between there and Australia, but it just couldn’t be much. It seemed easier to get to Australia from Europe. Rather than cross the Atlantic again, then cross America, then somehow cross the big pond called the Pacific. I figured I was on the right track. With high spirit, backpack, sleeping bag, a couple of canteens, and my trusty Austrian ice axe, I headed into the vast unknown. Each day a quest of endless dawns...ever reaching toward the rising sun.
I arrived in Australia flat broke, hungry, and listless. After hitch-hiking across a huge desert I ended up in Men’s Mission of down-on-their-luck Hobos on Francis Street in Sydney. So, after a week of just donuts and cocoa, I jammed some extra donuts in my pocket, and headed for the Sydney Harbor headed for Queensland. A few days later I got out of a car, walked to the middle of the main bridge in Brisbane, and looked to see a giant green lettered sign that simply said “FORESTRY.” I walked over, entered the building, and told them I was starving. I’d come to Australia to get fire experience to become a smokejumper. They hired me on the spot, and sent me off to a forestry camp some 60 miles to the North.

It was a great camp. They gave me a little cabin to bunk in. There was a mess hall where all the forest workers ate. I really appreciated the meals. Each building had its own rainwater collecting tank. There was a fire pit to build a fire in and boil enough water to mix with cold water from special shower buckets out behind the cabins. We all worked on forestry projects mostly thinning and pruning slash pine plantations. Vietnam was just brewing, and all these guys were duty bound to warn me not to get mixed up in a war. All wars were simply filled with disappointment, loss, and missed opportunities. That was their one and great universal message to the young Yank. Just do not get mixed up in a war – avoid it at all costs.

The fires were both in open Eucalyptus forests and Slash Pine plantations. So, after being on a few fires, the American Smokejumper bases got a new round of aggressive applications. I wrote Congressmen and Senators in Connecticut asking them to please write to those smokejumper bases and tell them I was really wanting and deserving of a job. Foreign often hostile ground was negotiated in order to become a worthy smokejumper candidate. “Better give me a job or it will be the biggest mistake you ever made in your entire life!” I wrote.

After being a hunter there for about 4 months we were at one of the huts in the middle of the Urewera National Park. A helicopter landed with supplies like sugar, tea, flour, potatoes, yeast, apples, butter, onions, carrots, matches, ammo and a packet of letters for me from all over the world. The big letter was from the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base telling me I have a job, and to be there June 10th for rookie training. There was one thing that I needed to do. Go get a physical.

I still only had 35 cents and not too many doctors in the middle of the Ureweras. There were no maps, or compasses there. My new hunter friends came up with some money for me to buy a physical. They told me how to go find a Doctor. It was going to be a 3 day trek to the nearest track or road out to a small settlement with a Doctor.

The first night I made it to a hut that they said would be there. Next night, was spent on a ridge under a fly. The following day was spent traversing a small knob and the following hill in the distance. I was never sure I was traveling in the right direction, just kept going till I emerged on brilliant-green, grass hills with sheep,
fences and sheep dogs in the far distance. I followed a winding dirt road that gave way to houses.

I was in shorts, had a New Zealand green skin bag on my back with fresh deer tails strung off the main pocket on the back of the bag. I had a pretty long, black beard, knife and cartridge belt and my rifle. I kept going and people looked at me. They knew I had come from the bush and knew exactly what I did as soon as they saw the tails. The doctor was supposed to be in a white house at the end of a road. Presto! It was right at the end of the street I was on. The doctor asked me to jump up and down a couple times, and breath. No big deal! He filled out the papers. I asked him to mail it off to the smokejumper base in Oregon, and he only charged me about half of what the guys had given me.

By and by the months went by and eventually I found myself getting out of a car in O’Brien, Oregon. From there I walked the last mile to the Base. The air was clear, sunny, and the snow covered Siskiyou Mountains were far more beautiful than anything ever imagined. I walked into a land, that had training towers, and classic things of which I was soon to be a part of.

I checked in and met a few of the smokejumpers. They looked me over and asked me where I had just come from. I told them I was just getting in from New Zealand. “Are you a New Zealand citizen?” someone asked. “No, I’m an American,” was my response. “What were you doing in New Zealand?” another asked. “Well, I was a deer culler,” I responded. “What is that?” a guy by the name of Ray Farinetti asked. “Well, you know what a hunter is. I had a job hunting deer.” I said. “You shot deer for a living?” asked Ray. “What did you do with the deer? Did you sell the meat or the hides?” Ray continued. “Neither. I just shot them and left them for the pigs to eat,” I responded.

That night a small plane landed at the base and a big blond haired, broad shouldered guy got dropped off for jumper training. I introduced myself, to this guy named Gary Buck. I told Gar he could be my roommate. That was the beginning of my tour at the Gobi.

Many of the veteran jumpers would return in the wee-wee hours from an excursion into town. The following morning they all vowed not go to town that night, but they always managed to shake off the hangovers and play a spirited game of volley ball. So went each morning on the Gobi with sound of the green chain from Rough and Ready Mill and the smell of saw dust from across the street. What an adventure! Made me feel like I’d never done a days work in my entire life.
I’ve got this theory. Most all smokejumpers suffer from acrophobia or extreme fear of heights. It starts with the idea that by far the scariest thing to do would be to jump out of an airplane.

Acrophobia really doesn’t show up while standing or sitting in the door of the airplane. Yeah, everybody is scared, but somehow you are, after all, looking out at a little toy world passing under you. You have been conditioned to launch your body from the door of the airplane at the slap of the spotter’s hand on your shoulder. Your instinctive reflexes take over, disregarding your fear of heights. You close your eyes and fall out of the plane. Where the relative nature of height really manifests itself is in the art of high tree climbing. Spurs, bark, rope, trembling muscles, and aching shins.

As rookies, Terry Mewhinney taught us how to climb trees in order to get cargo chutes and personnel chutes out of the tall trees of Oregon. Terry put on a rather spectacular display of speed climbing. He raced up and down a tree in a sort of squirrel like scampering; with skill, speed, agility, and daring for a human.

Then in his raspy, high-pitched yelling manner, he told us to get up the trees or head on down the road. Needless to say not one of us could do anything except scare the hell out of ourselves...just trying to reach the amazing height of 10 feet.

Next time out we all got up about fifty feet. We were really shaky and had to listen to Mewhinney’s undying ridicule and hammering of our poor egos. We ended up entering the canopy limbs, doing limb-overs, and so on, which was not as bad as I had expected.
Next time out they were dropping cargo chutes in trees, and we’d all get one to get out. What an exercise in exhaustion that promised to be. We all did OK getting our cargo chute out of our tree, but our legs were quivering, and we were all spent.

Hal Ewing, our jumper pilot, dropped one cargo chute in a particularly large tree. Mewhinney put two climbing belts together, and still there was not enough rope left to clip the end snaps into the “D” Rings on his climbing belt. In fact, he was about two feet short of even having the rope reach his body. He kept going around and around the tree throwing the rope, and was just not gaining much altitude for all his expenditure of energy. He was working his butt off, only to gain a few inches each time he worked his way around the tree.

To me it was obvious even Mewhinney could not hold onto that rope much longer, and there was just too much drag for one person to make it up the tree. It was just too dangerous. So I was trying to tell Terry there was more than one way to skin a cat.

Mewhinney got all wound up and asked me if I could climb, that tree. “Yeah, I could climb that tree, no sweat,” I responded. As I started to explain, he would not let me get a word in edgewise. With an ample degree of spirit and loud, screechy adjectives, he challenged, “I bet you can’t climb that tree and get the chute out.”

I declined the bet with the statement, “Mewhinney I won’t bet you on that! Hell, it would be like taking candy from a baby!”

I was serious. I knew I could climb the tree, and really did not want to take advantage of Terry. For all his noise, I liked the little guy, and he was a character.

I’m not exactly sure how much it started out as, but it must have been about $10.00, which was actually a lot of money back then, when we got $199.00 every two weeks before federal, state taxes, deductions for meals, room and board. There was no such thing as time and a half overtime, so we were way under $75.00 a week.

Mewhinney kept badgering me, and of course, others were sure I had talked way too soon. The bet was on. Then it snow-balled. Everyone saw an easy way to make $10.00. I reluctantly had to cover some $150 in bets.

My roommate Gar Buck was really worried about the entire thing and kept saying, “Troop how are you going to cover all those bets?” “Gar, I used to climb trees in college. I’m pretty sure I can get up there...just a little doubt...but really not much,” I replied.

The stipulations of the wager were these: Leroy Cook was to drive me out to the Cuts where the tree was with a radio. I was to spend as long as it took to get up the tree and cut the chute out. When I had either completed the task or failed, Leroy was to inform the base of the results.
Two guys were betting on my side. They were the Base Manager, Delos Dutton and Jerry Howe. Everybody else pretty much thought if Mewhinney had a bitch of a time getting just about 12 feet up that tree, there was no way with Troop’s experience he was going to climb 12 feet, let alone all the way up into the crown to get the chute out.

A lot of my pals like Gary Buck and Gary Mills just would not bet against me, but they knew I was perhaps one of the worst of the rooks in tree climbing. It looked bad for the kid.

As Leroy and I were heading out to the Cuts, Gary Buck just made it back from running into town. He handed me a bag full of foot long spikes. “Troop, if you can’t make it up the tree, use these to climb up the tree!” he said. “Gar, don’t you think I can do this?” I asked.

Now, the tree was really massive. It’s first limb was about 80 feet up. There was a big Madrone tree directly under that first limb, and it had a large horizontal top to it.

From the top of the Madrone to the first limb on the huge Doug Fir, there was still a space of 40 to 50 feet. I climbed the Madrone tree and stood gingerly or sat on the slightly sloping top. Then I threw a bullet knot over the first limb of the old Doug Fir with a standard ½” manila rope we used to haul stuff up and down a tree.

The only really scary or unsure part of all this was after I climbed up the rope to the limb. I had to swing up over the limb without rolling over it. Sort of like a cowboy throwing himself over a horse without rolling over its back, and ending up under it.

So after climbing the rope and with sort of a faint hearted roll, I found myself sitting atop the limb. At that point I figured I had it made. Being scared of heights, I kept myself tied in all the way up to the top the tree. Then I began cutting the chute out.

Then Leroy called in and told the guys at the base, “Troop is just finishing cutting the chute out now.” They thought he was trying to be funny. We had not been gone very long. "Chute coming down now???!?” Leroy radioed. “OK! Troop is out of the tree, and safely on the ground. We are heading back to the base!” Leroy spoke into the radio. (I rappelled down from the tree using an old “trick” incorporating the use of taut line hitch above and below the free rope that went over the limb.)

If it had been anyone else but “Leadhook”(Keith Leroy Cook), everyone back at the base would have thought the whole thing was a scam, and that we were bringing back some rag other than the chute from that particular tree. Leadhook was totally trustworthy, and he just did not do practical jokes. So when we showed up back at the base…..the payout was immediate and on the spot.
Delos, Jerry and I each rolled about $48.50 or so into our humble little billfolds and most of the guys lost $10 to $15.00. The skeptics lost $20.00.

What I remember was how fun it was. Even Terry Mewhinney enjoyed (with a good laugh) paying off the wager instantly with genuine fun in his manner of dealing with rookies. This was the first time I ever heard him do anything except sneer at rookies. Someone told me that his good buddy Tommy Smith, had cut the old Madrone tree down, and had intended to manipulate me into another bet.
WELL, IT WAS A SMALL TWO-MANNER in the lodge pole-Ponderosa mix of trees somewhere out of Redmond. Mouse was my jump partner, and it was a small, easy fire. There was the camp out as we waited through the night to look for smokes during six-hours of day light, then our pack out.

We took out the map, oriented it with the compass, and plotted a course straight to the nearest road that was about four miles.

On the map was a long lava flow about a mile out. There was no way to go around it, so we figured we’d just plow through it. It looked wide, but I figured it a better deal than going through a lot of lodge pole blow-down, which always caused Mouse lots of bitching. He was so short he just could not climb over a lot of the blow down like us bigger guys. He had to always go around, which made it twice as long a pack out for him as a normal human mule.

We got to the lava flow. At first it was not too bad, we were doing rather well finding our way across one rock after another. We were talking about the war and our experience in the Marine Corps. Mouse always got me laughing to the point where I got weak.

I think he intentionally did that, because he knew it slowed me down and we could stay together more. It was when we stopped for a break that he’d try to say he thought he had grabbed too much weight during the mad scramble to pack up. It was a good natured try to con me into carrying a few cargo chutes or something.

I remember us sitting down in the rocks, drinking water, and then helping each other up with our packs on. Then, that hard part done, we’d kick off again. When
it was just him and me, he’d start in on some hilarious war story. When we were with the mix of anti-war guys and folks who just elected not to go to the war, he really only went on with Marine Corps human interest stories. They were just spoofs on the whole culture of the Marine Corps and cause any and all to just see the random nature of people being and doing hilarious stuff. When it was just him and me, he could really get into some humor that only those who knew the culture of the Corps could find humorous.

Finally there was a brief period of quiet where I told a story. I went on and on and when I got to the point where I expected a laugh, I did not hear anything. I turned around and Mouse was gone.

As far as I could see around me were maroon lava rocks. There was nothing to get behind. Nothing to shield sight of Mouse with a huge Red pack out bag, under which I expected to see two small but mighty legs moving. We were in the middle of the Lava field. I could see miles in all directions with no views obstructed by any trees or vegetation. Everything was flat.

Mouse was not a practical joker. He could not be hiding on me, just to be funny. Yet he was gone. It was so strange. At first I thought it was a weird dream. I started yelling after I back tracked a hundred feet or so. I did not want to take off my pack, but figured I’d try to figure something out. So I started to sit down and of course fell backward and ended up looking at the sky. I did not see any UFOs that could have beamed him up and away from me.

I had not noticed any drop off holes he could have fallen into. This was fast becoming not at all funny. The old saying was, If you come back without your jump gear from a fire, you don’t have a job.” What the hell are the consequences of coming back with no jump partner or any of his gear?I tried to awaken from any possible dream. This was real. I concluded it was best to leave the pack where it was, and just start zig-zagging back from, where we had come.

There was no point gridding in front of where the pack was, because he was last seen behind me. I started a system of yelling and gridding backwards from the pack. I had a Pulaski with me. I used it as a walking stick-probe device. I got about as far back from the pack as I remember last seeing Mouse. My pack was just a small dot off in the distance.

About an hour had passed since I noticed Mouse gone. I was just standing there leaning on the Pulaski, when I heard a rock fall. I headed toward the noise, and there was a little swale. I yelled for Mouse and heard the slightest noise. Strange as this sounds, I started moving around a few rocks and discovered an upside down boot.

No doubt about it, it was Mouse. It took a while to get him out, but he had tripped into an odd, steep, and deep depression. The heavy pack pinned him upside down.
at a really steep angle. His hard hat protected his head, but the heavy pack atop
him prevented him from getting out. The more he tried to move the more rocks
slid down and locked him in. He was trapped and covered. He was singing out,
but all was muffled under his heavy pack and into the spaces between the rocks.

He was really upset with himself, and I kept telling him to put himself in my shoes.
I’d lost Mouse, and had no idea what to do. I was so happy to see him again. Of
all the odd stories he related, he saw no humor at all in that lava field predicament.

He insisted that he should quit jumping due to not being capable of doing the job.
“Mouse, stop being melodramatic, that could happen to anyone. Had I fallen into
the one hole in this entire lava flow there is no way I could have done anything
to get out from under that pack or somehow do upside down push-up movements
to push the pack up hill with rock atop of it and plenty of side drag.

“Just find some sort of beauty in the fact that no one is throwing hand grenades
at us. Plus we are within hours of having an ice cold beer.

“Hey Mouse, tell me again about the time you were deep in the jungle, and had
slid into a pile of elephant poop, the leeches were inching toward you and a bunch
of NVA were trying to figure out where the freshly disturbed elephant crap was
causing them to look around extra carefully. Dressed in camo and leaves, you
could not move as the leeches were climbing up on you?

“I mean being covered up by Oregon Lava rocks was a hell of a lot better fix to be
in than being covered with leeches getting ready to suck on you and having an
armed NVA about ready to find you, ah Mouse???”
WAY BACK WHEN Christ was a Corporal, the rivers ran deeper, and the mountains were taller a lot of campers at Forest Service Campgrounds were being wiped out by falling dead limbs. To do something about all this, the United States Forest Service called on smokejumpers. It was a job for the men of the Gobi.

I was the renowned and acknowledged weakest climber of all the rookies, even though I had won the big wager. Ray Farinetti took me under his wing, to teach me limb cleaning in the tallest pine tree in the world.

It was an orange-barked Ponderosa Pine tree set aside on the Galice Ranger District on the Siskiyou. It was a spectacular tree in a beautiful campground. It was duly recognized as a genuine national landmark. It had a split-rail fence around it. It was 246 feet tall. It was a beautiful tree. The bleached-gray dead limbs actually added to its character and good looks. For safety, the recreation types in the Forest Service wanted all the dead limbs taken off so they would not fall and injure someone. It is amazing how many deaths and injuries from falling limbs in campgrounds get tallied each year.

Ray just declared himself a great climber and told me he was going to show me how to be a great climber, too. We started with two climbing belts each. Both were always tied in, since we were hand cutting these huge foot-in-diameter, dead limbs.

Ray really did convey several very important things to this ol’ slow learner.

1. Keep your legs straight, pull yourself right in. Balls and chin against the tree. Trust your partner to throw your rope for you, so that it goes up high above
the thrower’s head. This was the way to climb those really big trees. To move around and around a tree with a lone climber only able to throw his own rope a few inches high each time, always moving to the right to inch upward, you could spend two days in a tree just trying to get to the place where you could use just one rope.

2. Relax, “Above all relax,” was the battle cry of Ray Farinetti that day. Never grip your rope hard, use gravity to do most of your easing. When you are in a tree for a full day, you really do have to learn how to take your spurs out of the tree, and just relax. If you ease your body in slowly against the bark, so that there is no space between you and the tree, you can just hang there and the friction will hold you steady. Hanging from the rope with body against the tree. The problem with being in a tree all day long is that your weight on the spurs begins to prey on your arches. Therefore, just take those spurs out, and periodically hang there to relieve the pain in your arches. Just hang there and let all muscles rest and recover.

Once we got into the green limbs, we worked out a way to weave each other’s ropes through the limbs so, that we were always tied in. It was a great experience, and Ray really did teach me a lot on that climb. A lot of the missing building blocks of training got conveyed, those that Terry Mewhinney left out all the while he was yelling at us to either get up those trees or down the road…………… with his customary final emphatic “god dammitt.”

Our pals Tommy Albert and Leadhook drove out from the jumper base with some cold beer. We were exhausted that night, but what a great night to be drinking a super cold beer around a campfire. The tough job done, and the story of what we were doing all day made it into a funny story, which of course Ray narrated.

There was great laughter. We cooked our supper in a bugless, cool, windless night. I remember it was definitely August. It was the one week in August when meteor showers were at their height. Throughout our meal, our beers, and even when we laid down to sleep in the open air, we could look up at the sky and see the shooting stars all night long till we fell asleep. The fresh cut pine sap was in the air and the smell of the campfire made it the best place I’d ever been to, and the Gobites were sure pleasant to hang out with.

I think it was that night, where smokejumps and pack outs had already been made that I deemed the Gobi, the job, and the Gobites the best of all places to be and each day another surprise adventure.

The tree seemed to produce more and more dead limbs after our climb. Within a couple years after our all day double-climb (while both Ray and I were off doing our military service) the Big Pine Tree passed on. Like all living things great and small, it had completed its great circle of life. So by the time we returned from the Service, some other crew had cut the great giant down and it was gone from our planet.
Ray, after a fun time at the 2010 Gobi Museum project and a few months after making his way back to Florida, had a big heart attack that brought him down. So he, too, is gone from our earth. He too entered the great recycling system to redistribute the nutrients aboard this great planet. I think of you often, Ray, mostly when looking up at some big tree. I miss you Ray. You talked so much and made such fun of all my doings in that tree. The day passed quickly. Oh, too, our time aboard this ship called earth. What a beautiful planet we got to live on!!! What a great tree that hosted our efforts and our laughter when we were young and in our prime.
IT WAS A LATE SEASON FIRE CALL TO NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, mid-October on the Six Rivers. It was late afternoon as we circled a large burning snag. It was obviously a two manner. Walt Congleton and I jumped into the big trees with no real jump spot. We both lucked out, threaded down between moss-drapped giants, and made it to the ground amid big rocks and massive trunks.

We lined the fire and cooled down the bottom of the snag so that we could stand there to drop the tree. It was getting dark fast as Walt dumped the tree. The ground was so steep that the thing powered down the slope. We could hear it still sliding, snapping branches and kicking rocks loose 5 minutes after it hit the ground. It was way, way down a super steep slope. We figured it was so far down there, and getting dark, that it would not be good to head down on such bad ground. We elected to get a campfire going.

The plan was to pack all our stuff up in the morning, when we could see, find the burning tree, and deal with it. Then it started raining. We had no tents to shelter up, so we just rolled up in our chutes and jump suits. It also started getting cold.

By morning we were soaked to the bone and miserable. The fire around the stump had virtually washed itself out. We got something to eat, but our main concern was to wring out our stuff as best we could, put the chutes and gear in our packs, and try to go check out the burning snag far below. Then we’d get out of there and not have to climb back up to our soggy, miserable camp. But it poured and poured incredibly hard.
The ground, as the snag had told us as it launched its power drive, was incredibly steep and dangerous. We could not follow the route of the tree because we came to drop-offs, which we had to go around. It was so slippery and dangerous we had to be more concerned with falling and one or both of us getting hurt on this decent. We ended up lowering our packs with our let-down ropes. We lost all hope of ever finding the snag and ensuring it was dead out.

We rationalized that, as wet as it was, nothing could possibly burn in the downpour. There was supposed to be a trail below us following Lightning Creek. The revised plan was that if we got to the trail we’d keep a lookout for the snag at the bottom of the drainage, because we kept moving to the left of the area, where it had raced down the mountain. We were heading down into the upstream direction of the water below us, so if we ever could make it to the stream and trail, we would cross the path of the heavy, barreling, burning snag. We figured it must have made it to the bottom of the drainage.

Finally we hit the stream. Then came the maddening climb up the other side of the drainage to hit the trail. When we finally got on the trail we figured we would be OK, but the rain kept pouring cold water on us. It was draining the energy away from our bodies. The trail was washed out in places, which made us scramble across slippery Madrone leaves and bare clay steep slopes. No sign of our snag, which we still hoped to run into.

About two miles down the trail we both started getting cramps: leg cramps, back cramps, arm and shoulder cramps. When we stopped to gain some sort of relief from the cramps, extreme shivering kicked in. We were both beginning to believe we were in serious trouble. Our bodies were beginning not to work right. I don’t remember getting hungry, but we were in serious need of getting something warm in our stomachs. Our core temperatures were dropping from the incessant pouring of cold water, sapping the very life out of us.

We had buried most of our heavy canned foods, because with all the soaked chutes and other things our packs were already enormously heavy. During our latest cramp up and shivering episode I dug into my ditty bag, and there was one of those giant, 10 inch-long, Hershey bars. We split that, and it immediately gave us a shot of strength and energy to get up and start covering ground again.

Eventually, after another five miles or so, found a man and a woman with a small campfire going. We were once again seriously shivering, and the cramps were back with a vengeance. We asked if we could warm ourselves near the fire. To our surprise and disbelief the guy was not happy at all with our strange out-of-nowhere arrival and gave us the cold shoulder. The woman was able to see we were in real trouble, so she told us to get near the fire. The guy was throwing around a little rope under some of the trees trying to get enough dry sticks to burn.
After a bit of a warming. Walt told the couple that we could get the chainsaw out and cut them a stack of wood, which would work out for everyone. The guy was not happy, but the sticks he was harvesting were thumb-size, and it was obvious he was not going to be able to keep up with things. We ignored the guy and cut a bunch of big dead wood. Our cramps were crippling us so we kept trading off on the saw. Eventually we had a serious stack of fuel.

The woman took charge of everything. She told us to get warm, regarding his meager efforts with sticks as ineffectual. She expected him to figure it out, that it was a mutual help-out thing going on there. Her body language and looks put him in his proper place. They had rain gear and a tent. Walt and I kept turning around and around to breathe some degree of life into our barely-functioning bodies.

We had come about seven miles to this little camping area. A Forest Service guy showed up and told us he could not drive down to the camp site beside the beautiful stream, but if we could make it up the steep washed-out road to the rig, he’d get us out of there. I’m sure that like me, Walt will remember this as a real uncomfortable ordeal. It certainly made me think about always carrying waterproof matches and always having ways of starting a fire. Never again did I ever go into the woods without having a fly to build a fire under, a set of rain gear, and a heat-securing wool sweater or polar fleece hooded jacket.

When I went to Alaska, the jumpers up there taught us how to be always ready to protect yourself from hypothermia. Not only that, they trained us to be always comfortable for days and weeks of being out there in the raw elements of extended rain and snow. We came to actually not only be comfortable, but to enjoy camping in the far North in ragged conditions, weeks in cold rain, and fog.

Looking back on our experience in Northern California, I know now Walt and I should have been able to set up a comfortable, dry camp, get a good nights sleep, and start off dry and well-fed. We could have fished a few of those beautiful holes filled with trout on Lightning Creek or Clear Creek and set up a shelter anywhere along the way for a fire, making cups of cocoa, tea or coffee. We could even have roasted that trout! At any rate, we could have arrived home totally warm, with a classic camping expedition story. We were just too used to jumping in the summer and enjoying our lot as fair-weather campers. We needed to learn a few things in order to conduct ourselves as if we belonged out there where we did business.

Walt and I lucked out. That snag never evolved into a reburn, so in that way we did not do everything wrong. Finally, winter came, and it kept on raining.
IN THE EARLY 70’S, Ray and Mack Truck rented a house just south of O’Brien. Kathy and I also rented a house in the same area. It was in the fall, when all the teachers and college students had left the Gobi. There were only a dozen or so of us still around. We would pick up slop over slash burns and hunter fires.

Ray and I planned a deer hunting trip one morning, out behind where Mack and he lived. We figured we could make a quick hunt and still get back to the base by the time we were expected to start work. We met about daylight and away we went. We figured out what time we needed to be back to the rig and make it to work on time. We separated and headed up this little valley. There was a small creek in the bottom, and we decided that we ought to hunt on both sides of the creek. After an hour or so of hunting I figured it was time to head back, so I sat down and had a smoke. All of a sudden, I heard this splashing coming up the creek. I figured Ray had jumped a big buck, and it was coming up the creek right at me.

It was a buck of sorts. A buck salmon with Ray hot on its heels.

Ray got up by where I was, threw his 7mm up to his shoulder and touched a round off. Now he didn’t hit the salmon but hit close enough to him that the old salmon just rolled over and floated down to Ray. We were laughing and carrying on.

Ray was already talking about how he was going to tell everybody how he got his buck.

Now, shooting salmon is not sanctioned as a legal pastime, but we figured what the hell. As soon as we returned to the base, Ray was telling everybody the story
and also saying he was going to cook the salmon for lunch. We all pitched in and somebody picked up salad fixings and french bread. Forty-five minutes or so before lunch, Ray went over and started cooking the fish.

At lunch time we all headed over to the mess hall for salmon. As it always happens, whether it be a party, a birthday or any planned event, the fire siren went off. As luck would have it, Ray was at the top of the jump list. Everybody headed to the loft, got the six guys suited up and away they went. Well, we all looked at each other and off to the mess hall we went. The salmon and fixings were great. Very tasty and nobody could stand to think about this wonderful meal going to waste. Yes, it was all gone.

About a half hour later, the news reached us that it was a dry run and the airplane was returning with all jumpers on board.

I have to say that I have seen Ray pissed before, but I don’t know that I had seen him that pissed. Even after explaining to him that it was in honor of his outstanding preparation of the meal that we didn’t want it to go to waste, he wasn’t hearing it. It didn’t help that the more pissed he got the more humor we all saw in it and the comments started to fly, with full bent-over laughter. Ray reminded me about this all the time. Of course, I could never pass up making comments like, “That was a good meal but not as good as that salmon lunch you fixed for everybody”.

Buck Salmon
A

BOUT THE SAME TIME AS THE FISH STORY, Ray and I jumped a fire down on the Sixes in California. It was a small fire but really steep and brushy. There was an old logging road about 300 yards from the fire and that was our jump spot. Amazingly, we both landed on the road. For some reason, we ended up with the big Homelite 2100 chainsaw. We weren’t excited to see it when it came floating down with the rest of the cargo. Ray volunteered me to run the saw, and he would throw brush. As it turned out, the big saw wasn’t that bad. I didn’t have to bend over to cut the brush, because it came with a 40 inch bar. Off we went, flanking the fire and scratching a line as we went.

It wasn’t long before we had cut off the head of the fire and were headed down hill to complete the line. About this time, a six-person ground crew showed up. The head man in charge came over, introduced himself and let us know that he was now the Fire Boss and that we should take a break while they finished the line. Ray suggested that it might be better if they took off and rewalked the line to make sure we didn’t have any slop overs.

You could tell right off that the head dude did not appreciate the fact that this GS-6 smokejumper was questioning his plan of attack. He did send some of his guys back to check the line, and Ray and I continued to build line. A little while later, Ray tapped me on the shoulder and told me to turn off the saw. I asked him what was up, and he proceeded to tell me that I was not qualified to run a saw. Of course, his comments were plenty loud enough that the official Fire Boss heard every comment Ray made. Ray went on to say that I did not have a green card, (the California answer to the red card that we later were required to have) and, therefore, I was not qualified to run a chainsaw. We had never heard of a green card, other than to prove you were a citizen of the U.S. I told Ray I had my
driver's license and asked if that would do. Ray went on to explain the situation and his comments did not show the proper respect that should be shown to the Fire Boss of a fire that was damn near completely lined. I said OK, this thing is getting a little heavy. I dropped the saw in the fire line and sat down. (Ray used to love to demonstrate how I dropped the chainsaw and said OK)

The Fire Boss said he had a guy who was qualified to run saw and that he could take over. He also said the guy could just use our saw. Oh no, Ray said. That was not going to happen. We were responsible for that saw, and we were not allowed to let anybody but smokejumpers use it. Ray's bullshit continued to piss this guy off to the point that he sent one of his guys back to their rig to get another saw. The guy returned with this little saw with an 18 inch bar. The production of fire line slowed right down.

Ray and I took our stuff and went to the bottom of the fire and grabbed something to eat. While we were sitting there eating, Ray continued to rip the Fire Boss a new one. We also noticed that there was a snag burning on the fire line that was going to need to come down. When the Fire Boss passed by, Ray asked if he was going to have his qualified sawman dump that snag. He said of course he was. Well, this snag was about 30 inches at the butt and was about 40 ft up to where it was broken off. Pretty soon the saw guy showed up and sized up the situation. Now this qualified chain saw operator didn't even put an under cut in the snag. He just started on one side and started cutting at a 45 degree angle down. Ray and I looked at each other and shook our heads. I told Ray, “I'll bet you that thing will settle back and pinch his saw.” Ray said he hoped it did. After awhile of going from one side to the other, trying to get this thing down, I won my bet. That snag settled back and pinched the saw so tight that he couldn't get it out. Ray said, “Now this is going to get good.”

After awhile the Fire Boss came over and asked if they could use our saw to get their saw out. I knew where this was going to go. And sure enough, Ray told him that he had already told him that we can't allow anybody to run this saw but a smokejumper. However, if he could find it in his vast knowledge of fire fighting to let his friend, GT, run his Homelite, we would attempt to dump the snag and get his qualified saw man's equipment out of the stump. Mr. Fire Boss did not want to agree, but he was in a bad situation and finally said OK. Ray and I dumped the snag back inside the fire line, and all was well with the world. As we were loading up our packs, the Fire Boss came over and asked us not to tell anybody that he let us run the chainsaw without being qualified. Ray was about ready to lay into this guy again when I stopped him. I told the Fire Boss it was no big deal and he could rest assured we weren't going to tell anybody, anything. Especially if he could get one of his guys to carry that saw up to the road. He never hesitated. He spun around, yelled at one of his guys and that saw was on its way to the road. Ray and I had to really keep it together and not fall over from laughing, while we packed the rest of our gear up the mountain.
SWIFT WAS FOND OF SAYING that the only difference between a fairly tale and a jump story was that a fairy tale began, “Once upon a time” and the jump story began, “This ain’t no shit.” This was undoubtedly a witty remark, but it gave the mistaken impression that jump stories often lacked full truthfulness. Believe it or not, and it takes a lot to believe, the following story is one hundred percent fact.

One summer morning the cook started work for the fire season. Her first task for the season was always to inventory the food that had been left from the summer before. Delos used to encourage jumpers to empty out the freezers and take the food home in order to avoid freezer burn and paying to run the freezer. But now we had a new boss. When the cook checked the freezer she found to her surprise that the turkey she had left in the fall was no longer there. She reported this to our new boss, the Project Air Officer (PAO). For reasons that will soon be obvious in order to prevent his embarrassment I will not identify this PAO to but instead will refer to him as “PAO T.” As he sometimes was known to do he simply went ballistic. High-pitched screams could be heard by our secretaries through the thin office walls as he reported this missing turkey to the Supervisor’s Office (S.O.) in Grant’s Pass. Those in our office could only hear one side of the conversation, but he seemed to be demanding an investigation by the FBI. The SO seemed to be less upset than the PAO, as neither the FBI nor the Sheriff’s department showed up to investigate. The Forest Investigator did not even show up to investigate. PAO T was not discouraged. He would conduct his own investigation into the missing turkey.
Many individual jumpers were called into the office, the door was shut and the jumpers were grilled. Everyone was mystified. They knew nothing about a turkey and could not believe that such a big thing was being made of a mere turkey. Normal activities at the base crawled to a halt as the turkey hunt consumed the PAO. I started asking around and quickly found the “culprit,” whom I will refer to as Jumper G. With the best of intentions, trying to avoid wastage caused by freezer burn, he had taken the turkey home for Thanksgiving. I shared the information with Troop. Neither one of us wanted Jumper G to suffer unjustly, so Troop volunteered to march into the office and confess. PAO T refused to believe him. When I heard this the solution seemed simple. I would walk in the office and confess. Surely PAO T who would put nothing past me and since he was always blaming me for something, would believe me. But for some reason he completely failed to believe me and kept asking whom I was protecting.

It somehow all petered out and PAO T went on to being outraged by other things. I think the hunt for the turkey thief was interrupted by an early fire bust. If I remember correctly PAO T never did find out who it was.
I worked at Cave Junction for twelve years and made 349 jumps. I stayed for the twelve years because I loved the Gobi. When I arrived at Cave Junction I already knew that I liked fire fighting. I had been a Hot Shot for three seasons. But nothing could have prepared me for the magic of the Gobi.

Even as a rookie I felt immediately accepted even though I was the slowest runner, the worst volleyball player, and never could learn to consistently do a proper landing roll. Everyone else seemed to be a jock and I was definitely not. I later decided that all one had to do to be accepted on the Gobi was to be reasonably cheerful, take fire suppression very, very seriously, think team rather than self, and work as hard as one possibly could on fires.

I found that fire line construction was different as a smokejumper than as a Hot Shot. No one builds line like a Hot Shot Crew. Three feet of mineral soil. Not two and a half feet, not three and a half feet, just three feet and it looked like a highway. Smokejumper line was quite different. It was closer to the fire, meandered more and varied in width: three inches here, six feet there. Instead of being in the middle of the canopy clearing, it was on the fire side of a canopy clearing. And then there was the question of supervision. Hot Shot line construction was supervised by a foreman and three squad leaders. When you watched smokejumpers build line you could not tell who was in charge because all were working as fast as possible.

It was quite a rookie year. On my first jump I had the sensation that I was flying just like a bird. On my rookie timber jump I managed to bag the tallest tree in ten miles and it took forever and lots of fear to get my chute out. It was the first
large tree I had ever been in. It took two climbing ropes tied together to make it around the tree. My first fire was a real barn burner on Grayback. When it was contained Jerry Katt picked us up in one of those old Forest Service green GMC crummys bringing a case of ice cold Albert’s milk. On the ride back I decided this was the job for me: aggressive initial attack, no mop up, and the Albert’s milk after it was all over. What else could one ask from life? During a bust on the Okanogan I jumped a two manner with Lou Wayers in Parachute Meadow, the site of the first fire jump in the Northwest. I was pleased that Lou not only asked me for my ideas as to how to attack the fire but accepted them, a squad leader paying attention to a rookie. I ended the year with a long post-season detail to Lake Chelan for aerial seeding and fertilizing of a large burn. That was really something, bouncing around in the back of the Twin Beech as you lifted fifty pound sacks of seed or fertilizer and dumped them in the hopper. Fifty pounds could get to be really heavy bouncing around in the back. I was teamed with Gar Leva as the pilot and as we flew back downhill to Chelan he let me fly and kept urging me to fly lower. He’d keep saying, “Lower boy, lower,” until I almost had to lift wings to get over snags. When the detail was over Mac Truck and Tommy Albert asked me to go with them to Mexico in Mac’s red GTO. It was a splendid trip to Mexico, and I recognized that if one hung around after the fire season was over one could often pick up enough work to make more than just a seasonal job of jumping.

Year followed magical year. Two manners, four manners, six manners and barn burners often involving multiple DC-3s from Redding and CJ or Redmond and CJ. The actual jumping became just another way to get to a fire. One was taught at Cave Junction not to brag about being a smokejumper and if someone asked what you did you should just mumble something about working on a fire crew for the Forest Service. One was not a smokejumper for glory. There was none. Some Bases tried to glorify smokejumping, not Cave Junction. Most employees in the Forest Service thought you were demented. The Forest Service told us quite directly and repeatedly that it was just a seasonal job, that you could not make a career out of it. No effort made to find you work after the short fire season except for Delos who did a wonderful job finding us work cruising timber, building trail, or burning slash. The Forest Service did not know or seem to care how hard we worked or how good fire fighters we were. Recognition and appreciation mostly came only from your peers.

We made multiple trips back East where squirrely winds and ever present power lines made jumping “interesting.” We moved around from state to state: Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee following patterns of lightning and arson. Line building could be ridiculously fast with a Council tool scraping away ground litter. The Wise Inn featured grits for breakfast. Dart gun fights and water pistol fights broke the monotony at night. The worst pack out of my life occurred in the Great Smokey National Park. We were rained on all night with no tent, sleeping bags, or food. Hunger drove me to eating wild ramps, a cousin of garlic, and discovering that they made a poor diet if you were away from a supply of Tums. The pack out was all down hill. The vegetation was
so thick it did not allow cross-country travel, so we hiked down a streambed filled with boulders the size of small cars, stepping down from one stone to the next. The next day my aching knees were the size of cantaloupes.

The crew wrote a letter to the Regional Office commending Delos for his management style and the way he trusted his jumpers and we in turn trusted him. The whole crew signed the letter. We later heard that it was quite a scene in the Regional Office when they opened that letter and saw all of those signatures. They immediately wondered what sort of trouble those rebels at Cave Junction were up to now. The Chief of Fire was quite pleased with the letter and Delos got a Quality Step Increase. We made trips to La Grande and stayed at the Pony Soldier hearing tales of Cave Junction jumpers rappelling out of the fourth story of the old La Grand Hotel. We had fire busts at the Gobi and raced back to immediately suit up and jump again.

When Bowen ran the base at Redmond I had a long discussion with him about pilots. He was trying to make the case that government pilots were just a bunch of trouble and a waste of money, that contract pilots were the way to go. That certainly was not our experience. Hal Ewing and Greg Schmidt were as good as smokejumper pilots get. I once jumped a two manner out of a Beech and Hal was so good on cargo runs that he put the fire pack into the fire. By contrast some of the contract pilots I spotted with liked to drop cargo from three thousand feet.

We had a wild party on White School House Road where I believe that Dunning for the first time used “Brother” to refer to another smoke jumper, a usage that has since spread to all of the bases. We had the Gobi Gourmet Society which Mouse renamed the Gobi Grommet Society. The first time it met so much was eaten and drank that many were still there the next morning. Several times the Grommet Society would meet in the mess hall. Louie had an old pickup nick-named F Truck that served as a vehicle for whoever wanted to drive it. The engine was so weak he had to back up hills when he drove it up from Humboldt State. Louie registered F truck in Oregon to Delos without telling him.

On one large fire we had all jumped in a meadow. After we were relieved we returned to the meadow to bag our gear. I noticed rookie Pup using a Pulaski in a way I thought dangerous. I interrupted him and summoned rookie Rocky to watch as I gave Baumann a lesson in how to properly use a Pulaski. I swung hard and the Pulaski bounced off the bush I had intended to cut and buried itself in my leg. I looked up and there were Rocky and Pup in contortions as they tried not to laugh. Pup latter told me that I managed to groan out, “Don’t tell Dutton.”

I really believe that Cave Junction jumpers were on average better fireman than the jumpers at other bases for several reasons. Cave Junction seemed the first base to have jumpers hang around longer, not just to be a summer job for college. More experience made you better. But the real advantage we had was burning slash. Delos worked the phones like crazy in the fall selling his jumpers as firing
crews for slash burning. Paying attention to burning slash, to burning indexes, relative humidity, reading and writing prescriptions, the different ways various FMOs chose to burn, the different levels of risk they took allowed you to learn much more about fire than merely fighting wildfire. There were so many fires over the years that one fire blended into another. What they all had in common was that they were exciting and fun and that one thought they were doing something worthwhile.

Then there were the off seasons. Mills and I took our sail boat to Mexico several times. We were once joined by part of the crew that had driven down to Guaymas. Fire cracker fights with WB on a bluff overlooking the ocean. I remember Thornhill ordering a grasshopper by mimicking the jump of a grasshopper on the bar with his hand, Mouse in a raft trying to give me a ride back to our boat to sleep and being unable to row in a straight line.

A large group of us floated the Illinois River from Cave Junction to Agness in two rafts, a large twelve manner and a small Avon. The Illinois is a splendid river, but less wild than the Rogue. The Green Wall is the best-known and most spectacular series of rapids on the river. We pulled to the side right after Fawn Falls to scout the Green Wall. Mouse and Troop were in the Avon quite a ways behind us. You did not need a map to tell you where you were. The sounds coming from the Green Wall far exceeded anything we had heard yet. Here the river drops fifty feet in a hundred and fifty yards. Most of us climbed the bluff overlooking the tumbling rapids to scout a way through the large rocks. Just then we noticed Mouse and Troop who had failed to pull out where we did. They ran the Green wall unscouted and backwards. Over the roar of the rapids we could hear them singing the Marine Corps Hymn. They made it through without tipping, testimony to the quality of Avon rafts.

I ask myself what made the Gobi special and the immediate answer that comes to mind is, of course, the people. But this answer really does not go far enough. It fails to explain it all. After all the Gobi drew from the same employment pool as did all of the other bases. I decided that it comes down to two factors. The Gobi was the perfect size. It was the smallest of the bases, so small that there was no room for cliques. There was just the crew. The other factor was the luck we had in supervisors. Supervision that immediately recognized that our most important work was done out of sight from supervision so that it was imperative to develop in the crew the desire to work hard when we were out on our own with no supervision. Cave Junction always lacked management by harassment. We had no room inspections, no haircut checks. Cave Junction practiced management by encouragement. Some other bases prided them selves on the number of rookies they washed out. Not Cave Junction. It was almost considered a case of management failure to wash a rookie out.

When I brought the woman who would become my wife to the base I thought that she would really be impressed. She was not. Her comment was that in some
ways it resembled “a summer camp for overgrown boys.” But she did recognize and appreciate the commitment to excellence. She was a poet and years before I first jumped, she wrote a poem about the unrecognized quest for excellence. It involved a corner on a recreation trail on the Willamette that I had worked on for hours even though no one would notice and no one would care. I thought she would be really impressed by my fellow jumpers but she was only really impressed by Troop. And really impressed she was. She immediately saw in Troop a kindred spirit, someone who did not know, could not know, the meaning of “can’t.”

I was not just an overgrown boy at the Gobi. It was a life for adults and it taught you adult things. I saw splendid models of marriage and parenthood. I shared an office with Joe Buck who never uttered a criticism of another person. After I left the Gobi I failed to find happiness away from fire and returned to it soon after in Alaska, working for Farinetti. I never learned much more about Fire Management than I learned at the Gobi. Swift and I spent many nights after work on the steps of the office talking about the transition from Fire Suppression to Fire Management and what would happen when small wilderness fires were in prescription, talking about the role jumpers could play in that transition, shaping fire, jumping in to burn out, monitoring fire. I think that politics, especially the politics of smoke management have kept it from happening down here but it happened in Alaska more than twenty years ago as Swift foretold.

I only left the Gobi because the Forest Service was closing the base and because the woman I was marrying wanted to go to graduate school. On one of my last days at the Gobi my step-daughter Robin had a birthday. Not wanting it to pass unrecognized I asked two or three jumpers to attend a birthday party but to not bring presents. Almost the whole base showed up, those having children brought them. Each jumper bore an extravagant present. Robin later would have many large and extravagant birthdays, but she remembers that as her best birthday. That was the Gobi.

The Gobi is still with me. Almost nightly in my dreams I am negotiating with Delos about how I can still jump after my mandatory retirement at age sixty-five. We have settled on my being in call-when-needed or EFF status and the rest of the time I am a volunteer rolling streamers, making fire packs, sharpening Pulaskie, and occasionally getting a jump.
I grew up in the Illinois Valley, attending Kerby Elementary and Illinois Valley High. My dad drove school bus for 23 years, safely delivering grandchildren of the first students to ride his bus route to and from school. My roots ran deep in the valley.

As it turns out, I did not know much about the jump base growing up. I was a graduating senior when the basketball statistician (IV District Ranger, Glen Hoffman) ask if I had a summer job. Me a job! Dad had lots of hay to bale, fences to mend, and cows to punch. I had not even thought about a job away from the ranch. So, my application went in to the Illinois Valley District, and I was hired as a Wage Grade 2 Forestry Worker ($2.57 per hour). The summer went well and I got on a couple of fires, found the overtime (OT) was much better pay than bucking hay. I spent the whole summer swinging a double bit axe on the Brush Disposal crew (only the crew boss was authorized to use a chainsaw, much too dangerous for crew folk).

The part of the firefighting job that was not really much fun was mop-up. Seemed like every fire I had to hike into, there were smokejumpers handing the mop-up over to us “ground pounders.” Since I had gone to high school with some of the jumpers (Gary Thornhill, Pat McNalley, Gary Mills, Rick Oliver) the “ground-pounder” ribbing was especially painful.

The district and the jumpers held an annual softball game. We were told it was for fun, but everyone knew it was for bragging rights between Delos Dutton and Glen Hoffman. Baseball is not my strong suit, dad limited us boys to two sports.
per year, claimed he needed our labor on the ranch. I had always chosen football and basketball. Apparently spending time with a double bit axe improved my bat swing. I remember smacking the ball fairly consistently, but none more pleasing than the infield home run against the jumpers. Glen even told me, “Good game.”

After a few more times of replacing the hot line digging jumpers (the fun part of fire fighting), just to do their mop-up, I began to think about becoming a jumper. I spent my second summer at IVRD and got to do some more mop-up for the jumpers. OK, that’s it! Since I played football with Thornhill, McNalley and Oliver, I figured, “If they can be jumpers, I can be a jumper.” The application went in. Apparently, Delos needed to improve his baseball team. Actually, that’s not true as I’m really a lousy baseball player. Delos was implementing his master plan of improving community relations by hiring more locals as opposed to out-of-towners.

I showed up for training in June, along with 12 (I think) other rookie hopefuls. One of those was Allen Dale Owen (a.k.a. “Mouse”). What a rookie group we made. I remember doing just as we were told, stand quietly in line near the cook house. All of us feeling a bit awkward with nothing in common…yet. The silence was suddenly broken by who else, Mouse. He farted, turned around and stomped his boot down hard on the ground, exclaiming, “Damn barking spiders!” The first sound I ever heard from him, but certainly not the last.

All of us rookies immediately realized, it was going to be an interesting summer.
I ALWAYS SMILE WHEN I THINK OF RAY. While we all had a social nature at the Gobi, Ray’s was one of the healthiest.

Ray always knew how to draw a person into his trust. Whether it was in the jump world, or the contact we had with district personnel, a fair maiden on the street, or a local in a bar.

One season I followed Ray closely, June through November. Through project work, fires, and daily Gobi life. I was first paired with him for an early summer detail on the Applegate. He quickly had me under control and as quickly controlled the confidence of the district.

But being stuck on detail cramped Ray’s need to socialize. He soon bought a VW Bug, enabling him to expand his after-hours horizons to Jacksonville—actually the J-Ville Tavern. This single purchase assured Ray’s freedom, but required my preparedness. I would either have to be prepared to go with him, or the greatest requirement—night crawling was not high on my agenda—be prepared to explain at 8:00 AM on countless workday mornings the absence of my crew leader.

On the Applegate at 7:55 AM, I would walk forlornly toward the detail compound without Ray. I was always greatly relieved by his 7:59:30 appearance. This pattern of timely appearance would be replayed countless times into November.

Even back at the Gobi, Ray would roll in before the start of work. If he had time, he would go from his VW to the bath house and prepare himself. You could always find Ray’s cosmetics over a sink in a toilet kit: Visine for his red eyes, Binaca for his horrid breath, Alka Seltzer or Tums for his upset stomach. And if time, a cigarette for his nerves.
We couldn’t keep up with Ray, although he always welcomed our company. He would include anyone and usually pay their way. But the energy to keep up with Ray waned after late hours, flat beer, and smoke-stenched clothing.

On through the fire season. Down to Gasquet on a slash burning detail. Over to Brookings for hardwood falling. And finally up to Powers in November for slash work. Whether in CJ, Gasquet, Brookings, or Powers, he was true to form, taking care of us during the day, on the move at night, and under the wire in the morning.

By Powers, we had Ray covered. I still have dreams of splitting for the weekend and then reassemble for Monday morning. Three of us would be waiting in the Powers compound to walk as a unit and to report to the awaiting FCO for our assignment at 8:00 AM sharp. No Ray. And Powers was out in nowhere. We’d begin concocting an alibi for Ray’s absence and then one of us would assume the responsibility to cogently weave our tale to a hopefully gullible FCO. The three of us would walk in unison across the compound to the awaiting FCO, who stood at the office door. As the designated liar stepped forward to explain Ray’s absence, putt, putt, putt, Ray would drive his VW between us and the FCO, get out and assume control. This occurred continually.

But that was Ray. We’d do anything for him because we knew he would, and always did, do the best for us.
On the Umpqua

HOW ABOUT THE TIME WE JUMPED A FIRE on the Umpqua and Rick Dees forgot his hard hat so Crew Boss Gary Mills made him wear his jump helmet on the fire line because there were District personnel on the fire. We told the District folks that he had rabies and had to wear the helmet so he couldn’t bite anyone!

We jumped a fire on the Umpqua and were digging line with folks from the District when a small fixed-wing aircraft began circling the fire. As we were digging line we were discussing who was in the aircraft. Finally Rick Oliver said he thought it was the District FMO because they rarely left the office and inferred that they were generally too lazy to dig line. One of the guys down the line, from the District, said he didn’t think so and Rick asked why and he stated it was because he was the FMO. Oops!

Speaking of Rick Oliver, why would anyone when they were taped up and being carried to the Gorge threaten those that were carrying him not to tickle his feet? If I remember correctly it was Cote who couldn’t resist and Rick couldn’t see who it was. We were all laughing except Rick, he was going crazy!!!!

One Sleeping Bag

It was in the early to mid-70’s, don’t remember the exact year, but we were flying in a DC-3 after a lightning bust. We were south of Diamond Lake, the fire was 1/10 acre smoldering, the perfect 2-manner. David Ozwalt was a trainee spotter and as I recall, after about the tenth set of streamers we got in the door. I don’t remember Oz as a perfectionist but maybe he was when it came to spotting, NOT! My jump partner was Warren Villa, Pancho. Pancho had rookies the year before and had broken his leg on his first practice jump so......it was Pancho’s second
year but he was a rookie, kind of confusing, uh. Pancho was older than I but not in jump years. Anyway this was Pancho’s first 2-manner, may have been his first fire jump, don’t remember.

It was late afternoon when we jumped and our jump spot was several hundred yards above the fire. We landed safely, got tools out of the fire pack and hiked down to the fire and began lining, bone-yarding, and mopping up. It was starting to get dark and Pancho said he would go up to the cargo drop area and bring down food, water, and sleeping bags.

Well now, this is where the story really begins......... After Pancho told me he was heading up the hill to retrieve food, water, and sleeping bags, I felt this was the golden opportunity to mess with a guy that was older than me and a second year guy that was really a rookie. So I told him to only bring down one sleeping bag and he asked why. I said because WE WERE GOING TO SLEEP TOGETHER. Before you start jumping to conclusions, I WAS NOT SERIOUS, I DIDN’T REALLY WANT TO SLEEP WITH PANCHO but I did want to mess with him a little bit. So when he asked why, I said, IT’S WHAT WE DO......he again said Why, I said, ......IF IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE OTHER OLD GUYS THAT HAD JUMPED THIS FIRE WITH HIM IT WOULD BE THE SAME, THIS IS WHAT WE DO, WE SLEEP TOGETHER ON 2-MANNERS. This conversation went on for awhile and Pancho kept saying, COME-ON PUP, THIS CAN’T BE TRUE. And I KEPT SAYING IF IT WASN’T ME IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE OTHER GUYS.

The conversation went on long enough that I was starting to get nervous, maybe he believed me. Not really, but it did go on for awhile. He finally did go up the hill and get food, water, and sleeping BAGS—notice BAGS not one but two. WE DID NOT SLEEP TOGETHER, WE EACH SLEPT IN OUR OWN SLEEPING BAG, WE DID NOT KISS GOOD NIGHT, WE DID NOT HOLD HANDS ON THE PACK OUT AND WE DID NOT FALL IN LOVE BUT........every time we see each other we discuss this fire and chuckle, at least I do.

Proper Use of an Axe
In 1973, my rookie year, I jumped a 4-manner on the Galice RD on the Siskiyou NF. My jump partner was fellow rookie, Rocky Cabalyan. The other jump stick was David Ozwalt and I don’t remember who else. Rocky was first out the door. I know they always said that first out the door in a 2-man stick had the right-of-way. In this case Rocky steered under me, how’s that for blaming the other guy, and I walked across the top of his chute. We both descended at a higher rate than normal and I never did that again. Rocky capped a snag and broke the top out of it. My chute draped over a couple of 10-20 foot white fir trees. We all landed safely, marched down to the fire to find out that it was staffed, lined, and they didn’t need our help. So....we marched back up the hill to retrieve cargo and bag our gear.
As I stated earlier, my chute was draped over a couple of 10-20 foot white fir trees, the chutes were a little damp from precipitation from the lightning storm. To retrieve my chute I decided to chop the white fir trees down using the 2¼ lb falling axe from the saw box. After successfully chopping down the first of the two trees with the falling axe, Oz marched over to me and said, YOU DUMB ROOKIE DON’T YOU KNOW HOW TO USE AN AXE, as he snatched the axe from my hand. I looked at him and politely, maybe not so politely, said I THOUGHT I KNEW HOW TO USE AN AXE. As stated before, things were damp, and as Oz reared back and took a mighty swing with the axe, his angle of attack was too steep, the axe glanced off the tree and STUCK IN HIS SHIN........not in the shin bone but the meat alongside the bone. His eyes were as big as pie plates, my grin was so big you could see every tooth in my head, my grin was so big it made my face hurt, you get the picture........I was not grinning because of Oz’s pain, maybe a little, but mostly because of his arrogance. We looked at each other for a little bit, he with big eyes, me all grinnie and the first thing he said was DON’T TELL DUTTON. He began to hobble away and I asked him, because he was hurt, IF HE WANTED ME TO PACK HIS GEAR TO THE ROAD, I don’t think I got an answer just some mumbling.
THE LAST BOOK OF GOBI? I doubt it! Smokejumpers will stop telling stories when there aren’t any left...Smokejumpers, that is. The stories will continue. It’s the Smokejumper branch of the immortal science of Scatology. To be distinguished from the science of Last Things (death, judgment, heaven, hell) known as Eschatology. Some people, having watched too many Indiana Jones reruns, believe it’s all coming to an End in 2012. Such optimism is unwarranted. We have not suffered enough yet. Life is too good, especially, as I remember it, the part I spent on the Gobi.

When I got accepted at the Gobi, the FCO at the Pomeroy Ranger District of the Umatilla NF said, “Well, if you auger in down there, you can always come back to your old job on the helitak crew.” I didn’t fully grasp the import of “auger” until rookie airplane door exit training on the Gobi tower. Although I later learned to prefer jumping out of, rather than landing in, Forest Service contract airplanes (God bless the pilots!), compared to the real thing, those jumps off the tower were always...terrifying, even with the safety netting underneath. I think it was because the ground was SO close. Out the door of a plane you always seem to have lots of time...perhaps enough to get in those necessary eschatological prayers... After the training was finished and rookie status ended, we were cleaning up the training area and discovered the nylon netting was sun weakened and rotten. Makes one wonder how often the End is near every moment of life.

In my line of work, I have buried the bodies of a lot of people who lived through World War II. In all of their life stories there is an oddly universal love of, and satisfaction with, just being alive, having survived, no matter how their life may have gone afterwards. In the same way, I think doing something as stupid as jumping out of a plane, even for the filthy lucre of education dollars, has a simi-
larly strong focusing power. It puts things in perspective. After time on the Gobi, I was described in a seminary evaluation by a faculty priest in the lovely phrase: “he walks with an insolent swagger.” There’s more to that story as it went rapidly downhill to its own End, but let’s just say I was quite (inappropriately) pleased and not a little amused. There are any number of more courageous activities to engage in, like giving birth and/or raising teenagers, but surely “I jump through open plane doors into fire” ranks up there somewhere among the lesser causes of “don’t-bug-me-if-you-like-living” attitudes which result from such life experiences as surviving war and smokejumping.

After 5 years as an Army chaplain and during the second 6-month deployment of American troops into Bosnia, I came to the startling realization that the Army is full of dysfunctional Americans, and this is one of the essential reasons why the American military is so great! It’s counter-intuitive to find that an organization which prides itself on suppressing individuality in pursuit of unit cohesion, overwhelming force, etc., can attract such a useful collection of misfits. Yet it makes sense. Despite the fact that what I am about to say is an indictment of the culture that names this behavior “dysfunctional,” it is regarded as “characteristic” of the dysfunctional that they subordinate their own interests to the interests of others. They are care-takers, sometimes produced by not-necessarily-nice family backgrounds where they tried to keep the peace, still looking for someone(s) to take care of, and what bigger care-taking organization is there than the US military (okay, the Roman Catholic Church is right up there ([really almost all fractions of Christianity]), along with hospital personnel, EMTs, police, psychologists, social workers, maybe a few politicians—all of which professions are vulnerable to perversion by the isolated, seriously psychotic care-taker). …And then there are the United States Forest Service personnel following their hero Smokey the Bear protecting campers and cougars, flora and fauna, from the enemy: Fire!

Now, gracious reader, you’re probably wondering where all this is going. So is the author… (Old smokejumpers tend to wander…) Oh, now I remember. It’s hard to pin down in a word what was special about the Gobi, beyond the completely obvious fact that there was magic in the mix of misfits that occupied the place over the years, a magic that lives on in the continuing interest the Gobi attracts. [Really does anyone doubt that the best thing that could happen, for forest and future and finance, would be for the Forest Service to open it up again? And maybe more like it??]

The word “unregimented” comes to mind, or maybe “flexible.” Perhaps because it was a small base with, of course, the right people working on it, the Gobi could push the “envelope” as we liked to say when I was in the Army (where you talked bravely about but did NOT push the envelope!). There was a kind of laid-back climate of confident over-achievement that made room for (and “made money” out of) personalities and peculiarities without ever sacrificing safety, competence, or what qualifies in the USFS as productivity. With all due respect to Clancy the Ghost, the Gobi was a place where nobody would be “lost in the crowd” or just
another number in a series of outputs. I didn’t know it at the time, but the Gobi was an enriching community to live in, and produced some pretty “enriched” characters going on to enrich a world that, sadly, prefers “outputs.” The Gobi was a place people would find themselves devoting more than a little extra of themselves to, without being aware of it. Organizations and bureaucrats can’t beg, borrow, or steal commitment like that.

In my line of work, we talk about the world as a place where things themselves can act as symbols, expressing and containing underlying realities in a denser and revealing way. For this, of course, you can’t be a materialist; you have to believe there is more to reality than meets the eye or stomach. So, for “unregimented” think the morning one (no) or five (yes) mile run; for “over-achieving” think “Mouse”; for “flexible” think (can we say this now??) the “special chutes”; for “confident” think BS and bravado aka nerves of steel aka courage “to jump through an open plane door into fire”; for “more than a little extra” think Gobi Botanical Area, or log-cabin raising. Any guesses about what the repeated baptisms in the Gobi Gorge meant???

“To get to heaven, you have to take it with you,” wrote a famous preacher. Life is for Eschatological training. I believe heaven will be occupied by a lot of dysfunctional care-takers who gave their lives away, in an instant or with agonizing slowness, because it seemed worth doing. And darned if often it won’t have turned out to be fun too despite the pain. As I write this, it is Passion Sunday in the Christian calendar when we read the narrative of God giving His life away to save the world He made, a world that by and large did not love Him. Talk about dysfunctional. The weather is rainy, elevated atmospheric pressure. The right hip (which I smashed into the runway on a “hard surface” jump but never talked about--wanted to stay on the jump list of course) hurts…a bit. There is always a cost. The parish I serve now is not exactly young. Of the first five funerals I had here, 4 were for WW II war brides. Marvelous people, who knew what is important, learned it the hard way.

As I said, if I remember correctly, at the beginning of this, it was easier to jump out the plane door than off that rookie training tower. There is a song by W.A. Fisher (c. 1922) that should be used at more funerals. It’s lyrics run in part: “Goin’ home…I’m a goin’ home…it’s not far, just close by…Through an open door…” I like to think Eschatologically of that. It’s what Smokejumpers (and really everyone) train for--the last gift of self. Someday we’ll all jump “through an open door,” and that Jump will last forever.
Late August of ’78, a crew meeting was called, and the prep was that they had some good and some bad news to be delivered. Well, the “bad news” was that due to the current weather and low fire danger, we would not be needed the rest of the year and laid off. The “good news” was that the Siskiyou National Forest had a bunch of conifers for which they needed climbers to help harvest cones, especially on the Gold Beach and Chetco Ranger Districts. Anyone wishing to work could detail to those areas and join in the harvest.

The opportunity to keep drawing a paycheck and spending sometime on the coast was inviting to me and a few others. So when the cones started ripening we were called up. We were briefed on arriving by the Silviculturist on logistics, inspectors, being safe, and that they had a bumper crop of cones, while a low seed inventory at the nurseries. Bottom line being they wanted as many cones collected as they could. They said we would be able to climb ½ hour before sunrise til ½ hour after sundown. After a Summer of almost no overtime, that sounded like a real “GOOD DEAL.”

I asked one of the inspectors why we were offered this opportunity. He said they had contracted a company to do the work, but during the cone surveying and sampling stage, they had determined that the workforce and daily production of the contractor would be insufficient to meet the harvest needs. He further gave us some of the pricing that had been agreed to on the Contract. When they ran the numbers by us, I started thinking we should have hired on with the contractor.

Driving to the next tree or while drinking a brew in the evening, Mike Wheelock and I would steer our conversation to the pros and cons of contracting the work we were doing. One major pro was the potential for better pay for our effort.
On the other side would be the possibility of not jumping any more. We were in agreement that we enjoyed jumping and would like to continue doing it.

Over the next few off seasons from jumping, I started working for other contractors climbing, planting trees and other work I had done on the Forest Service BD crews. Mike Wheelock had started up doing some logging and harvesting of other wood products from the forest.

Living was good. Then came the word the “powers that be” were closing the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. They planned for the SSB to close the end of the 1981 season. A meeting was held with the PAO and Forest Fire Staff to outline the options for those of us with appointments. The offers were standard for any closure of an operation, take a position opening at another Base, apply for positions on the districts, or seek other work. Most took the first two. I had grown up in the area, had a family and was not interested in making a move elsewhere, so I made an Exit. So from that time to now I have been working with a company owned by Mike Wheelock “Grayback Forestry, Inc” and still with him some 30 years later.
THE JUMP LIST HAD BEEN CONSTANTLY ROTATING for a couple of weeks with mostly 2- and 3-manners caused by lightning. You’d jump a fire one day, come back to the base the next, and go right back out that day or the next. We jumped a fire in Northern California one day, Washington the next, then Oregon, and then back to Northern California to start the rotation again. Although this is every jumpers dream, my jump partner, Steve Mankel, and I were hoping for just a little break, like an easy 2-manner in a wilderness area we could ease through instead of the all-out efforts we had been doing. As if the jump gods were listening, we got a call to the Sky Lakes Wilderness area. The fire wasn’t much, but the area was all large rock with a few trees scattered in between.

As we flew over the area in the DC-3, we discussed jumping into a small lake close by, although we didn’t really want to, because that water was definitely cold and it was late afternoon. We decided on a spot close by with a few more trees and slightly fewer rocks. As we exited the plane and got closer to the ground, I yelled at Steve that I was going to land in a tree and he indicated he was going to try for one too. I capped the tree and my tippy toes touched the ground. I quickly got out of my harness and started looking around for Steve. I was calling for him as I got out of my jump suit and went looking for him. I found him laying next to a Volkswagon sized rock and obviously in pain. He had flown into the rock, which was mostly hidden by the tree he was aiming for, and probably busted his ankle.

I called the plane to tell them what happened. We had 2 EMTs aboard, so one was going to jump in to assist with Steve and stay on the fire. Dave Oswalt jumped in
and they dropped the first aid kit. As Dave was taking care of Steve, I called for a chainsaw to start cutting a heli-spot. The only places not littered with large rocks was where the trees were growing. The saw came in and I left the long bar on, which stuck out the end of the box. The trees were short but large diameter at the base and I needed to cut the stumps at ground level so the helicopter could land. I started the saw, but the chain came off. I quickly put it back on and started the saw again, just to have it come off again. Perhaps the bar had hit a rock when it came in and tweaked the bar a little or something else was wrong, but I didn’t want to waste time trying to figure it out. The plane, flown by the great Hal Ew-ing, was flying circles overhead. I called for another saw. They dropped saw #2 and it hung up in a tree, so I asked for another saw and requested they put a long-line on it. Saw #3 also hit a tree, but the long-line deployed and it looked like it was going to make it to the ground until the box settled across 2 large limbs about 20 feet off the ground. The helicopter was about 20 minutes out and light was fading fast, so I asked the plane if they had any other fires to respond to. They told me we were the only thing going on, so I asked if they had another saw. They replied that they had 1 more saw aboard. I said, “Get it to me.”

The plane came in low when they dropped the saw, so low that the chute barely opened when it hit the ground. I started cutting as fast as I could and by then, Dave was over to help swamp out a small spot. We could hear the helicopter coming in as we finished and the pilot was skeptical of landing because of the fading light. He asked who the ground contact was and was told “Floate.” Well, as so often happens in the small community of firefighters, the pilot knew me from my rookie days at NCSB –where I had been tasked with sweeping the heli-spot between landings–and decided that he would try and squeeze in. Fortunately, he got in and we got Steve on board and heading to the hospital. Unfortunately, Steve had severely broken his ankle.

Dave and I then headed over to the fire and started scratching a line around it. We got around it fairly quick and took a break for dinner. We continued working on the fire until around 1 o’clock when the several weeks of fighting back-to-back fires and the feverish activity of getting Steve out caught up to us. We grabbed some sleep. We woke up early because of the cold at that elevation and started working the fire again. The fire was in deep duff and old punky logs and wasn’t going out easy. About 11 am we got a call on the radio from a packer who was at our jump gear. We tied in with him. He wasn’t aware that we had 3 sets of jump gear and 4 saws. The district had sent him in to help haul us out. He only had 1 pack animal with him and was only able to carry a couple of saws. Since the fire wasn’t completely out yet, we asked if he would sign us a release from the fire. He said he couldn’t release us. We asked him to carry out what he could, but couldn’t leave the fire yet. During all of this talking, another thunderstorm came over and totally soaked us, but didn’t completely extinguish the fire. We asked him to come back the next day, and he said he’d bring enough animals to carry out the rest of our gear. We built up a fire to dry out our gear, finished the fire and then I pulled out the extra food and tobacco I carried and we enjoyed a pleasant eve-
ning. The next day we completed our six daylight hour requirement and helped the packer load the rest of our gear. We had a very pleasant seven mile hike to the trail head, too bad Steve hadn’t been able to share it. So that’s my case for the most chainsaws on a 2-man fire in a wilderness area.

PS- we never used any of the saws on the fire.
MEMO NUMBER 1

Monday
June 23, 1975

Through a unilateral decision, The Gobi Botanical Refuge and Geriatric Haven has been created at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base to provide leadership in the realm of its own dealings. Federally financed, the Gobi Botanical Refuge will operate as an autonomous agency that is responsible for the perpetuation of its own existence, embracing all tenets of government bureaucracy.

The Gobi Botanical Refuge will be needing irresponsible personnel to staff its ranks. Applications will be available for position openings. Only those dedicated people wishing to further their pecuniary posture and enhance their professional strength need apply.

Interviews will be held in the near future. White shirt, tie, and polished Otto Whites required.

Personnel satisfied with their present positions need not apply.
GOBI BOTANICAL REFUGE

W. BROWN curator
G. BUCK wardan

Application for Employment

Name __________________________  Job Applied For __________________________

Number of years jumping: 10 ___ 20 ___ Forever___

Can you express yourself coherently using one four letter word for all eight parts of speech? yes ___ no ___

The following questions require written responses. Your responses will provide deep insights into your mental & emotional capabilities for THE GOBI BOTANICAL REFUGE:

1. If a range fire was threatening the GBR, what would you do?
   a. Save the Gobi Stones.
   b. Save the vernal splendor of the lawns and rich timber stands.
   c. Sit in the Gorge and watch the beautiful light show.
   d. Let the fire spread to the office.
   e. Suppress with gas.

2. In a short, concise sentence without using circumlocutive verbiage and following standard English grammar, express your concept of the natural order of this far-out, too-heavy universe, giving specific emphasis to the GBR in such a cosmic, time/space matrix.

3. If 12 cu. ft. of concrete are watered constantly for 3 months, how many linear feet of green, luscious grass will appear the following spring? Answer to the nearest .1 cu. ft.


Are you now or have you ever been a member of a subversive party? yes ___ no ___
   Would you like to be? yes ___ no ___
   Can we hold the party at your place? yes ___ no ___

In the spirit of brotherhood, would you be willing to share your wages with the GBR staff? yes ___ no ___

Signature ___________________________________   Date ____________________

A Sense of Humor is Common Sense Dancing
As the Story Goes...
GREG “GONZO” GONZALES
‘76

AS THE STORY GOES.....it was 1979 and remembering now 32 years later is like watching a play through a peephole, remembering only bits of all that occurred. Thank goodness for friends who still have their memories about them...good ole Pete (Hawley)... I could/can always count on him to come through. This was our only two man jump together in the four seasons we had together at the Gobi. We were flying out of NCSB in the Beech 99 or the King Air. We had been flying patrol all day long it seemed, had refueled in Spokane, and were cramped. Pete says it was a Saturday and he was thinking of getting back to base and going into town to party at Three Fingered Jack's. Four of us jumpers were left on the plane and so when we spotted a fire, Pete offered up his jump to Dean Cernick so that he could get on with his plans. That left the two of us as the last stick heading back to Winthrop. Somewhere near Colville we spotted another smoke and so out we went. By now it was starting to get dark but all went well with the landing...nice open country, big pine, but as luck would have it our gear got treed. It must have been late or we were low on fuel, because the plane headed out in a hurry and we never got our climbers. What to do? Our gear hung up 100ft in a Big Tree, no low limbs and no other trees next to it to work from. We tried throwing stones, slinging stones with our let-down ropes, there was just no way we could even get close to reaching our gear. Thankfully it was a small fire burning in the duff and pretty quiet; nothing we needed any real tools to deal with. I think we had our cubitainer of water and our boots to kick a toe-line around it. We called in to the local ranger station to report our status, all “under control, but send climbers!” The night was crisp, sleeping in our jump gear and parachutes under the incredible summer sky. Pete remembers having to get up and mess with the fire... I remember the smell of smoke and the occasional crackle in the darkness.
So the next day a small crew came in, with climbers so we were able to get the gear and head out, a bit humbled but proud to have kept the fire from “blowing up.” From there we had a short pack-out, a short drive to the Colville airport, and a hitch back to the jumper base on a small Cesna, with barely enough room for our gear and quite the drop into landing, says Pete, who was seated in front.

So that’s how I remember that fire...it was a “good fire-season,” 1979, my last at the Gobi. I know I’m preaching to the choir when I reminisce about how good it was those last years, and those weren’t even the “good ole days.” I looked up to our squad-leaders and fellow jumpers with a bit of awe. They had been around the block a few times and could do just about anything related to jumping and fighting wild-fire, as well as anyone else. And, it was as if we were family, sharing our lives and experiences, our kids, our homes, and now our stories and these memories.
The Phantom and his Assistant
Dateline—Smokejumper Base
Ah, June, the month to be married! The month to elope in a most secretive fashion! All of you out in the Valley beware of the Ides of the Summer Solstice. For it is then that the innocent spring frolicking, the frivolous, flower-fragrant kisses, all the budding desires, are brought to their culmination; and no human, be they ever so resistant, can escape the ritual of marriage that follows.

Even our most stalwart leader, Gary Mills, trusted and revered by all men as a level-headed exemplary smokejumper, could not overcome these heady summer days. Without a single word (no, he didn’t even bring it up for a vote at our last crew meeting!), Gary suddenly disappeared for several days. The jumpers fretted and worried late into the night, fearing their comrade had suffered a fate worse than death. Little did they know that he had tiptoed away with his bride-to-be, Jana Jackson, to Reno. There he crashed into the altar; murmured the “I do’s,” probably held up by best man Gary Thornhill, and galloped away in blissful double harness.

Deceived, the boys at the Gobi were not long in discerning that one of their own had left the flock. Revenge, sweet revenge, took the form of the eternal ritual of glass-taping Millsey and throwing him in the proverbial Gorge. Ceremony completed, forgiveness granted, all of us on the Gobi wish Gary and Jana a long and happy marriage.

Just a note about what wives of smokejumpers learn to expect from a man who for some strange reason jumps out of antiquated airplanes into raging infernos. Expect him to be called out at any hour of the day or night (especially when you’ve planned something extra nice for him). Expect him to disappear for as much as several weeks at a time without any notice. And, of course, no one will tell you where he is, even if you’re sure that the Dispatcher knows exactly where your beau is. Expect him home at 3 a.m., smelling like an incinerator, so tired he can’t even take off his boots, much less tell you how he loves you.

Look forward to visitations by whole squads of his hungry, loud, furniture-breaking, clumsy, but well-meaning, jumper-friends. Assume you will be suited up in jump gear, thrown off the shock tower, and tossed into the Gorge; just so you can be “one of the guys.” Be prepared to hear him tell silk story after silk story, and listen to him complain about the slow days when there aren’t any fires. Expect the rest of the men to take him (against his will, of course) out on the town for a few in memory of the good old days. Through it all, however, remember that you can expect him to be with you in his heart and you can be assured, no men have bigger hearts than our
smokejumpers.

Ted “Tree-toad” Clark and Pancho “Bush-Ape” Villa have completed their rookie training. They now join the Phantom and all the other real jumpers to bring our manning force to 24. Of course, no rookie ceases to be a rookie until there is another year gone by and new rookies replace the old. So the life of a new man will indeed go on.

What does it mean to go through smokejumper training? Consider this letter written by one of the rookies to his mother (yes, the Phantom sees all!).

Mother,

It is a hot day. The wind sock hangs limp, no breath of air to liven this baking land. Our jumpsuits have no circulation, so sweat drenches us at the least exertion. Instructors wipe sweat from their foreheads, and are as thankful as we are the morning units are completed.

What does a “rookie’s” body look like at this stage of training? Well, Mom, my feet are blistered from my new boots—no bandages relieve the pain of constant rubbing. My knees and hips, neck shoulders ache. They are discolored from the shock of landing rolls. The impact of a falling body must be absorbed somewhere, so these joints have paid the bill.

My collarbone bear the marks of leaps from the shock tower, and my tender bottom is black and blue from the hours spent sitting in a tight fitting harness. My stomach and neck muscles are strained from doing sit-ups all morning. My shoulders have been stretched so many ways that touching my head is a painful operation.

There has been no consideration for the flesh: my hands are scratched and filled with slivers from “burning out” at the tree-climbing. The cuts are infected and filled with germs, so the whole area is tender, filling with pus. A dangerous red. My nose seems forever filled with dust, my mouth desiccated, my eyes salted. I will be very happy when this is over.

Your Rookie

Welcome aboard, Ted and Pancho. All that’s left of the fire initiation (as well as the, you guessed it, Gorge).

Quickies; The Grants Pass rappellers completed their training last week. Now another group of 25 rappellers have arrived from Detroit to be instructed in the area of rope sliding. Christine Berg and Elizabeth Eterovic, our office girls, claim they are intellectuals after graduating from IVHS. Compared with us jumpers, there is a lot of truth in what they say. Steve “Pup” Baumann has become quite talented in numerous ways, including Show Business. He interviews reporters frequently and is regularly appearing on television, although he is to modest (aloof) to mention the time and channel.

Rick Oliver, Bill Floch, and Chuck Mansfield, former jumpers, dropped by to say “hello.” Old jumpers don’t die, they just go to the Gobi gods in the sky.

Until next week. The Phantom

Report from the Gobi

Allen Owen, known as Mouse, was also THE PHANTOM for the IV News, reporting for many summers about people and happening on the Gobi.
Flipping the Gobi

MIKE APICELLO

'78

IT WAS OFFICIALLY THE LAST SUMMER for Gobi Smokejumpers. In 1980, the Washington Office of the Forest Service had made a decision to close the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in Cave Junction, Oregon. It had been rumored that we were an unruly bunch, uncontrollable. After almost 40 years of hosting the cream of the crop in smokejumping lore, it would be the last summer for active jumping from the Gobi. Though many of us local southwestern Oregon smokejumper residents had gathered over 10,000 signatures of public support to keep the base open, our pleas fell on deaf Congressional ears. All we got was a directive to maintain a skeleton crew to dismantle the base. Shut it down.

Working as a public affairs officer for the Washington Office of Fire and Aviation Management some 15 years later, I was told from a well placed source, that the reason the base was shut down was not due to a “budget” situation; only that the Gobi crew was too “unmanageable.” It summed up the entire political situation to me – and in time, it made me even prouder to know I was a piece of this magical and prestigious Gobi history. To be labeled “unmanageable” was yet another affirmation of the great camaraderie, freedom, and independence that smokejumping has always given me. But this is not a story about the history of the Gobi; this is a story about a fateful day, a unique little jump, and a sequence of events that changed my life forever.

August 14th, 1980 – I was on an “off-day” so I took a sojourn to the Oregon Coast to my adopted home-town of Brookings, Oregon (about a one hour drive from Cave Junction). My days off were spent meditating at the beach, downing a few at the local pubs, listening to music, and dancing the night away. The Oregon coast was my escape, it’s where I communed with the Chetco River, explored the ocean, the beaches, and went commercial fishing between seasons. Brookings completed the circle of my personal tour of working the earth, wind, ocean and sky.
On this day, after returning to my “roost,” I received a call from Mouse, the “acting” acting Base Manager, asking me if I wanted to be part of a twenty person smoke-jumper crew for a 30-day “truck jumping” assignment. We would be in the great state of Arkansas fighting arson and “whiskey still” fires. Having made a previous commitment with three fellow jumpers to start a tree climbing contract on the Siskiyou Forest within a few weeks, I knew that I needed to refuse the assignment. The 1980 fire season had turned out to be a pretty slow one (but there were still a few bucks to be made climbing trees and picking cones) - though the weather was warm, and forest fuels were ripe and ready to burn.

So I turned down the junket to Arkansas. I still had to think about the commitment I had made to take on a lucrative tree climbing contract. Who could pass up an opportunity to make 10 grand in 30 days in 1980?

After my decision, Mouse then asked me if I would stay on at the Gobi. The base would be short-staffed and at least the Gobi could maintain one full load of jumpers for “nine-zero-Alpha” if I stayed. Taking it as a good sign, I responded, “sure, why not.” Although things were quiet, the Gobi was home and inevitably I knew we would get some late action. And sure enough two days later it happened.

On August 16th, 1980, the fire bell rang. Those of us left at the base included Trooper Tom, Ricky Dees, Tom Hunnicutt, Don Bison, Willie Lowden, Mouse and me. Once we were all in the Beech 99, “nine-zero-alpha” began circling a small fire burning at the base of a fresh logging deck, somewhere in the backwoods of the Applegate Ranger District.

One nice thing about the Beech-99 is that whenever you were one of the later jumpers out the door you had a tendency to watch how the first jumpers navigated to the spot. In this instance, the spot was a very small sized postage stamp clearing surrounded to the south by a group of tall, spiked, dead-topped snags. To the west was the fire, burning in a log-deck – fresh green logs; and surrounded by cured red slash. To the north were scattered hardwoods and some tall Douglas firs. To the east were large old-growth Ponderosa Pines with a smattering of openings that looked like meadows of soft grass.

The fire seemed somewhat benign from the air, so it was decided only four jumpers would jump, and we would jump in single man sticks.

Mouse and Trooper Tom must have had one heck of a conversation, because we kept circling the fire in between bouts and fits of squirrely winds. Mouse was spotting, Troop was squad leader. Troop had the only radio and was first out the door. Don Bison was second, Ricky Dees third, I was next, Willie Louden was fifth, and Tom Hunnicutt backed up the load. The fire still seemed somewhat benign.
“Was this a fire really worth jumping?” Those were words that went into the annual After Action Report. The fire really never took off, but three out of the four of us, came in hard – and the landings were not forgiving.

The south end of the jump spot was an arc of large diameter, tall, spike top snags. This is where Troop landed, slamming his side hard into the side of a tall snag. He had bunged up his elbow and it made for a delayed letdown. It also led to a delay in getting the rest of the on-ground scene organized as the only radio we had was inaccessible until we were all on the ground.

Don Bison was next. He went out the door and I never saw where he landed, but apparently he made it safely to the east of the fire. He was a bit downwind, his canopy hidden in the trees, and I’m sure upon hitting the ground he was taken up with his duty to check on his Jump Partner, Troop.

Ricky Dees exited next and he was blown to the north. I believe he hung up, uninjured, but not in the best of places. I never saw him land and after I hit the ground, I wouldn’t see him for a long while.

I sat in the door of the plane. My exit was good, my chute fully deployed, and I was on my way towards the spot. About halfway down I hit a dead air pocket and then a short, strong gust of wind, took me too far east. Realizing my chances of making the spot were nil, I looked for an alternative landing site. I knew there were open meadows before me and if I ran with the wind, I just might slip into one of them fairly easily. My mind was also made up that if I ran out of running room I would select a green tree and do a timber landing.

Falling rather rapidly I picked my tree. All seemed perfect as I capped the tree and began crashing through the limbs. The first jolt stopped my descent for a fraction of a second. I assumed the position because I began to drop a little more. I dropped another 30 feet or so thru the canopy of the old growth. Once again, I was slowed enough to want to catch a limb, but gravity was against me. I fell another 30 feet or so through the tree, but this time I did stop. I looked over my left shoulder and saw a nice limb to cling to. As I arched my right arm to grip the limb, all felt normal. I just about had my arm locked in when once again I began to fall. This time rather swiftly.

It happened fast. My training kicked in. I was thinking “feet and knees together, do a roll,” anticipating the ground. After running that sequence through my mind once again, I realized I was still falling. Another few seconds passed and I told myself, “Oh shit, start counting.” Although I was maintaining the right posture, it still took awhile before I hit the ground. After crashing 90 or so feet through the top of the old wooden relic, I was unceremoniously dropped about another 90 feet, free-falling feet-first, and landing upon a pile of solid rocks. I was laid flat out; my only saving grace was that I landed on my feet.
I was unconscious. I know this well because when I came to, my first conscious thought was “I’m alive!” My eyes opened, my vision returned, and I came out of the black reemerging from a dead zone into a new reality. As soon as I realized I was alive, a shock of intense, gripping pain seared the bottom of my feet and coursed along my legs, thru my spine, and up to the top of my head. The pain was so intense I had to fight from blacking-out again. What kept things real was my vision of the tree trunk from which I fell. As my vision returned I still remember every fissure and crack in the jigsaw shaped bark of that tall Ponderosa Pine. I knew I had to stay conscious and aware. I knew there was someone out there who would be looking for me. I knew I was in trouble.

I didn’t know the extent of the damage from the fall. I could not move my legs and my back was killing me. I went to pop the capewells on my harness and realized all I could move was my right arm. My legs were swelling in my 16” high top boots and the temperature of my legs was rising rapidly. I did not know what the injuries were but fear was not helping. After realizing that I was immobile, could not move, suffering in extreme pain and spitting out teeth, I knew I was in a unique situation. Survival was a matter of keeping my airways open and staying conscious until someone found me.

Every 20 seconds or so I called out for “help” with a real, simple reasoning—to keep breathing and prevent blacking out again. I figured if I could keep screaming I would keep breathing. In between breaths I remember going through a fusillade of emotions; tears of fear, laughter for relief, anger for rage, gasping for air—trying to stay awake until someone could find me.

About 20 minutes later it seemed I heard a voice in the brush. “Over here,” I cried. It was Don Bison. He looked me clearly in the eyes and I saw the concern reflected on his face. He knew I was in bad shape but he kept it cool. He told me Troop was hung up in a snag, struggling to get down with a hurt elbow. Don had no radio so he said he was going to signal the plane and place streamers requesting that the trauma kit be dropped. Serious Injuries - Jumpers Hurt.

I told him not to leave me alone for long because I felt I was going to go into a Gran Mal seizure. The pain, inability to move, and total feeling of paralysis, while thoughts of bleeding in my boots, seemed an impossible yet very surreal, frightening thought. It seemed like forever, but Don did return, offered me comfort and we waited...

We waited. Up in the Beech, it was unclear what was going on. No radio; no air to ground. No sign yet of any cohesion or coordination. (Just streamers; both on the ground and in my head). Something was terribly amiss. Why were we all scattered? Who was okay, who was hurt? No one knew anything yet and still “nine-zero-alpha” continued to circle, waiting for the word, burning up fuel.
It seemed forever but Troop finally showed up. I was in agony; the pain was so intense that anyone within a four foot radius of me just seemed to set off even more intense feelings of anguish. I was fading. But Troop and Don stayed by my side; their presence was all I needed to know I would survive.

What I did not know was that Troop finally did reach the plane on the radio and called for the trauma kit. As with the luck of all things that day – the trauma kit got hung up in the top of an old-growth Fir. A decision was made then to drop Willie Louden. His mission: to climb the tree and retrieve the kit. Who else but Willie; one of the best climbers the base had ever known.

I was also told that Mouse then decided to drop Tom Hunnicutt. What had started out as a fire call was now a full-fledged rescue mission. Willie was in the top of the Fir, he must have raced to the top. When he got there – the trauma kit was just out of reach. I was told it took a scary but heroic effort to get it to the ground. And sure enough, after what seemed like forty minutes on the ground in excruciating pain, the trauma kit arrived.

Troop administered a shot of Demerol to alleviate the pain from the swelling in my legs, and to be able to make a more thorough assessment of my wellbeing. I still could not be touched, the pain raged and coursed through every cell and cavity of my body. I was paralyzed but alive. After five minutes Troop asked me if I was ready for another shot and I got a second dose of Demerol. We waited another five minutes, and still there was no pain abatement. The worry was that I might be bleeding out in my boots. Troop wanted to cut them off to check for breaks, but I still could not be touched.

It wasn’t until ten minutes after the third injection that I began to feel any sense of calm. Troop cut off my boots and, yes, I cried. Fortunately, no spurting blood, just huge, swelling feet, a pair of cut-off White’s and one seriously broken-hearted jumper.

Things got real confusing then. All of a sudden it seemed I was surrounded by strangers. Some “pounders” must have made it to the end of the remote spur road. Someone came up to me and said, “I know first aid, can I help?” I remember telling Troop to keep these people away from me. I needed faith, I need trust, and I needed the spiritual care that only my brother jumpers could provide. I don’t remember too much detail after that. Except I spit out a few more teeth.

My legs were being wrapped in air splints. I was being strapped to a spine board and an air collar was placed gently around my neck. I still remember the tree. The image of the fissures and cracks in the wild jigsaw pattern of the Ponderosa Pine bark was all I really saw clearly. Even today, I can draw the bark of that tree. Somewhere in the background noise was the din of the jumpship circling above. Its drone reminiscent of a wailing mother. Coming out of the black was the beat-
ing of rotors as I sensed a helicopter trying to land somewhere close. All I could feel then was relief. With all that noise I knew that I was not alone.

On the ground, the gripping feelings of isolation, immobility, fear, and frustration seemed to last an eternity. My sensory perceptions started working again, though I certainly felt that my world as I had previously known it was slowly slipping away.

The next thing I knew I was being carried gently through the woods by my comrades. The helicopter had dropped into the one of the meadows I had considered as an alternate spot. It had “stovepiped” into the site. It wasn’t far away, but its turbines seemed forever distant. As it began to rise, its ascent seemed to take forever. At treetop height, right before we began forward movement, I remember looking out the helicopter door and seeing the pained faces of Don, Willie, Tom, and Ricky. They looked real concerned. Sad. And upset. I knew they could feel all of our pain.

All I knew was that Troop remained by my side. We were being flown to the nearest hospital. Although Troop had a badly injured elbow, he kept his strong hand in mine. That meant a lot. It embodied the brotherhood of smokejumping and our reliance upon each other. This memory stays embedded in my mind even today. It’s a hard feeling to describe; but still today – the caring – is a hearty tell-tale sign of reliability and camaraderie that is so hard to find.

True to form, I knew what I had to do. It was a simple motion but it made a lot of sense to me. As I caught their faces out of the corner of my eye, I slowly rolled my one working arm out the helicopter door and proudly flipped the Gobi sign. A final tribute. A recognizable symbol telling them things would be all right. There’s something special about the Gobi sign. No matter when it’s flashed good things happen. That’s when I saw their sullen frowns turn to grateful smiles. I was telling my bros, I was okay, I was good to go.

The accident was a potent blow. I question why at times, but not so much any more these days. Perhaps I was moving too fast, perhaps I was meant to slow down. Either way it brought me to a new place in life.

And it’s fairly seldom that I tell this story, but when I do it grips me like it did when I impacted the ground. And as either tell it, or try to write it. There really are no words that can come close to the emotional highs and lows I experienced that fateful day.

The little jump gave me the insight of knowing that just to be alive is a gift. And every once in a while, when I’m feeling pretty proud—I still flip the Gobi
I ONLY JUMPED OUT OF SSB ONE YEAR (1979), but I’ll be forever grateful to the Base and the guys working there for something they did for me that year. I worked the previous three years at another base and did something a little bit ahead of the times for then. I came out of the closet and was openly (although quietly) gay. When the overhead found out that I was gay, they wouldn’t allow me to return for a fourth year. I know this for a fact as one of the Squad Leaders was a friend, and he told me they decided collectively as a group that they didn’t want a gay man returning for the next season. I was the only veteran not hired back that year.

I went to the base to ask for my job back, and they suggested I call Siskiyou. I called the Base Foreman, and he said no problem they had a space for me. I drove down to Cave Junction, talked to the Foreman, and got hired. Because of my prior problems at the former base, I was quiet about my status, but did tell a few guys over the course of the season, with absolutely no problems.

The atmosphere at SSB was totally different than my former base, with a bunch of guys that enjoyed working with each other and hanging out together off duty. It was a little bit on the counter-culture side back then. I’m sure everyone from that era knows what I mean by that. Laid-back, accepting, friendly. And yet still professional and great at the job of jumping out of planes and putting fires out. I became friends with guys with names like Mouse and Troop and Joe Buck. I had a chance to switch to Alaska the following year, and was sorry to leave such a great place to work.

I retired a couple of years ago out of the LA County Fire Department in Los Angeles. I’ll always remember fondly my year jumping out of SSB. And I want to say THANKS!
CAVE JUNCTION—Alone buzzard circled over the strip of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base this morning as a final load of equipment was hefted into a truck bound for a similar base at Redmond, Ore.

The symbolism of the buzzard didn’t escape the crew left with the close-down duties at the O’Brien facility.

The closure of the Siskiyou base, a budgetary threat that has been heard for several years from the U.S. Forest Service, came to pass with rapidity, and drew the comment from project air officer Wes Nicholson, “It’s just one of those things. As they say in Washington, ‘RIFed by Reagan.’” (RIF means reduction in force.)

The remaining twin-engine airplane sitting on the airstrip apron was to be flown out at 5 p.m. today. The final truckload of equipment was due to leave at mid-day.

The closure affects two pilots, three Forest Service ‘permanents’ (regular staffers), a secretary and eight temporary smokejumpers, although the latter had finished out the fire season already.

Nicholson said that the county was destined to get most of the facilities, including the blacktopped airstrip, but that the Forest Service will keep two warehouses at the property alongside U.S. 199.

“RIF means reduction in force,” he said.

The Forest Service, fighting a restricted budget, decided to close the base’s fulltime operation in order to save an estimated $250,000 annually, despite strong opposition from smokejumpers and other Illinois Valley residents.

Today was the last fulltime operational day for the base which dates back to 1949.

Nicholson, a smokejumper since 1969, will probably be the last jumper to leave the base.

“Well have the temporary help on until midnight,” he said this morning. “They’re loading just about everything now.”

Nicholson, an opponent of the Forest Service action, is waiting for orders.

“I have no idea what will happen,” he said. “They’ll have to transfer me to another job.”

Most of the gear being removed includes parachutes and protective equipment used by the jumpers and most of it is being transported to the Redmond Smokejumper Base.

“We’re closing up shop—winterizing the facility and putting it in a storage mode,” says Russ Bripp, assistant aviation fire staff officer for the Siskiyou National Forest. “A lot of equipment is going back to the other bases.”

Meanwhile, hopes that the Forest Service can still be convinced to change its mind remains, according to Bette Weaver, spokeswoman for the group which includes the Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce.

“The main feeling of the chamber and people out here is that we believe in the system, and if we continue in doing what we think is right, the right (decision) will be made,” she says.

“It’s hard to accept that a few men, who don’t listen to correspondence, to representatives, can do this,” she said, acknowledging the orders originated from Region 6 headquarters in Portland.

The Forest Service wants to use the facility as a spike base,
flying in jumpers from Redmond and other bases during periods of extremely high fire danger. Those opposed to the move believe smokejumpers should be on the base during the summer, and counter that agency plans to shuttle smokejumpers back and forth is more expensive that keeping them at the base.

Fourth Congressman Jim Weaver (D-Eugene) won a reprieve for the base last fall when he convinced the Forest Service to keep the base open on a fulltime basis through the 1981 fire season. Weaver has requested that 10 jumpers remain on the base during the summer rather than use it as a spike base.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Weaver is waiting for a reply from a packet the group sent to the General Accounting Office in Washington, D.C. The packet gives a blow-by-blow account of why the base should not be closed, including what Mrs. Weaver believes are errors in the Forest Service study on the project.

The crux, Mrs. Weaver says, is that the closure could mean a substantial loss of time should a major fire break out and smokejumpers not be on hand to immediately battle the blaze.
...from the Editor

CHUCK SHELEY
‘59

This article is excerpted, in part, from the National Smokejumper Magazine of January 2003, of which Chuck Sheley is editor. The Magazine continued to provide subsequent investigation and documentation of Biscuit Fire management.

THE BISCUIT COMPLEX FIRE IN SOUTHERN OREGON—the largest in the nation during the 2002 season—burned at over 500,000 acres and has cost taxpayers more than $150 million. Estimated loss of timber, watershed, land rehabilitation and environmental reports could add another $100 million, adding to a total that could easily hit a quarter of a billion dollars.

The fire, caused by lightning in a wilderness areas, began on July 13. It was not attacked for over three days.

When initial attack is delayed 24-48 hours under extreme burning conditions, wildfires can envelop and destroy thousands of acres. On July 16—three days after the Biscuit Fire began—the U.S. Forest Service was still in the process of building a road into the fire, and no one was on the ground building fire line.

This didn’t have to be the case. For more that 60 years, the USFS has had an efficient firefighting force in its smokejumpers. The Biscuit Fire would have been a quarter-page fire report had jumpers been used quickly after its discovery. It was a perfect situation: There were 110 jumpers available the morning of July 13. Ten were an hour away and could have been on the fires by afternoon. Seventy-nine jumpers were still available on July 14, but none were used. When minutes mattered, days were wasted.

Years ago, this wouldn’t have happened. For 37 years prior to 1981, the area currently being ravaged by the Biscuit Fire was actively protected by smokejumpers. During this period, fires were routinely jumped within a couple hours of being reported. In 1981, the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base at Cave Junction, Oregon, was closed to save money. One repercussion of the closure and others like it was a steady deterioration of an efficient system to attack wildfires.
*Mouse’s contributions from a 1976 issue of the Base newspaper, the Waterpipe.*

*a big bust* What every smokejumper dreams of.

*canopy* What your jump partner throws on you when he doesn’t have a can of water.

*gorging* A strange ritual peculiar to the GOBI tribe. While looking somewhat like Baptism, its significance and true meaning are obscure.

*hang-up* Syndrome associated with GS-12s.

*let down line* When your date tells you she has a headache.

*manipulation* What you still attempt after the let down line.

*malfunction* When your squirt gun jams while you’re being attacked.

*mess hall* Area between Clancy’s and Emmett’s room.

*over extension* Squadleader disease...losing sight of feet.

*pilot* Smokejumper who can’t pass his P.T. test.

*riser* We refer you to the *Joy of Sex.*

*slow opening* A pair or better or pawn to King’s two.

*a Grijalva* A hilarious one-liner.

*Abby’s.* A rest stop used by returning jumpers. The location has plentiful pitchers of a bubbly substance that turn shy, well-mannered jumpers into crude and gregarious patrons.

*Albert’s Milk* Code words requesting beer to be cargo dropped on a fire. Proven to be a terrific moral builder.

*Allen Roll* A fluid motion that attenuates impact forces with the ground. It is rarely accomplished correctly but is often thought about after a three-point landing... feet, knees, face.

*annual leave* Time taken when caught leaving the base early or reporting late.

*apex jump* Test term used in a bar to see if your new “friend” who talks on and on about all his jumping experience is full of shit. At this point you ask him, “Have you ever jumped through your apex?”

*attitude adjustment* Performed at the gorge with glass tape, a rite realigning individual attitudes to group expectations.
auger-in  A finely tuned landing style; an alternative to the Allen roll, and was perfected by D Oz. It consists of ground contact in a forward motion, striking feet-knees-face in sequential order.

BA  Something the jumpers did NOT do in front of the Fireside Tavern alongside Highway 199 at the state line.

back east  Another term for Region 8 and the source of many legendary stories about real hillbillies and white lightning. (see Region 8)

bag it!  To quit!

Bemis Seamless (seamless sack)  A heavy cotton sack used to stuff gear and parachutes for transport.

“better you than me”  What Mac Truck would tell you as he hit you on the shoulder while spotting.

Big Bertha  A large stand-up sewing machine used in the loft for harness construction and capable of firmly attaching a jumper/operator’s finger firmly to a section of nylon webbing.

blipping  Cooking method and more: 1) 2-Blip Method—after placing an unopened can of food directly into the coals in a warming fire, the food was done upon hearing the second “blip.” There was never a third blip, just an explosion. 2) 3-Blip Method—an attempt to splatter hot creamed corn or ???? on the person next to you.

Brand-X  Jumper softball JV team, which wore plain white T-shirts with a big black “Brand-X” stenciled on them.

break  A fifteen-minute period that occurs twice a day when jumpers wake up and come out of their hiding places to mingle.

bull cook  Worst job on the work list, involving washing dishes and cleaning toilets. Accompanying hunker time is not worth it.

bump up  1. A method used when building fire line to advance the lead jumpers, allowing for all in the line to progress with line construction. 2. A practice used by jumpers to clear a spot at the bar for themselves.

burn out  1. An event preceded by a “spur out” that removes exposed skin from forearms  2. A fire fighting technique used by district fire managers, which often results in additional overtime for jumpers.

“Can’t Bust ‘Em”  Black pants worn by smokejumpers. Proper style... the “faded look” with frayed cuffs.

chain saw  An automated gasoline powered climbing tool used to fall trees (See Sheley Climbers).

chicken skins  Boots made with thin leather and slick soles that rookies wore when first reporting to work. Were replaced after first paycheck with high-end boots like Buffalos or Whites.

coffee  Used in great quantities as jumpers warily watched the sky during July rainstorms.
controlled crash  SOP for Dick Bassertt landing in a Twin Beech.

crash and burn  A VERY hard parachute landing.

crown fire  A “grass fire” traveling through the tops of trees, which can occur during extreme conditions of wind, temperature, and fuel moisture.

cumulonimbus overtimus  Heavy dark clouds, which develop in the east, create sounds of static on the loft radio, rumble & spit lightning, causing cherry two-maners on the Winema good for lots of OT!

day room  1. Room in the new barracks where jumpers spent stand-by hours playing poker and watching TV.  2. A room used by jumpers to sleep in during the day and stay up at night drinking beer.

DC-3 loading ramp  What you sent the rookies to take out to the apron to prepare for the arrival of the DC-3. (rookie intelligence test)

dead march  Each smokejumper's fantasy that his worst pack-out was the worst packout of all time.

detachable shovel  A fire shovel found in two parts. Assembling the parts is quite easy but still requires hours of rookie training.

detailed out  Smokejumpers loaned to districts during late fall, winter, and early spring for shit work... but we got paid!

ditty bag  A bag carried by smokejumpers containing critical firefighting items such as: pint of diet whiskey, smokes, chew, mind improving book (Lolita), gum, Abby Pizza coupons.

“dive for five”  Demand heard for the five pushups “owed” after losing a point in volleyball.

douched-in  A hard landing. (see auger-in)

dry mop-up  To extinguish all smokes without water. (see vibram mop-up)

dry run  1. A fire call to a non-existent fire.  2. A trip to town to purchase beer only to find out the stores have closed.

elephant bag  Heavy-duty military canvas bags used for pack-outs before smokejumpers went high-tech.

elephant fence  1. 16-inch diameter peeled and painted logs used for fencing on the Gobi. Designed mainly to keep Albert and Farrenetti off the lawns and runway late at night.  2. Built to keep the elephants out. (You don’t think it worked? Well, did you ever see elephants on the lawn?)

ember storm  When sugar-cube sized glowing embers are scattered by the wind across the fire line causing many spot fires... a good time to get the hell out of there!

falling wedge  You never think to use one till it’s too late.

Fanno Saw  A small folding handsaw used while climbing high into a tree to retrieve a chute. Always dropped just when you needed it most.

fart-sack  1. A sleeping bag made of paper.  2. The term is especially apropos
for jumpers who have eaten C-Rations for two or more days.

**fire line** A place used by jumpers to eat meals so that mealtimes were not deducted from their fire time sheet.

**fire shelter** 1. Something else to pack out. 2. Something to crawl into if the fire was going to burn over you, not unlike a microwave.

**fire siren** An adrenalin producing event which causes jumpers to smile and make loud “whooping” noises... accompanied by the coughing/whining sounds of aircraft engines firing up.

**fire timesheet** A record of untruths and profound lies.

**free fall** A rapid descent that is the result of not hooking up.

**F-Troop** Jumpers allied with loft lizards, whose genetics failed GBR requisites.

**flying right seat** 1. The co-pilot of an aircraft. 2. To Lou Grozza it meant right toilet in the bath house.

**glass tape** 1. The tie that binds—mostly hands and feet—as a restraint for unwilling gorgings. 2. The moral fiber of the Gobi.

**“Go get em!”** The command heard by a jumper in the door, accompanied by a solid slap on the shoulder.

**GBR (Gobi Botanical Refuge)** 1. An enlightened group of jumpers, mostly suntanned, buff and handsome, in balance with nature who not only maintained the Gobi Gardens but attended to the general aesthetic ambience of the Gobi. 2. A nefarious and subversive group dedicated to confusing the Gobi bureaucracy: the arch nemesis of F-Troop.

**Gobi** (proper noun) 1. The property upon which the Siskiyou Aerial Project was founded. 2. A name conjured up by Danny Oh to describe the alluvial plain that forms the ground the base was built upon. 3. A mind-set and brotherhood that you just wouldn’t understand unless you worked there.

**Gobi** (adj.) Prefix used by jumpers to describe the unique and usually impractical methods employed by Gobi jumpers to accomplish simple tasks. Also, used to describe various objects found on the Gobi.

**Gobi beret** Handkerchief worn on the head with knots tied in the corners. Invented by Lou Groza to “keep up” with Redding Jumpers. Usually worn with the knots out.

**Gobi cart** Three wheeled scooter mainly used to haul fire packs and saws to the airplane. Also used for a lot of other stuff that would be wrong to mention.

**Gobi glossary** A set of words, each capable of eliciting one or more “crystal clear” memories of “how it really was.”

**Gobi Gorge** A irrigation ditch, which carries cold water from Rough & Ready Creek through the Gobi. Jumpers tend to reject invites to test its magical waters and must be subdued with glass tape and then gently assisted into the magical water.

**Gobi Green** A highly “Mick Swift” modified T-10 chute that performed far
above the standard-issue smokejumper parachutes. Disapproved by MEDC in Missoula but later adopted under another name.

**Gobi salute** Thought by some to be an obscene gesture but in actuality a sign of good luck and fortune for jumpers departing to a fire.

**Gobi stones** A prolific life form that exists underground at the Gobi with the sole purpose of being dug up and relocated by smokejumpers as many times as possible.

**goony bird** DC-3

**gravity** 1. A relentless force which accelerates an object toward the earth. 2. Nickname of an individual who always accelerated toward the earth with more force than average.

**Greek god** The image jumpers believe they see each morning in the mirror.

**groundpounder** 1. Firefighters that arrive at the fire by vehicle or on foot. 2. Smokejumper groupie tag alongs... Arrive at the fire two hours later, exhausted and needing water. Immediately begin dreaming about becoming a smokejumper “stud” next season.

**hang-up** The only situation in which a jumper fails to reach the ground.

**harness** A device used to securely attach a jumper to a parachute; sometimes associated with marriage.

**helicopter** A word used fondly by jumpers returning from a fire.

**hit the silk** Not to be confused with WWII parachuting. The term applies to climbing into a paper sleeping bag stuffed with a cargo chute.

**human streamer** The jumper who is in the door when the spotter can’t get the streamers into the spot. (see streamer) (see “Jumpers Away!”)

**hunker-down** Technique used to avoid activities implied by a “bad” day on the work list.

**inversion** When a parachute opens up inside out and locks controls in reverse gear. Often results in the jumper not reaching the spot.

“...it’s all so vague...” Phrase heard daily on the volleyball court about the activities of the night before.

**jump gear** Essential equipment at the front end of a fire call. Non-essential equipment at the back end of a fire call.

**jump list** The rotating order in which jumpers are designated to jump a fire.

**jump list (off the...)** An injury or other situation that excluded a jumper from being able to successfully respond to a fire. Example: The morning after mouse’s rookie class party, after running and getting up and down to pump out roughly 230 pushups, mouse does his last five pushups and crawls off to the side of the volleyball court to projectile vomit the remains of his last shot of scotch. Delos was on his team and instantly removed him from the jump list. That means that mouse was taken off the jump list before he made his first fire jump.
jump partner  A person who confir-
mer the accuracy of the fire time re-
port and insists on giving you the hon-
or of packing out the chainsaw.

jump spot  A mythical place, which
is rumored to exist “100 yards beyond
those tall trees.” Always strived for, sel-
dom achieved.

jump story  A highly exaggerated
story about jumping a fire that always
starts out with the five words, “Now
this is no shit....”

jumper bum  Jumps in the summer,
plays in the winter.

jumper formal  A clean t-shirt and a
new pair of “Can’t Bust ‘Ems.”

“jumpers away”  Words a spotter uses
to announce departure of jumper and to
absolve himself of further responsibil-
ity for jumper’s decision to jump. (see
jump spot) (see “go get em’”)

kick the can  What jumpers end up
doing when they return to base with-
out their parachutes.

lightning storm  An event that oc-
curs too infrequently over the forests,
but when it does, it allows jumpers to
switch from: 1. Hamburger to T-bone
steak; 2. Lucky Lager to Budweiser; 3.
Grants Pass to Mexico.

limb over  A dangerous procedure
usually performed in the top of a tall
tree after spending all night on the fire-
line: “real-man” moment!

line over  1. A malfunction in which,
part of the canopy, during deployment,
is restricted from opening fully. 2. A
routine occurrence when sleeping in
the parachute well under a hung chute
while hiding from squad leaders. (see
hunker-down)

loft lizards  Those jumpers who
lounged in the loft and packed and re-
paired equipment, but whose light skin
required avoidance of the hearty sun.
Always wore sunglasses outside and
resembled a sickly, pigmentless gecko.
(see F-Troop)

May West  A line over malfunction
in which a shroud line bisects the open
canopy dividing it into two perfect
hemispheres!

maxed out  Maximum possible pay-
check: equal to the Forest Supervisor
and something that only happened in
Alaska

misery whip: 1. Crosscut saw... also
known as a Swede Fiddle. 2. An un-
gainly torture device that when used
with an uncoordinated jump partner
can lead to homicide.

mop-up  A tedious task accomplished
by jumpers who are not relieved on a
fire, and not relished except when fill-
ing out Fire Time Reports.

motate – Move with haste.

new barracks run  A very challeng-
ing cross-country automobile course
that ran between the fence and the
back of the new barracks. It could only
be driven after eight or more beers be-
cause it was too tight to attempt sober.

nobble nobble  1. The mating call of
hair lipped turkeys. 2. A dance best per-
formed on table tops in pizza parlors.
Ochoco  A term used to indicate no overtime.

old barracks  A place inhabited by older, more experienced jumpers. Primarily used to sleep off late night returns from town.

Only one...  A misused phrase spoken by jumpers before going to town.

opening shock  A spurious term, because it is only a “shock” when it doesn’t open.

oscillation  1. The act of swinging side-to-side under a parachute, causing one to land in an ungainly manner, referred to as “balled up.” 2. A method of walking used by jumpers when leaving the bar late at night.

OT (overtime)  A term that is rarely applied to smokejumpers but is the major reason people risk life and limb to jump fires.

P-38  A tool used to puncture can lids by those too chicken to use the blip method.

pack-out  What to do when you’ve lost all hope that a helicopter will come to take you out. (see helicopter)

padding the book  While on smaller fires the jumpers kept their own time. There are rumors that some jumpers logged time when they were not doing anything.

parachute well  A tall building, which allowed parachutes to be hung from its peak and inspected for damage. Also, a good place to hunker during long afternoons at the Gobi.

per diem  Extra pay for room and board while away from base. Normally lent to Gary Dunning on the second day.

poison oak  A plant in the Anacardiaceae family and specifically called Toxiscodendron diversilobum by Biologists. Smokejumpers refer to this plant by its common name, usually preceded with several adjectives.

practice jump pool  All jumpers on a practice jump bet $1 on who could land closest to the spot. (see X)


piss poor  A term often used when teaching Allen Rolls.

piss pump  A leaking rubber bladder backpack with a bent plunger shaft, which is always empty by the time a jumper hikes from the creek at the bottom of the canyon up to the fire.

pressed hams  What spectators saw in DC-3 windows as they gathered on the runway to watch a planeload of visiting jumpers take off for home.

project work  Used to describe a slow fire season.

pull-up  The act of lifting a case of beer from the ground into the trunk.

push-up  A ritual practiced by volleyball players who have not yet perfected the art.

rat hole  1. verb: To stash something away for future use. 2. noun: A good
place to hunker-down for the afternoon.

**rat shack** A small room that housed all the canned goods, freeze dried food and assorted gourmet items that were selected for fire packs. Appropriately, a door with a frequently changed lock separated it from the saw shack. Rat shack boss was always in constant state of consternation over unauthorized late night visits.

**Redmond** A place inhabited by a wooden Indian Chief holding cigars, who liked to vacation in Cave Junction.

**Region 8** Experimental Smoke jumper program in the east. Folks back there were known to set fires just to bring the “smokejumpers show” to their holler. (see back east)

**reserve parachute** A device used by jumpers who have counted to ten and notice their velocity increasing rather than decreasing.

**retread** Redding smokejumper.

**rigger** A person all jumpers go out of their way not to piss off.

**rip hole, tear hole** A small hole in your t-shirt large enough for some other jumper asshole to get his finger into, after which he tears your shirt off your back.

**rookie** Lowest form of life, Ground-pounder wearing chicken skins reporting for duty with visions of greatness.

**rookie jump pin** “You only get one! If you lose it or give it to your girlfriend, don’t expect to come back and get another one.”

**rough-outs** What you have after a long session in the bar... not to be confused with “black-outs” or a certain type of boot.

**runway** A 5280 foot paved strip used to tire jumpers and cause them to hold their sides and gasp for air and/or used to reduce the contents of their stomachs.

**screw boss** A lower level manager equipped with a groundpounder hard hat, vest with useless items attached, and a roll call list. These people are found on project fires and become confused when attempting to call roll at night.

**seasonal** A person who alternates between the Jump Base and Mexico.

**Sheley Climbers** An ingenuous device that reduces the height of parachute snagging trees making ground level retrieval possible.

**show-me tour** Jumper guided tour to show visiting tourists the smokejumper base and answer questions.

**Shroud Hawk** Mythical bird which circles high above rookie practice jumps swooping down repeatedly to slash several shroud lines with each pass.

**six pack** 1. A Forest Service rig used to return jumpers from fires. 2. An amount of beer that when consumed increases exaggerations of events that occur on fires.

**sky hook** A device rookies are sent to find. (see DC-3 loading ramp)

**slash burning** A reforestation practice that can assure a jumper adequate funding for vacations to Mexico.
sling load  A pouch shaped net-like container suspended under a helicopter used to deliver tools, water and food in which the sandwiches were always packed at the bottom.

smoked oysters  A dietary supplement used by jumpers who cannot stomach another can of C-Rations.

Snake Pit  An infrequently visited tourist attraction that flanked the Gobi. Rookies were the only people that took advantage of this educational experience. It burned down one winter due to a lightning strike—rumors of arson unfounded.

spot fire  A small fire sometimes a mile ahead of the main fire caused by blowing embers.

spotter  The “wind artist” on board who uses drift streamers, along with his vast experience and intuition to assess the currents and eddies of the wind on the forest below. He suggests adjustments in aircraft course and altitude; finally sending the hapless jumper in the door to his fate with a hardy, “Go get em!”

spotter’s window  Used as a reservoir for stomach contents on turbulent flights.

spur out  The event that immediately precedes a burn out. It happens when a climber fails to sink his spur through the bark of the tree. Usually results in bad road-rash on the forearms and rapid ego deflation.

staged pants  Jumper fashion statement: new black “Can’t Bust ‘Em” pants (washed till faded) hems removed and shortened to the ankle with fuzzy cuffs, worn with White Boots. Good for shallow floods and visiting the Sportsman but a definite fire hazard on a jump.

stand-by  Usually the two hours after quitting time spent hunkering and waiting for the fire siren.

streamers  Wind measuring devices that land in areas not often frequented by jumpers.

ten-four (10-4)  Radio talk for “sure.”

tennie runners  Footwear that jumpers change into for PT.

termination  The first step when traveling to Mexico.

tree up  Missoula talk for “hang-up.”

trenching  A firefighting method used on steep terrain to contain rolling embers.

Tapered Racing Turd (TRT)  A vintage 1950 Hudson Commodore that was known to have impressive performance when headed to the Sportsman. The car was also capable of finding the Gobi on its own when returning from the Sportsman.

twists  Multiple rotations under a canopy experienced by some jumpers shortly after exiting. Twisting used up manipulation time but provided a handy excuse for a hang-up.

two-manner  A small 10 foot diameter fire smoldering in the duff. Something you always wanted and rarely got.
Umpqua  A curse word that is applied to a place disdained by all jumpers. When heard, tended to induce the same results on the body as a “snag.” (see snag) Antonym: Wynema

vibrams  Boots with distinctive tread pattern on the sole.

webbing belt  A “homemade” status symbol worn by jumpers immediately after they learned to use a sewing machine in the loft.

Whites  Whites are sturdy boots worn by jumpers, usually in bars so that patrons will know they are jumpers. (see apex jump)

widow make  A limb that has broken off a tree, but is still hanging up there. Not something you want to see in a snag that you have to fall.

Wolley Creek  A location that is used to simulate a month long trip through the jungles of Borneo. The location reduces jumper humor and results in sunken eyes, gaunt faces, and shredded clothing. (see death march)

work list  A schedule that causes squad leaders to look for jumpers all day and jumpers to hide from squad leaders all day. (see line over)

wrong way  (A parachute maneuver) When a jumper is told to do a one-eighty degree turn results in a 360 degree turn that culminates in a downwind three-point landing... feet, knees, face. (see douched-in)

X  The jumper that lands closest to this symbol on a practice jump wins at least $3. (see practice jump pool)

X-rated fire  Naked locals covered with fire retardant working on fire the they started when smokejumpers arrive.

“You OK?... You OK?” 1. First words when administering CPR after witnessing a heart attack. 2. First words spoken to D Oz after a practice jump.
Appendix

Listed here is an as accurate account as possible of Smokejumpers who served at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base 1943–1981. Jumpers are listed in their initial year of service, with an indication of other years. Jumpers who rookied at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base are listed in ‘regular’ type, jumpers who transferred to the Base are listed in ‘italic’ type.

Walter R. Buller 1943 43,44
Kenneth A. Diller 1943 43,44
Marvin W. Graeler 1943 43,44
Jack G. Heintzelman 1943 43-45
Calvin A. Hilty 1943 43-44
Charles R. Hudson 1943 43-44
Gus I. Janzen 1943 43-44
William S. Laughlin 1943 43-44
Gerrit A. Rozeboom 1943 43-44
Winton H. Stucky 1943 43
Floyd F. Yoder 1943 43-44

Elmer W. Neufeld 1944 44
Robert H. Painter 1944 44
Arthur C. Penner 1944 44

Elon H. Eash 1945 45
Roger L. Frantz 1945 45
Chalmer C. Gillin 1945 45
Albert L. Gray 1945 45
Millard W. Green 1945 45-50
John L. Harnish 1945 45
Donald F. Hostetler 1945 45
Arthur S. Hoylman 1945 45
Daniel N. Kauffman 1945 45
Willard S. Krabill 1945 45
Clarence Leasenbury 1945 45
Ray J. Mast 1945 45
Emerson Miller 1945 45
Leonard Pauls 1945 45
Dale R. Yoder 1945 45

Ed Adams 1946 46-47
Ralph Clark 1946 46
Tommy Cornell 1946 46
Richard J. Courson 1946 46-50
Bob Gerling 1946 46
Millard W. Green 1946 46-50
Paul Hankins 1946 46
Andrew Henry 1946 46-47
Herbert Krissie 1946 46-49
Fred Logan 1946 46
Merle Lundrigan 1946 46
Cliff Marshall 1946 46-53
James Middleton 1946 46
Len Miguel 1946 46
Danny On 1946 46-47, 52-53
Daniel J, O’Rourke 1946 46
Ray Phillips 1946 46
Clem L. Pope 1946 46
Neil T. Shier 1946 46-47
Paul P. Siler 1946 46
Ken Smith 1946 46
Tom Steel 1946 46
John O. Thach 1946 46
Calvin Thompson 1946 46
Wilber Wasson 1946 46
Francis Webb 1946 46
Margarita Avila 1947 47
Leroy Barnes 1947 47
William Beaird 1947 47
Harry L. Cummings 1947 47
Albert H. Devoe 1947 47
Terry Fieldhouse 1947 47-50
Charles Foster 1947 47-48
Lyle J. Hoffman 1947 47-48
Harold Lahr 1947 47
Walter McNally 1947 47
Robert L. Nolan 1947 47-50
Alfred Rosin 1947 47
Jack Barrett 1948 48
Paul Block 1948 48-50
Charles Clemensen 1948 48-49
Richard B. Cole 1948 48-50
Robert N. Cummings 1948 48-49
Arthur T. Honey 1948 48
Starr Jenkins 1948 48
Gudmond Kaarhus 1948 48
Paul G. Kovaleff 1948 48-49
Robert A. Moffitt 1948 48-49
John Myers 1948 48
Bill Padden 1948 48-53
Bob Richardson 1948 48
Armand O. Riza 1948 48-49
Robert A. Snyder 1948 48-51
Ward V. Speaker 1948 48
K. J. Westphall 1948 48
Roger D. Wolfertz 1948 48-49
Dick Bethel 1949 49
Hobbie W. Bonnett 1949 49
Albert N. Boucher 1949 49-54, 57-63
Bud Falk 1949 49
Bert Foster 1949 49
Delmar E. Jaquish 1949 49-51
Larry Looper 1949 49
Orville C. Looper 1949 49-56
Fred Michelotti 1949 49-50
Lowell Scalf 1949 49-50
Robert J. Scofield 1949 49-50, 53-55
Donald E. Wallace 1949 49-50
Andre Brunette 1950 50, 53
Bob Butler 1950 50
Henry G. Florip 1950 50-51
Joe Gardner 1950 50
John Harns 1950 50
Edgar Hinkle 1950 50-51, 53
John Lovejoy 1950 50
William O. Lovejoy 1950 50
Hallie E. Norton 1950 50
Wilford L. Olsen 1950 50
R.H. Proctor 1950 50
Maurice Robertson 1950 50
Willi Unsoeld 1950 50
Richard Allewett 1951 51
Louis A. Banta 1951 51-52
Roy L. Belli 1951 51
Paul M. Bryce 1951 51-52, 56, 58
Philip E. Clarke 1951 51-53, 55-56
Gilbert L. Coody 1951 51
Gordon C. Cross 1951 51-52, 54
Paul L. Dominick 1951 51
Steve Downer 1951 51
David Goblarish 1951 51
Dick Gregory 1951 51
Don Hansen 1951 51
Charles Harter 1951 51, 54-58
Bobby G. Johnston 1951 51
Lamar Lecompte 1951 51, 54
Eddie Ledbetter 1951 51
Darwin T. Miller 1951 51
Bob Newberry 1951 51-54
Roger E. Newton 1951 51-58
Clarence Rowley 1951 51-54
John Shallenberger 1951 51
Glen Sheppard 1951 51
George Wilson 1951 51
Bill Wright 1951 51
Donald L. Basey 1952 52
Jay T. Brazie 1952 52
Bill Clarke 1952 52
Gordon Cook 1952 52
Leroy Crippen 1952 52-53
Jimmie F. Dollard 1952 52-54
Thomas A. Elwood 1952 52, 54-55
Axel A. Johnson 1952 52
William E. Kester 1952 52-53
John R. Lindlan 1952 52-54
Paul Lukens 1952 52
Delano Lund 1952 52
Harold W. Meili 1952 52
Dick Merrill 1952 52
Bob Ramsey 1952 52
Phil Smith 1952 52
James A. Allen 1953 53-65
Bill Arrington 1953 53
Calvin Austin 1953 53
Bill B. Buck 1953 53
Don Chapman 1953 53
Robert G. Crick 1953 53-56
Mel Greenup 1953 53-55
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Harris</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Jacobs</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. James Oleson</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel M. Palmquist</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart A. Roosa</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernie Showers</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert E. Wood</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James L. Wright</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>53-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen A. Botkin</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Ferrell</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack D. Heiden</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip M. Hodge</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert G. Lewis</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James R. Moore</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Spalinger</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas P. Stinson</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas F. Tincoff</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren L. Webb</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>54-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert G. Berry</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Buckner</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Calverley</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Dail</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan Ferry</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Hayes</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert L. Kester</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Kesterson</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John T. Koester</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Long</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William E. Long</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard W. Macatee</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold J. Maxwell</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gideon Newton</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-58, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold L. Werner</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim C. Yandell</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>55-56, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David E. Arnold</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard L. Board</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56, 61-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William B. Brophy</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Brunt</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Edison</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Eggers</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Emory</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmie H. Hardisty</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Koehler</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keith Morrill</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Price</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linwood Reed</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floyd G. Rogers</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug Sutherland</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eldo W. Swift</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56, 62-65, 69-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard L. Wessell</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56-61, 66-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenneth R. Wicks</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence J. Wright</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>56-57, 59-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Allen</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Bryant</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael J. Byrne</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Cherry</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert A. Harrison</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Hull</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon L. Kellogg</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57, 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John R. McDaniel</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald B. Nelson</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernie Nicholson</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman E. Pawlowski</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-61, 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Rosenberg</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne G. Schrunk</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald O. Thomas</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert D. Tyson</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Vines</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Zachary</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William G. Byrne</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted E. Cook</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James L. Cramer</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil Harvey</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael A. Lehman</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58-59, 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard E. Light</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford E. McKeen</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John P. Murchison</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John S. Murray</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry R. Reid</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Roberts</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William R. Ruskin</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell R. Beem</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don M. Cramer</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred L. Cramer</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>59-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James L. Fritz</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>59-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard L. Groom</td>
<td>1959 59-60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles R. Mansfield</td>
<td>1959 59-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen W. McBride</td>
<td>1959 59-60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary L. Meredith</td>
<td>1959 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard H. Mortensen</td>
<td>1959 59, 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael E. Mulligan</td>
<td>1959 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh G. Rosenberg</td>
<td>1959 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck Shelley</td>
<td>1959 59-66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David H. Slagle</td>
<td>1959 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner P. Smith</td>
<td>1959 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny R. Tucker</td>
<td>1959 59-60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alvin F. Baker</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip G. Beardslee</td>
<td>1960 60-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles A. Crowley</td>
<td>1960 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald L. Donaca</td>
<td>1960 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John C. Helmer</td>
<td>1960 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William M. Knight</td>
<td>1960 60-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald L. Lufkin</td>
<td>1960 60-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael H. McCracken</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William L. Olesen</td>
<td>1960 60-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Page</td>
<td>1960 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Peay</td>
<td>1960 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack J. Ridgway</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil O. Riffe</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael B. Simon</td>
<td>1960 60-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Thoreson</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger D. Towers</td>
<td>1960 60, 62-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Vanwagtendonk</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary E. Welch</td>
<td>1960 60-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis W. Wheeler</td>
<td>1960 60-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul P. Boyer</td>
<td>1961 61-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truman L. Sandelin</td>
<td>1961 61-62, 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy R. Smith</td>
<td>1961 61-64, 66-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie R. Welch</td>
<td>1961 61, 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry D. Welch</td>
<td>1961 61-62, 69, 73-75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert H. Boundy</td>
<td>1962 62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William J. Denton</td>
<td>1962 62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald E. Garner</td>
<td>1962 62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Gossett</td>
<td>1962 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford W. Hamilton</td>
<td>1962 62-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jere A. Hancock</td>
<td>1962 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug Hopkins</td>
<td>1962 62-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry P. John</td>
<td>1962 62-63, 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven T. Johnson</td>
<td>1962 62-63, 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter R. Landis</td>
<td>1962 62-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John L. Manley</td>
<td>1962 62-63, 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles E. Moseley</td>
<td>1962 62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom A. Pettigrew</td>
<td>1962 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James S. Roberts</td>
<td>1962 62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry E. Schmidt</td>
<td>1962 62-63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hal K. Ward</td>
<td>1962 62-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George R. Bliss</td>
<td>1963 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James B. Grubs</td>
<td>1963 63-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen B. Hill</td>
<td>1963 63-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry C. Lufkin</td>
<td>1963 63-67, 69-71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Moseley</td>
<td>1963 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garry R. Peters</td>
<td>1963 63-66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry J. Peters</td>
<td>1963 63-64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James F. Schmidt</td>
<td>1963 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George M. Straw</td>
<td>1963 63-64, 66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Albert</td>
<td>1964 64, 66-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leroy Cook</td>
<td>1964 64-66, 70-71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Farinetti</td>
<td>1964 64, 66, 70-73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael V. Johnson</td>
<td>1964 64-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar R. Jones</td>
<td>1964 64-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John P. Kirkley</td>
<td>1964 64-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Keith Lockwood</td>
<td>1964 64, 66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick McMahon</td>
<td>1964 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry M. Mewhinney</td>
<td>1964 64, 66-69, 75-77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Pierce</td>
<td>1964 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric T. Schoenfeld</td>
<td>1964 64-66, 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Weissenback</td>
<td>1964 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Zedicker</td>
<td>1964 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Cowart</td>
<td>1965 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Egan</td>
<td>1965 65-68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold E. Hartman</td>
<td>1965 65-66, 70-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry W. Howe</td>
<td>1965 65-66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon T. Klingel</td>
<td>1965 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myron B. Kreidler</td>
<td>1965 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon Oswalt</td>
<td>1965 65-68, 70-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Reeves</td>
<td>1965 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Robinson</td>
<td>1965 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John F. Robison</td>
<td>1965 65-67, 70-73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex A. Theios</td>
<td>1965 65-66, 69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix

Wesley A. Brown 1966 66-78, 80
Jerry L. Brownwood 1966 66
Gary J. Buck 1966 66-67, 71-80
Delos Dutton 1966 66-74
Troop Emonds 1966 66-67, 71-80
Emett C. Grijalva 1966 66, 74-78
Ronald D. McMinimy 1966 66-77
Gary L. Mills 1966 66-80
Joe A. Niesen 1966 66-67, 70-72
James C. Tomasini 1966 66
David B. Ward 1966 66-68
Louis H. Wayers 1966 66-71

Doug J. Bucklew 1967 67-68, 72-75
Robert E. Bunn 1967 67
Daniel A. Casey 1967 67
Dale D. Gardner 1967 67
Robert B. Hooper 1967 67, 70-76, 78
Jerry A. Katt 1967 67-69
Robert G. Lowden 1967 67, 70-72
Robert H. McCray 1967 67-73
Patrick T. McNally 1967 67-74
Stephen W. O’Dell 1967 67-70
John T. Remley 1967 67
Jay D. Scott 1967 67
Gary F. Sharp 1967 67
Lee W. Smith 1967 67-69

Gregory W. Barnes 1968 68
Allen J. Bersaglier 1968 68-69
John S. Casad 1968 68-69
Walter S. Congleton 1968 68-81
Thomas H. Greiner 1968 68-69
Chris R. Hartman 1968 68
James A. Miller 1968 68-69
Lawrence Oliver 1968 68-76
David P. Oswalt 1968 68-80
Gary W. Thornhill 1968 68-79
James Vroman 1968 68-70
Alexander A. Wold 1968 68, 74-77

Claude A Greiner 1969 69
Samuel L. Greiner 1969 69
Wesley R. Nicholson 1969 69-81

David E. Atkin 1970 70-72, 74-79
Roddy K. Baumann 1970 70-75
Douglas C. Beck 1970 70-78
Ernest Carlson 1970 70
Stan Collins 1970 70-72, 74-76
Michael W. Leclercq 1970 70
Allen Owen 1970 70-80
Ralph E. Rhodes 1970 70-72
Michael Russo 1970 70-71
David S. Warren 1970 70

Steve A. Baumann 1973 73-81
Francisco C. Cabilayan 1973 73-77
George W. Custer 1973 73-74
W. Roy Floch 1973 73-76
David G. Laws 1973 73-74
Michael L. Mann 1973 73-77
Raymond Osipovich 1973 73-81
Dain M. Smith 1973 73-76
Gary A. Cote 1974 74-76
Thomas Koyama 1974 74-77
Pat Armijo 1975 75
Dean Cernick 1975 75-79
Rick Dees 1975 75-77, 80
Edwin D. Floate 1975 75-79
Daniel A. Marsh 1975 75
Roger Dehart 1976 76-78
Greg Gonzalez 1976 76-79
Michael J. Hardy 1976 76, 79
Peter D. Hawley 1976 76-81
John K. Hughes 1976 76-77
Willard Lowden 1976 76-77, 80
Steve Mankle 1976 76-77
Robert J. McCann 1976 76-78
Larry Owen 1976 76-77
Robert Terrell 1976 76-78
Loy Tucker 1976 76
Warren D. Villa 1976 76-77
Eric Ward 1976 76
Michael D. Wheelock 1976 76-78, 80
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Howard T. Clark</td>
<td>1977 77-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael G. Apicello</td>
<td>1978 78, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art N. Benefiel</td>
<td>1978 78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald G. Bisson</td>
<td>1978 78-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe E. Budenholzer</td>
<td>1978 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theo Collins</td>
<td>1978 78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Lightley</td>
<td>1978 78-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Miller</td>
<td>1978 78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Versteeg</td>
<td>1978 78-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert G. Wilken</td>
<td>1978 78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Blackwood</td>
<td>1979 79, 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Campbell</td>
<td>1979 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Davis</td>
<td>1979 79-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Dickenson</td>
<td>1979 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie V. Floyd</td>
<td>1979 79-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Neal</td>
<td>1979 79-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Rees</td>
<td>1979 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom K. Smit</td>
<td>1979 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul L. Williams</td>
<td>1979 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hunnicutt</td>
<td>1980 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partick Withen</td>
<td>1980 80-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry J. Hunter</td>
<td>1981 81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTRIBUTION (YEAR)</th>
<th>VOLUME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Ed (1946)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In My Time There Was No Gobi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Picnic (Smokejumper Version)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert, Tommy “Gravity” (1964)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gobi Fire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hunter Fire Standby</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• International Night at the Gobi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Just Mess Up one “Time” and...</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mars Flat Pine Cone Picking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mrs. Peter’s Boy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pyramid Peak Fire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rookie Year Memories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Gobi Charisma</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Toolbox Springs Fire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen, Jim (1953-1965)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A Sense of Humor is Common Sense Dancing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Who, When, and Why</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Never Take a Wooden....</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apicello, Mike (1979)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flipping the Gobi</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumann, Roddy (1970)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why I Became a Smokejumper</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumann, Steve (1973)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A Few Short Memories</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beck, Doug (1970)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Just Follow Pat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boucher, Al (1949)
  • Koontz and Davis Creek Fire
  • Orville Looper
  • Random Remembrances

Boucher, Ruthie (1960)
  • I Remember

Brandt, Roger
  • Oregon’s First Smokejumper Base

Buck, Gary (1966)
  • Remembering the Best
  • Squaw Basin Fire, Version 1
  • The Region Three Detail

Bucklew, Doug (1967)
  • Fond Gobi Memories

Bunn, Skip (1967)
  • What Made the Gobi Special

Casad, Judy
  • The “Gobi” Meant Something Else to Me

Clarke, Phil (1951)
  • Mule Creek Fire

Collins, Clancy (1970)
  • After We Leave
  • Father Farinetti
  • Floating Over Crater Lake
  • The Mouse and the Moon
  • You’re OK

Courson, Dick (1946)
  • Eagle Squadron
  • The Big Blow

Cramer, Mike (1959)
  • Paid Vacation

Dollard, Jimmie F. (1952)
  • Late Checks and Communist Conspiracy on the Gobi
Eugene Register-Guard

Farinetti, Ray (1964)

Floate, Ed (1975)

Floch, Bill (1973)

Graeler, Marvin (1943)

Grants Pass Daily Courier
Gray, Albert (1945)
  • Crawling Along a Bear Trail 2
  • Smokejumpers at Cave Junction 1943, 1944, and 1945 2

Grijalva, Emett (1966)
  • The Vigilantes 2

Gonzales, Greg “Gonzo” (1976)
  • As the Story Goes... 3
  • Breakfast, Lunch and the Hog Fire 2

Hardy, Mike (1976)
  • Everyone Was Claimed by the Gorge 1
  • Master Blasters 2

Heintzelman, Jack G. (1943)
  • Letter from Jack Heintzelman, August 17, 1976 1
  • Smokejumper Project Region Six, 1943 1

Hilty, Calvin (1943)
  • History of Cave Junction Smokejumper Camp 1

Hinkle, Ed (1950)
  • The Logger and the Raccoon 2

Howe, Jerry (1965)
  • Gobi-ites 2
  • Recollections of My Last Fire Jump 2

Hostetler, Don (1945)
  • Getting Back to Cave Junction 2

Hunnicutt, Tom (1980)
  • Spirit Made the Gobi 1
  • Being in the Door 2

Illinois Valley News
  • Cabbages and Kings (Summers of 1965 & 1966) 3
  • Preparing for the Summer of 1945 2

Index 3

Jenkins, Starr (1949)
  • Pulling a Slip 2
Index

John, Jerry (1962)
  • Bad Packout 2

Johnson, Mike (1964)
  • Jonesies’ Flat Hat 2
  • Mid-Air Collision 2

Johnson, Steve (1962)
  • The Gobi 3

Kauffman, Dan (1945)
  • Summer 1945 2

Kirkley (1964)
  • Gobi Blessing 3

Lahr, Ray (1947)
  • What Made the Gobi Special? 2

Lowden, Willie (1975)
  • This Is All True 1

Lufkin, Larry (1963)
  • Remembering the Gobi 1
  • Trips to North Cascades 1

Lufkin, Ron (1960)
  • My Travels with Homer 1

Manley, John (1962)
  • My Gobi Days 3

Marshall, Cliff (1946-1953) 1

Meili, Hal (1952)
  • Airborne Danny On 2

McDaniel, J.R. (1957)
  • It’s Only a Trail Jump 2

McNally, Pat (1967)
  • The Ol’ Static Line Trick 1
Miller, Darwin (1951)
- The Castle 2

Moseley, Charley (1962)
- Four Fools on the Rogue 3
- Meeting My First Jumpers 3

Nolan, Bob (1947)
- Bridgeview Grange Dance 2
- Cliff Marshall Stories 1947-1948 2
- Danny and the Bear 3
- Fire Jump with Danny On 2
- Moore Timber Company Fire 2
- Party at the Forks Swimming Hole 2
- Plane Down 2
- Rescue Jump in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, June 16, 1948 and Beyond 2
- Smokeumpers Crash Local Party 2
- The Big Camp Fire 2

Oleson, Jim (1953)
- Tribute to Stuart Roosa 1
- Tribute to Dick Board 1

Osipovich, Ray (1973)
- Making an Exit 3

Oswalt, David (1968)
- The Great Turkey Caper 3
- Why I Loved the Gobi: Things I Will Never Forget 3

Oswalt, Lonny (1965)
- Pranks 3

Owen, Allen (1970)
- *IV News: Report from the Gobi* (1977) 3

Pauls, Leonard “Nick” (1945)
- Horse Mountain-Three Miles Above Cave Junction 2
- Missoula, Montana Jump # 1 2

Peters, Garry & Larry (1963)
- Larry (or Garry) and Garry (or Larry) 2
Proctor, Bud (1950)
• He Was Unique 2
• Overcoming Fear 1

Riza, Armand (1948)
• Whence Came the Name “Gobi” 1

Robison, John (AKA Juan Rubisow) (1965)
• A Night on Bald Mountain 2
• Breaking the Cardinal Sin 2
• Cheatin’ Death 3
• Eric the Blak 2
• My First Fire Jump 2
• My Most Incredible Fire 2
• North to Alaska...Episode 1...My Introduction 2
• North to Alaska...Episode 2...Orienteering 2
• North to Alaska...Episode 3...My Introduction to the Politics of Fighting Fire 2
• Shroud Lines 2
• The Gygose Modicker 3

Rowley, Cap (1951)
• Style 2

Schoenfeld, Eric (1964)
• What Made the Gobi Special? 1

Scott, Jay (1967)
• Bits and Pieces 2

Sheley, Chuck (1959)
• Recollections of Time and the Gobi 1
• Smokejumper Quarterly: ...from the Editor (2003) 3

Schmidt, Jerry (1962)
• Gobi Memories 1
• Installing the New Line 3
• Little Granite Fire 3
• Meeting the Cackleberrys 3

Smith, Gardner (1959)
• The Eugene Register-Guard: Hustling Smokejumpers 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snyder, Bob “Rigger”</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>• Getting There and Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How Nasty Nolan Almost Wasn’t Nasty Anymore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Plane Crash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The Gobi and the Gobi Salute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The Gobi 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thach, John</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>• Summer of 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, Don</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>• Hitting a Cow on My Second Jump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornhill, Gary</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>• Buck Salmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can I See Your Green Card?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Squaw Basin Fire, Version 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoresen, Ron</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>• A Couple of Pals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Making the Gobi Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace, Don</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>• The Class of ‘49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welch, Larry</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>• Oregon Caves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Paul</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>• SJ Base Ahead of Its Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special *Thanks:* to David Oswalt ('68) and John Robison ('65) for the assistance in story development and editing; and, to Johnny Kirkley ('64) for the fine photographic arrangements.
THE CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAM AND SMOKEJUMPING 1943–1945

By the spring of 1943, the manpower shortage reached a critical stage. A number of inquiries had been received from individuals 4-E (conscientious objectors) draftees in public service camps. This paved the way for the parachute program of 1943, in which CPS camps were solicited for volunteers.

Anticipating a continued shortage of smokejumper candidates (1944), arrangements were made with Selective Service and the National Service Board to keep as many of the trained CPS men as wished to remain. This resulted in a retention of about 60 percent of the entire group.

With the end of the war, the CPS program was rapidly liquidated.

—History of Smokejumping, USFS, Region I, 1978