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## Static Line, July 1996

National Smokejumper Association

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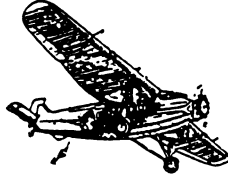
# THE "STATIC LINE"

## NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION

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Volume 3

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# THE STATIC LINE

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----- The Static Line Staff -----

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First, congratulations to the five newly elected members to the N.S.A. Board of Directors. Those five are: Bill Moody, NCSB 57, who was re-elected; Carl Gidlund, MSO 58; George Gowen, MSO 54; Larry Moore, MYC 59; and Charles "Chuck" Sheley, CJ 59.

Congratulations! I personally was very pleased to see ten individuals in the race. This is, I believe, indicative of the high degree of interest our members have in the N.S.A. Though five were elected, all of the contestants were "winners". (Many ballots were returned.) Remember too, that several more Board positions will be up for election again next Spring. These will be announced in a future newsletter.

This past May fifteen N.S.A. members from the Missoula area participated in the Association's Adopt-A-Highway cleanup. Our stretch is a two-mile section of Reserve Street, from Mullan Road to I-90. Montana Dept. of Highways signs at each end of the section of road let the thousand-plus passersby each day know that the N.S.A. will be responsible for keeping it clean.

If several members would like to gather a few volunteer helpers and adopt a section of Highway elsewhere in the the state and nation where such programs exist, in the National Smokejumper Association's name, feel free to do so. This is a fine community service and would let others know that the N.S.A. is involved. It is also good P.R. for your Association.

And we discovered all sorts of trivia about Missoula. For instance, we figure the beer-of-choice among other litter bugs is Schmidt's Beer.

Lastly, we now have over 1,140 members in our N.S.A. and new applications are becoming more frequent this year than before. A large number of delinquent members are renewing too. This sudden surge in membership is directly due to the outstanding efforts of your Compiler and Historian, Jack Demmons. Jack has spent a lot of time lately searching out new potential members, compiling lists of those who were long delinquent, and sending letters and/or reminder cards. His efforts are paying off and deserve recognition. Thanks Jack!!!

### BUSHMASTER -750RW

Loren Rotroff, RDD 67, North Pole, AK, gave us a photo of the Bushmaster. It was built in 1985 along the lines of a Ford-Trimotor 5-AT-D. Two were built, the first in 1957. (One, (N-7501V, is at the Owls Head Transportation Museum, Owls Heads, Maine.) The one in the picture is with Denali Wings Air Tours and flies scenic tours of the Denali National Park in Alaska during summer months. (Denali is along the highway between Anchorage and Fairbanks.) Loren "Bud" was in Missoula a short time ago and visited the Association Hdqs.



## NEW MEMBERS

*Note: This listing of new members includes those who joined between December 25th, 1995 and July 20, 1996. Those who joined after July 20th will be mentioned in the 13th newsletter, which will be mailed out in October. Should your name be misspelled, or the address be incorrect or changed, please let us know as soon as possible. For Boise jumpers the base code will now be shown as NIFC (National Interagency Fire Center) instead of BIFC (Boise Interagency Fire Center).*

NAME	ADDRESS	BASE	1st YEAR
Baker, Norman F.	1721 N. Pacific Hwy 18, Cottage Grove, OR 97424	RDD	81
Bald, John F.	8920 South East Hills Drive, Sandy, UT 84093	RDD	78
Bierman, Steve	705-345 Indale Drive, Susanville, CA 96130	RAD	86
Blanton, J. Charles	3244 Catalina Lane, Boise, ID 83705	MYC	47
Brown, Michael T.	59 Sun Valley Court, Merced, CA 95348	RDD	68
Buck, Bill B.	9921 Central Road, Traverse City, MI 49686	CJ	53
Burns, Richard "Dick"	3730 Amber Lane, Roseburg, OR 97470	FBX	64
Calkins, Richard G.	PO B0x 262, Atascadero, CA 93423	RDD	64
Cole, Jack J.	19512 Jordan Road, Arlington, WA 98223	MYC	56
Elefant, Richard	1503 Cedar Street, Berkeley, CA 94703	RDD	74
Fair, Brian E.	RD #2, Box 311, Glen Rock, PA 17327	Affiliate	
Frost, William W.	5670 Riverland Drive, Anderson, CA 96007	RDD	63
Gerber, James	9987 Ironwood Court, San Diego, CA 92131	MSO	77
Helmer, John C.	c/o Caldwell Systems Inc., 1460 Washington BLVD Concord, CA 94521	RDD	59
Hernandez, Danny J.	816 West 12th Street, Silver City, NM 88061	RDD	85
Higgins, Charles	14775 Grover Street, Omaha, NE 68144	MYC	52
Hunnicuttt, Tom	PO Box 257, Laytonville, CA 95454	RDD	78
Hunter, Ernie L.	East 107 Greta, Spokane, WA 99208	MYC	68
Hunter, Jeffrey	PO Box 11, Chemult, OR 97731	RAC	75
Johnson, Gary	2357 Lewis Drive, Carson City, NV 89701	AKA	74
Klaseen, Sven L.	1325 Pleasant Street, Redding, CA 96001	RDD	74
Kline, Robert F.	156 West Mission Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025	RDD	65
Kuster, Dennis R.	PO Box 3590, Sonora, CA 93370	RDD	78
Luttman, Jim	2614 McKinney, Boise, ID 83704	MYC	60
McGee, James	3444 Cessna Drive, Redding, CA 96001	MYC	51
Mitchell, Daniel	PO Box 10793, Truckee, CA 96162	RAC	78
Murphy, Steve	PO Box 301, Brownsville, CA 95919	RDD	88
Murphy, Thomas	264 Cascade Valley Road, Windsor, NY 13865	RDD	79
Newhall, Robert E.	925 2nd Avenue SW, Great Falls, MT 59404	MSO	59
Newman, John R.	PO Box 391, Kernville, CA 93238	RDD	78
Noble, Dave J.	20278 Lupine Drive, Redding, CA 96002	RDD	74
Paluso, Charles F.	1231 Canterbury Blvd., Altus, OK 73521	MSO	50
Pettitt, Timothy	PO Box 15473, Boise, ID 83715	MYC	75
Peugh, Kenneth	PO Box 201, Orleans, CA 95556	RDD	73
Tracy, Brenda	18485 Landes Road, Cottonwood, CA 96022	RDD	90
Weber, Darrell J.	560E Robin Road, Orem, UT 84057	MYC	53
Welch, Bernie R.	PO Box 552, Kiowa, CO 80117	CJ	61
Westergard, Howard	9990 Highlander, Boise, ID 83709	MYC	51
Williams, Gary L.	PO Box 2090, Kings Beach, CA 96143	RDD	75
Wilson, Paul	420 Ichabod Lane, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814	MSO	50
Woodhead, Gordon	220 North Gilman, Susanville, CA 96130	RDD	83

# LISTING OF DECEASED JUMPERS AND PILOTS

The names shown below are new to the N.S.A. Obituary listing. Should dates and other material not be correct, please let us know. If you submitted information for the Obituary and it is not shown, please contact us. Members have been very helpful with this information. (Wilmer "Bill" Carlsen gave us much material lately concerning jumpers from the 1940's.)

NAME	BASE	YEAR	COMMENTS
<b>Cook, Pierce William "Bill"</b>	MSO	48	Bill's widow, Lura, informed us that Bill passed away Mar. 29, 1996 at Charlotte, NC from cancer, after a brief illness. She said his smokejumping days had been a big part of his life. (His obituary mentioned that he had been a member of the N.S.A.) He was a native of Charlootean, NC and had served with the U.S. Marines during both WW II and the Korean conflict. He had retired after 20 years with the DuBois Chemical Co. In addition to his widow, he is survived by two sons, Blake and Todd, both living in North Carolina with their families.
<b>Conner, Kenneth</b>	MSO	59	Ken died May 25, 1996 at the family cabin at Darby, MT, about 70 miles south of Missoula, when a tree fell on him. He was born in 1939 at Missoula. Ken had received a civil engineering degree from Montana State University at Bozeman. He was a member of the smokejumper rescue group that parachuted into the earthquake area near Hebgen Dam along the Madison River near West Yellowstone, MT in 1959 to assist survivors. He had been living with his wife Bonnie at Big Timber, MT, approximately 55 miles east of Bozeman. He is survived by his widow and three sons, Karl of Big Timber, Cory and his wife Jeanne of Great Falls, and Rusty of Missoula.
<b>Dirks, Clarence</b>	MSO	45	We received word recently from his widow that Clarence passed away May 20, 1996 at Federal Way, Washington, which is located along the southern outskirts of Seattle. We do not know any of the particulars at this time.
<b>Holdeman, Ivan</b>	MSO	45	Ivan passed away sometime after 1989.
<b>Johnston, Jack</b>	NCSB	51	Jim Rabideau, NCSB 49, mentioned that Jack had died when the plane he was piloting crashed into a hill near Yakima, WA many years ago during instrument weather. Ed Mays, NCSB 51--now deceased-- had given him this information.
<b>McDonald, Ted</b>	MSO	52	We were given a copy of the Dillon, MT daily paper, dated Sept. 23, 1966. The paper mentioned that Ted had died in the crash of a helicopter in the primitive Sentinel Creek area of Madison County, north of Quake Lake. He was a Forest Service engineer with the Beaverhead Forest, out of Dillon at the time. The pilot was also killed. Eight smokejumpers parachuted to the scene the following day to rescue one survivor and clear a landing spot for a rescue helicopter. Ted was a native of Missoula. At the time of his death he was survived by his widow Daphene and three sons. His father, Charles McDonald, was a retired Forest Service employee.
<b>McDonald, William Z.</b>	MSO	52	Tom McGrath states that Bill died 10 to 15 years ago. He had taught forestry at the Missoula vo-tech school and worked as an aerial observer during summer months. In 1957, the day after termination-- because of the close of the fire season-- he made a free-fall across the highway from the airport and opened his chute at <u>minimum</u> altitude Tom said.

# CONTINUATION OF LISTING OF DECEASED JUMPERS AND PILOTS

NAME	BASE	YEAR	COMMENTS
<b>Rehfeldt, Richard</b>	MSO	43	We believe Dick passed away in the Central Point OR area. We do not know the date.
<b>Rozeboom, Gerrit</b>	MSO	43	Bill Carlsen said Gerrit died a number of years ago. Possibly in the Martinez, CA area.
<b>Schlabach, Dr. Abe</b>	MSO	44	Abe's widow, Lelia, sent us a note stating that Abe had passed away July 8, 1996 after a long illness at Phoenix, AZ. She mentioned that smokejumping had been a great experience in his life. He was a member of the N.S.A. Lelia sent the Association a check in Abe's memory.
<b>Shipp, John</b>	MSO	44	We do not know much about John's death. We believe he was living around Harrisonburg, VA at the time.
<b>Soto, Eusebio "Sonny" III</b>	MSO	92	Sonny passed away April 17, 1996 in Butte, MT after a very short illness. He was from Elmo, MT at the time of his death. He was born at Corpus Christi, TX in 1959, the son of Eusebio Jr. and Mary Soto. He had been a fire fighter for the previous eight years in the Missoula area. He is survived by his wife Tracy and a daughter Maricella. His mother, a brother and three sisters live in California.
<b>Thompson, Paul</b>	YUKON		We were told that Paul, who was once base manager for the former Yukon jumper base, died while scuba diving in May 1995. We do not have any more details at this time.
<b>Woodford, Fred V.</b>	MSO	52	Fred's widow, Pat, told us he passed away at Etowah, NC on 6/13/95. He was a member of the N.S.A. We do not know the cause of Fred's death.

## TROOPER TOM LUGTENAAR, CJ 66

Tom will be on the way back to Russia shortly, to demonstrate his new fire fighting tool. He had 260 fire jumps. How many have equaled that? He retired from the USFWP in 1994 out of Alaska.

He was a Capt. in the U.S. Marines, and served in Vietnam during 1968, '69 and '70 as a rifle platoon leader, company commander and tactical air controller.

He was originally a forester. We will have more about his past in the days ahead. Tom and his wife live on the coast at Nehalem, Oregon.



## Danny On, CJ '46

Dick Courson, CJ '46, sent us several pictures of Danny On (see picture in photo section). They both trained at Nine Mile, west of Missoula, in 1946, and then returned to Cave Junction to set up that base for the first time. (After 1946 the Cave Junction jumpers were trained at their own location.)

Danny was a former paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division and saw action in Europe during WWII. He was severely wounded in the Battle of the Bulge at Bastogne, Belgium during December, 1944. Dick believes he had an 80% disability rating from the Veteran's Administration.

He had a deep fascination for German culture, and took German while working on a Forestry degree at Montana State University (now known as the University of Montana). Dick mentioned that he would practice his German on them. There were several times when visitors at the Cave Junction base were startled when this six-foot jumper would suddenly materialize from behind a tree, singing songs in German.

While at Cave Junction, Danny made his own bow and arrows. Dick said he was quite a craftsman, and excelled in photography. He was very much a gentleman with a great sense of humor.

Forestry officials tried to discourage Danny from continuing on as a smokejumper, since he had both a

bachelor's and master's degree in Forestry. Around 1950 he left Cave Junction.

We talked to Gordon George, a former Forestry official who retired at Pendleton, after serving as a timber staff official in Oregon. He was one of Danny's best friends through the years. Both of them were on the Deschutes N.F. out of Bend, Oregon from 1955-56. Danny went on to the Supervisor's office in Bend, then transferred to the Kootenai N.F. at Libby, Montana. His next change of duty station put him at the

Region 1 office in Missoula, and then to Whitefish, Montana. During those years, Danny took thousands of pictures and had them made into slides.

January 21, 1979 was a very cold, windy, snowy day at the Big Mountain Ski Resort out of Whitefish. Danny had been skiing with friends that morning and after lunch went back up the mountain by himself. Few skiers ventured out because of the extreme cold. Several saw his car in the parking lot late that afternoon but thought nothing of it. However, when it was seen in the same spot the following morning people did take note and word

soon spread that Danny was missing.

A search was launched. Cal Tassinari, a retired Wilderness Ranger in the Flathead N.F., now living at Whitefish, was one of the searchers. He told us that each had a radio and a call came in from one of the men, stating that Danny had been found. Cal skied to the location and said one of Danny's arms was sticking up out of the snow, trapped behind him, with a ski



*Danny On, late 1940's, with a German backpack. He was a free fall artist. (Photo courtesy of Dick Courson, CJ '46, now residing at Pendleton, Oregon.)*



pole still attached to his wrist. He had either hit a tree or caught an edge and then plunged down into a "tree well" - a hole under the snow near the base of a tree. It is not known if he was unconscious when going into the hole, but Cal is certain that he suffocated. (The snow in a "tree well" is not compacted and the more one struggles to get out, the deeper one usually goes.) Danny had only one arm free and his skis were near the top of the hole. Cal did not know if Danny had an "iron mask" as a result of his entrapment - where vapor from one's mouth freezes around the head, cutting off a supply of air. A rescue helicopter flew Danny off the mountain and he was later taken home to Red Bluff, California for burial.

Then, in August 1981, a trail was dedicated to him on the mountain. It has two segments - one 3.8 miles in length and the other 5.7 miles. Many visitors at Big Mountain walk it during summer months. One can either walk up and ride down on a ski lift, or ride up and walk down. There is a scrapbook at the summit house restaurant dedicated to him also.

We talked to nine different individuals about Danny's fate. They said he was a "powder hound" and liked to get off in snow away from the regular trails and ski "out of bounds". He didn't know any fear when skiing, and would plunge straight down a course. Danny died doing one of the things he liked to do best.

We also talked to Danny's sister-in-law, Norma, at Sacramento, California. (She was married to Danny's brother, Jon, who passed away four years ago.) She reiterated stories about Danny. She mentioned that his brothers Joe, John and Louis live in the general Sacramento area, as does a sister, Mary Jane. The family has a furniture store in Sacramento and at one time the On family operated a restaurant, years ago, at Red Bluff. She said the family donated Danny's thousands of pic-

tures to the U.S.F.S., the National Historical Society, Glacier National Park and the University of Montana.

A number of libraries have copies of the book *Along the Trail, a Photographic Essay of Glacier National Park and the Northern Rocky Mountains*. It was published in 1979. The photos are by Danny and the text was written by David Sumner. It is dedicated to Danny, and the foreward reads, in part: "Danny On, University of Montana forestry graduate and Flathead National Forest silviculturist, perished January 21, 1979, in a skiing accident . . . He was fifty-four years old, a native of Red Bluff, California (south of Redding, about thirty miles near I-5), an Eagle Scout and World War II paratrooper . . . Danny On was known for his generosity, intelligence, respect for people and love of the outdoors . . . Among us are a few men and women who become legends even as they are friends and neighbors. Danny was such a man." The foreword also states: "This unassuming forester became Montana's best-known wildlife photographer."

At the U of M library there is a set of 21 colored slides that Danny produced on Rocky Mountain Wildlife. He also took pictures for the book, *Going to the Sun: The Story of the Highway Across Glacier National Park*. He was the co-author of the book, *Plants of Waterton-Glacier National Parks*.

This quiet, unassuming man, who almost died in the service of his country at Bastogne, went on to touch and help shape the lives of many, many people. At a memorial service held January 27, 1979, Dr. Les Pengelly, wildlife biologist at the U of M stated: "All assembled here have had their lives shaped by Danny. He probably would have been embarrassed by all this attention. Instead, he would have suggested, 'Lets head for the hills.'"

## **ILLINOIS RIVER, OREGON JUMPER PLANE CRASH, AUGUST 2, 1994**

The "Static Line" newsletter of the Missoula jumpers in 1944 had an article written by Bob Painer, MSO 44, who told of a plane with three jumpers--Bob, Floyd Yoder, and Art Penner, plus Jack Heintzelman as spotter--taking off with pilot Fred Frank and the engine quitting thirty feet above the ground. The jumpers had sinking feelings in their stomachs for a few tense moments he said, but Frank brought the plane down on the remainder of the field. The pilot worked on the engine briefly and it ran smoothly. The jumpers were about to board the plane again, but it was decided the it should be given a test flight first. During that flight the plane took off very steeply and the engine again quit. Bob wrote that the plane banked sharply to the left and crashed almost nose first into the ground, and burst into flames. Does anyone remember if Fred Frank died?



# HOMER "SKIP" STRATTON, MSO 47 WASHINGTON, D.C. 1949



Left to Right:  
Bill Dratz  
Ed Eggen  
Bill Hellman  
Skip Stratton.

Bob Johnson is seated in Tri-motor N 8400. The picture was taken at Missoula prior to departure for Washington, D.C.

Photo courtesy of Skip Stratton.

Skip Stratton served as an Army Air Force officer during the period 1942-1946. After completing primary, basic and advanced flight training he received his wings and was sent to Dayton, Ohio to qualify as a test pilot. He was then sent overseas to check out repaired aircraft, basically ones that had received battle damage. He flew more than fifteen different types of aircraft, to include the small PT-19 trainers, up through B-17 heavy bombers, as well as P-40, P-39, P-61 and P-47 fighters.

Following military service he enrolled in the Forestry Department at the University of Montana and worked summers as a smokejumper. After graduation he went on to a career with the U.S. Forest Service, which included holding a number of different positions, to include being a ranger on several districts.

In June 1949 Skip, Ed Eggen, Bill Dratz and Bill Hellman were selected to parachute to the

Ellipse at Washington, D.C., between the White House and the Washington Monument. Jim Waite was to accompany them, as was Al Cramer, who would act as spotter. Bob Johnson of the Johnson Flying Service, along with mechanic John Carls, would fly the Tri-motor N 8400 for the event. The mission was being flown in support of American business leaders who would be meeting in Washington, D.C. They had been supporting a continuing fire prevention program within the nation.

On June 23rd they took off from Missoula on a flight that would last three days. Skip mentioned that at one point they became lost over the Midwest. Johnson took the Tri-motor down low, following railroad tracks like early-day pilots often did, searching for names of towns on the water towers. Flying over one hamlet people came boiling out of their homes to see what was passing by overhead, making all the thunder.

## SKIP STRATTON, MSO 47, CONT.



Johnson's Tri-motor N 8400 at Washington National Airport June 28, 1949. Preparations are being made for the jumpers to parachute onto the Ellipse between the White House and the Washington Monument.

N 8400 crashed south of Helena near Basin, Montana on 7/14/53, killing the pilot Jim Dillon and mechanic Dick Duffield.

Photo courtesy of Skip Stratton.

Bob cranked the big Ford around in a tight turn and came back around, giving the people a real flying exhibition, then gunned the engines and pulled up and away.

Bob Johnson did not like to fool around with aircraft radios, so at several fields the control operators had to use their "light guns" to signal him. He also preferred to land on grass strips alongside the concrete runways in order to save wear on the tires, which left some tower operators speechless. Pilots of passing aircraft would wag their wings in salute as the Tri-motor thundered on eastward, bouncing in the heat waves. Then, on Saturday June 25th, they arrived at Washington, D.C., which gave them several days to prepare for the big event.

On the morning of June 28th, 1949, the group was up early and ready to go. The

Washington Evening Star that day said in part: "... Crowds sniffing the wind for the best vantage point, rimmed the south half of the park. . . ." It was shortly after noon when the Tri-motor began circling the Ellipse. Al Cramer was spotting and a little concerned about getting the jumpers into the Ellipse without hanging up on the White House or Washington Monument. Bob and Carls were having the time of their life up in the "office" of the Tri-motor. (Truman was President at the time but they did not see him on the White House balcony they later reported.) Al had Johnson drop down to 900'. Skip was in the door and when Cramer hit him on the leg he was quickly out in the slipstream, followed by Dratz. Eggen and Hellman jumped on the second pass. Dratz's chute became totally inverted, but he missed the trees lining the park, Hellman injured a heel.

## SKIP STRATTON, MSO 47, CONT.



Left to Right:  
Bill Hellman  
Skip Stratton  
Bill Dratz  
Ed Eggen.

The fellow standing at the right was an Undersecretary for the Dept. of Agriculture. The jumpers are on the Ellipse, having just parachuted there from an altitude of 900'.

Photo courtesy of Skip Stratton.

The Advertising Council, Inc. paper in its July issue said: "Four 'smokejumpers' from the U.S. Forest Service base in Missoula, Montana parachuted from a low-flying plane to the Ellipse near the White House in a spectacular salute to American Business . . . to the accompaniment of the U.S. Marine Band. Thousands on the scene watched the four young veterans jump at smoke targets set in the middle of the 18-acre field."

The jumpers rode on the backs of two convertibles behind a police motorcycle escort to the Press Club. They had to stand in the banquet room as speeches and awards were given out. Skip tells of waiting outside the room in their heavy, hot suits as a waiter slipped them several Tom Collins drinks, along with mints for their breath. An officious individual came bouncing in and asked the waiter, "These flowers of American

youth are not drinking liquor are they?" (Each of the four was a World War II veteran.)

After the ceremonies the jumpers had a night-on-the-town. They decided to walk back to their quarters and had a difficult time searching for a toilet along the way. Skip said they did arrive ok, but almost afloat.

They flew back to Missoula during the evening of the 30th. It had been a very successful operation and the jumpers enjoyed national coverage.

One month later Bill Hellman died in the Mann Gulch Fire north of Helena, Montana. Skip was placed in charge of the retrieval of the bodies of twelve jumpers and a former jumper. Bill Dratz passed away from cancer several years ago. Skip lives in Missoula and Ed Eggen is at Colfax, Wisconsin. Bob Johnson and Al Cramer are deceased.

# JOHN "J.B." STONE, MSO 56

Bob Whaley, a former Marine Corps pilot during the Vietnam War, mentioned that J.B. had downed a MIG fighter during that conflict while serving with the Air Force. He showed us an article in the Retired Officer Magazine, Nov. 1995, written by retired Col. Ralph Wetterhan, (who had flown 180 fighter missions with both the Navy and Air Force in Vietnam) telling of that kill. We got in touch with J.B. and asked for his story and pictures. (He and his wife Tommie live at Breckenridge, Colorado.)

John was born in Memphis, TN, the son of a former squadron commander in the Army Air Force during WW II--John Pittman Stone. He earned a degree of BS, Geological Engineering, from the University of Mississippi in 1959. During those college years he spent four summers as a smokejumper out of the Missoula base. He was designated a Distinguished Military Graduate in that school's ROTC program and was commissioned as a 2d Lt. in the U.S.A.F. upon graduation.

After pilot training he served with the 32d Fighter Interceptor Squadron in The Netherlands. He led the flight of the first trans-Atlantic deployment of F-102 fighters.

In 1964 J.B. was assigned to the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, flying McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantom fighters at George AFB, California. The Wing then moved to Ubon, Thailand where it became formidably known as the "Wolf Pack." J.B. flew 100 combat missions and then elected to extend his tour, serving as the Wing Tactics Officer under Brigadier General Robin Olds, a legendary fighter pilot whose exploits date back to WW II in Europe.

During that extended tour he was one of several fighter pilots involved in what became known as "Operation Bolo." (Col. Wetterhan was another one of the planners.) The plan was to lure MIG-21 fighters into combat with the F-4 Phantoms, which were armed only with air-to-air missiles for that mission. On January 2, 1967 the mission was flown. The "Wolf Pack" downed seven of the MIG-21's in a dogfight that lasted

but nine minutes over and around Hanoi. It proved to be the greatest aerial victory for the U.S.A.F. up to that time. J.B. was credited with one of the kills and Col. Wetterhan shot down another, as did General Olds.

J.B. flew 157 combat missions in Vietnam and was then reassigned to George AFB, training pilots for service in Southeast Asia.

In 1968 J.B. joined the Colorado Air National Guard. While Squadron Commander for the 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron, his unit became the world champs of Gunsmoke 1981 (gunnery competition between a number of AF fighter units). He later served as the Director of Operations, 140th Fighter Wing, and as Vice Wing Commander. At the time that he transferred to the USAF Reserves in 1986, he was the Director of Operations, Headquarters, Colorado Air National Guard.

He has been awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Air Medal with Silver Oak Leaf Clusters, among other decorations.

J.B. accumulated 4,500 hours of flying time in fighters, and 250 hours of air combat. At the time of his transfer to the Inactive Reserve, he had completed twenty-six years of continuous years of Combat Ready Status in the U.S. Air Force fighter aircraft.

He has a son Jon who is an F-16 fighter pilot with the Colorado Air National Guard. He recently returned from Kuwait, and will join the Regular Air Force in September, and be stationed in Korea.

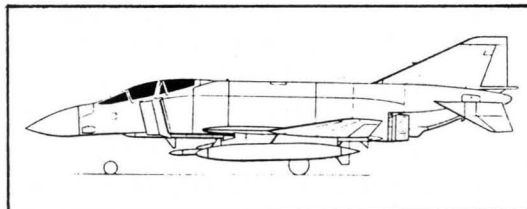
It should also be mentioned that J.B. holds a degree of Juris Doctor and was once an attorney and the executive Vice-President and General Counsel to a regional airline in Denver.

He has had a very action-packed career, to include those four seasons as a smokejumper. We doubt that he will ever be a retired man-of-leisure. Somewhere over the horizon there will be more challenges for him. We wish him the very best. (Pictures on following page.)

# JOHN "J.B." STONE, MSO 56, CONT.

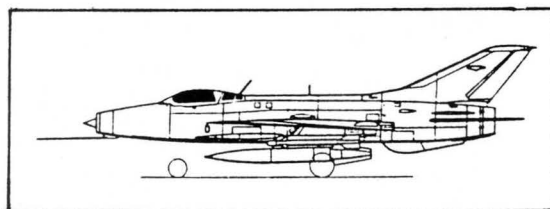


John J.B. Stone as a Missoula Smokejumper in 1958. Tri-motor NC 8419 is in the background.



MCDONNELL DOUGLAS F-4D Phantom. This is the type fighter J.B. was flying when he made his MIG kill. Maximum speed with external stores was in excess of Mach 2 (twice the speed of sound).

Photos courtesy of John "J.B." Stone.



MIKAYAN MIG-21F "Fishbed-C" (NATO Code Name). This is the type fighter that J.B. shot down. Maximum speed clean--Mach 2.



Left to Right: General (Colonel at the time) Robin Olds and Captain John "J.B." Stone, just after making their MIG kills on Jan. 2, 1967 in the Hanoi area during "Operation Bolo." (General Olds had 12 kills during aerial combat in WW II with the 479th Fighter Group and 4 in Southeast Asia.)



# KEN S. HESSEL MYC '58

## PLANE CRASH ON HUNT MOUNTAIN

### AUGUST 1, 1976

During the 1989 Reunion at Boise, Ken wrote out a donation check on a placemat. The bank kept the placemat and honored it as a valid check. Ken said, "It must have been legible enough to read, which is unusual in itself, considering the function of the activities."

Ken sent us an account of Dave Schas' 1988 Twin Otter crash near John Day, Oregon in which he died. We will write about that in a future newsletter.

He also sent us a story about a crash he was in, which involved a Forest Service twin-engine Cessna 310, N 130Z, on August 1, 1976. Early that morning Ken and all but four persons were released from the Wenatchee National Forest where they had been involved in fighting a large forest fire. At Pangborn Field in Wenatchee, Ken had talked with Tony Percival, NCSB '54, about transportation back to La Grande, Oregon. Tony was acting as demobilization coordinator. (That year Ken was the dispatcher-coordinator of the La Grande Fire Center.) Tony said lead plane N 130Z was available if pilot Bob Conine was of the opinion that the weather was OK at the other end of the proposed flight. Ken called La Grande and found that the field there was socked in. Conine talked to the FAA about conditions at Pendleton and Baker and both were above minimums. He then filed an IFR (Instrument Flight Requirement) flight plan to Pendleton and Baker. (A passenger, Ray Stever, was

dropped off at Pendleton.) Ken and Conine then proceeded on towards Baker.

Pendleton flight services told Conine to climb to 10,000' and they were later passed on to the Salt Lake City center, who directed them to maintain 9,000', and then that station cleared them into the Baker Flight



*Cessna 310, N 130Z, after the crash landing on Hunt Mountain in Oregon, on August 1, 1976. The cockpit is at left center and right wing, with fuel tank attached, is tilted upwards on the other side of the right wing. Photo courtesy of Ken Hessel.*

service. Ken mentioned that he was sitting in the co-pilot's seat and watching the artificial horizon indicator as they began to descend, and "looking for holes in the soup below them". Bob Conine was concentrating on the approach plate for Baker which he had fixed to a clip board attached to his right leg above the knee. Suddenly, Ken saw some tall timber through a hole in the fog and knew something was wrong, because they should have been over barren ground or cultivated fields at that point. When Ken saw timber again, the tops were only about one to two hundred feet below. At that point he knew they were

# **KEN S. HESSEL, MYC 58, PLANE CRASH ON HUNT MOUNTAIN CONT.**

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going to crash and yelled at Bob, "Pull it up!" two or three times as fast as he could. Conine pulled the yoke back and pushed the throttles all the way forward, but they continued to settle and began mowing down trees and then more or less "pancaked" into the hillside through the timber.

Both of them began getting their seat belts off. There was smoke coming from the right engine. Ken hollered at Bob to see if he was hurt and he said no. Ken bailed out the door onto the right wing. Ken said about fifteen to twenty seconds elapsed and Bob had not appeared, so he went back into the plane to check on him. They both exited the destroyed plane. Both walked down to a farm house at the Denver Markle Ranch below Rock Creek. Mrs. Oliver Markle said, ". . . I heard the craft overhead, its engines revving like a D-8 Cat at full throttle. Then there was a sudden silence on the misty side of the mountain (Hunt Mountain)."

Conine suffered minor injuries and was hospitalized briefly. Ken's injuries did not necessitate his being placed in a hospital.

The plane crashed at 2:20 PM on August 1st, 1976 on a 60 percent slope. The fact that Conine was able to raise the nose of the plane and "belly-flop" helped

save them. The plane only traveled about sixty feet from the point of initial impact with the trees. N 130Z was totally destroyed and luckily did not burn. Apparently the pilot took a wrong turn toward the Elkhorns to intercept a radio beacon signal.

At the time Ken was thirty-seven years old and Bob Conine, 60. Ken was later asked if the accident had changed his attitude toward flying. Ken replied, "Nope, I shook it off right away. I'll go up again when they tell me to. I just don't want to run into those clouds full of rocks very often."

Ken currently resides at La Grande. He sent us several pictures of a gathering at Marana, Arizona in the late 1960's, involving present and current jumpers at that time. A short while ago he, Tom "Shep" Johnson (MYC '56), Dick "Pete" Peterson (MYC '47), and Randolph "Toby" Scott (MYC '57) held a mini-rendezvous in Vale, Oregon at Shep's horse ranch to identify as many as possible in the "rogue's gallery lineup". Ken states, "Needless to say, the more nectar we downed and the more lies we told, the worse the ID project got . . ." (We have all individuals identified now and one of the pictures — with thirty persons — will appear in the October newsletter.)

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## **"SILK STORIES": FRACTURED FABLES FROM THE FIRELINE**

**by Scott Belknap, MSO 83, An Active Missoula Jumper**

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Scott was detailed to Silver City, NM this spring and did not have a chance to write an article this time, but he will have one for October. His wife, Jamie Moon, gave us some remarks she has heard about smokejumpers through the years. They are: Does your husband actually jump out of planes? We have heard that such people have death wishes, or thoughts of suicide. Has Scott been psychoanalyzed? Has he almost died of fright? We have heard

that jumpers have to spray their beards with retardant before fighting fire. Is that true? Todd told us jumpers have to chop trees down if their chutes get hung up, to keep from being injured. We have been told that jumpers receive beer drops on fires. Isn't that expensive? Jeff said jumpers have to use their helmets on the planes if they get sick. Do they have to jump if sick? Dirty told us Scott once had to fight fire and rattlesnakes at the same time with his ax, etc., etc., etc..



# “SEARCH FOR THE DOWNED”

## by JOHN FERGUSON, MYC '42

In the last newsletter we featured John, and stated that in this issue his story, “Search for the Downed,” would be covered. It is an amazing story that John put together, involving the crash of a four-engine Boeing B-17F “Flying Fortress” heavy bomber approximately twenty air miles southeast of Challis, Idaho on March 20, 1943 and the subsequent crash of two search aircraft. (Challis is located about 130 air miles northeast of Boise.)

John has stated: This article is about an airplane crash that occurred over fifty year ago in a primitive area and can be classified as one of the greatest search and rescue missions, by ground and air personnel, in the history of the backcountry and the Northwest.

Penn Stohr, Idaho’s “Miracle Pilot”, played a major role in the search and rescue operations. During the initial search efforts John flew with Penn— he also flew with him on other flights to backcountry airstrips.

The bomber was assigned to the 316th Squadron, 88th Bomb Group (Heavy) at Walla Walla, Washington.

While on a training flight the weather closed in at the base and the tower instructed the crew to fly on to Gowen Field at Boise. Around 8:00 PM the pilot, 2d Lt. Joseph Brensinger, estimated that about ten minutes of fuel remained and ordered the crew to bail out. He turned the landing lights on before leaving the plane. The aircraft continued on, flying to the northeast, east, and then to the southeast after the crew had parachuted from it.

Several people at homesteads along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River saw the B-17 flying along erratically, with lights on—not knowing that the crew had left it some time earlier.

Several Forestry officials in the Challis area saw the B-17 making an elongated circle, drifting towards the Pahsimeroi Valley to the southeast. Rangers were

alerted to the situation, with Ranger Morin watching it disappear behind a ridge and crash in Crane Basin in the Lost River Mountain Range. (The plane had flown for one hour and twenty minutes and close to 150 miles from the time the crew bailed out. The estimate of remaining fuel had been an error.)

Forestry officials and military personnel were alerted and told that the wreckage had been searched, but no bodies found. Four military twin-engine UC-78 Cessna “Bobcats” arrived to begin search operations, along with several C.A.P. planes from Twin Falls, Idaho. Penn Stohr began his search missions from Cascade and McCall, and then out of Challis and Stanley. (Stohr flew some 101 hours and 30 minutes in Travel Air N 623H, which belonged to Bob Johnson, during the search.

On Saturday, April 3rd, one of the C.A.P. planes crashed within two miles of the B-17 wreckage when it encountered rough air and hit a ridge. The plane wasn’t badly damaged and the pilot and observer walked away from it.

On April 5th, Capt. Bill Kelly and Lt. Arthur Crofts arrived from Hill A.F. Base in a UC-43 Staggerwing

Beech aircraft. It participated in search efforts and returned to Challis at 1:00 PM to refuel. Then, at 2:45 PM, along with the four UC-78 “Bobcats”, it resumed searching.

Ranger Charley Langer thought the B-17 might have flown over the Cape Horn, Fall Creek-Soldier Creek area. He volunteered to fly along in the Staggerwing since the search efforts might extend to include his Ranger District. The “Bobcats” returned to Challis at 5:30 PM, but the Staggerwing did not.

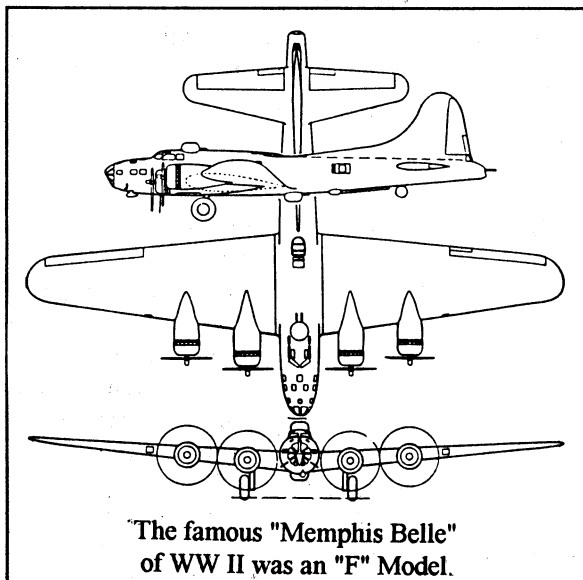
On Tuesday, April 6th, a full-scale search was launched for the Beech aircraft and its occupants. The wreckage was finally spotted on Tuesday, April 13th, when planes were re-flying the area between Cape



*Travel Air NC-9038, Model 6000-A, a sister ship to NC-623H in the article. Penn Stohr is standing by the plane at McCall, Idaho. This was another of Bob Johnson’s aircraft. Photo from Dan Stohr’s collection.*

Horn, Soldier Mountain and the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. The plane was south of Vanity Peak, NW of Stanley and East of the Middle Fork. There wasn't any sign of life.

A Forest Service ground rescue party was quickly organized. Penn Stohr was ordered to Stanley in NC-623H and flew eight men to Beaver Creek. Rescuers reached the crashed plane at 4:30 am on Wednesday, April 14th. Deep snow and the breakdown of a ski-toboggan hindered rescue efforts. During repair of the equipment Dan O'Connor lost part of a finger and had to be flown to the Pocatello Air Base. The Staggerwing had crashed at the base of a very deep snow-covered rock slide area with a heavy stand of timber. The rescue team removed the bodies and returned to the end of the road at Cape Horn at 3:00 AM. Penn Stohr flew the bodies and rescue team to Stanley, where the victims were taken by ambulance to Challis.



*A Boeing B-17F Model. Later versions—late Model F's and G's—had chin turrets.*

In the meantime, five of the airmen had been found at the Indian Creek Guard Station and the search continued for the remaining four.

The five had gathered at that guard station along the Middle Fork, close to where the river makes a sharp bend to the east. At first they could not get the telephone to work, but then they found that the box with the cut-off switch was outside on a pole. That was late in the afternoon of the 5th, the date the Staggerwing crashed. They broke in on a call between Milt Hood and a woman neighbor, Fern Larsen. Word of their whereabouts was then called in to Challis.

Penn Stohr flew them from the Indian Creek landing strip in his ski-equipped Travel Air to Cascade, Idaho.

The other four underwent some harrowing experiences but were eventually located and retrieved by ground searchers along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. S/Sgt. Van Slager was never located, nor was his parachute. It was felt that he probably fell into the river and drowned. (There have been stories for many years of a ghost walking that stretch of river during all seasons.) He is believed to have fallen somewhere in the vicinity of Artillery Rapid. The last one to be located was the pilot, Lt. Joseph Brensinger, who was seen huddled under a tree near the bank, on the 6th of April, in extremely bad shape.

The rescue mission was finally halted on April 24th. Penn Stohr returned to McCall on the 25th, and one of the most spectacular search and rescue missions in the history of the nation was ended.

*John did a tremendous job in researching this subject and putting it together. We have not been able to include all his material, which includes a number of maps. He went to great lengths to produce a gripping story of tragedy and courage.*

*He followed up on what had happened to some of those crewman. Three were shot down on different missions during WWII and had been placed in the same German prison. The pilot, Joe Brensinger, died about twelve years ago. He had been transferred to B-24 heavy bombers, took part in the attack on the Ploesti Oil Fields in Rumania—465 of 1,733 men on that mission were killed—and was then transferred to the Far Eastern Theater.*

*John lives at North Ogden, Utah and is still recovering from an aorta aneurysm and heart attack. He has said that flying in the backcountry, especially with Penn Stohr, made up the best days of his life*

## **A VOLPAR ON ITS BACK OVER THE DROP ZONE**

*In the October newsletter we will have the story of this incident, as related by Dan Thompson, AKA 86. It was a wild ride that could have ended in tragedy.*

*The Volpar was a Beechcraft Super H18 with tricycle landing gear and was being used by the Alaska jumpers when this story took place in 1986. Dan currently lives at Lakebay, Washington, a short distance west of Tacoma.*

# CHUTE THE BREEZE

Pages 16-19

We have received a tremendous number of stories from jumpers and pilots. They are greatly appreciated and will be a permanent part of the history of smokejumping and mountain flying. The following stories were selected at random. If your story has not yet appeared, don't worry, it will in a later issue. Some who sent in their smokejumper profile sheets said they had stories to tell when they get time.

In the last newsletter we mentioned that Tom McGrath's daughter, Sandy, had heart failure in New York City March 1, 1995, and she had been brought home to Nacogdoches, TX. We very sadly announce that Sandy passed away June 20th of this year. It was a tremendous blow to Tom. He plans on teaching college again this coming session at Nacogdoches. He thought he might come back up to Missoula if the fire danger increases--it has, and very much so recently. We hope to see Tom shortly.

Alaska jumpers so far this year have made more than 500 fire jumps, with some of the first being on Afognak and Kodiak Islands. (For the October newsletter, Scott Belknap will bring us up-to-date on what happened this summer at all of the bases.)

Jim Rabideau, NCSB 49,--known as "Rabid" Rabideau by former jumper pilot Wally Tower--sent us information about another former smokejumper pilot, Ken Benesh, currently residing in the Upland, CA area on the outskirts of Los Angeles. The article was from the Pomona Valley (CA) Pilots' Assoc. publication known as "Tailspins." In part, it said: "Mr. Benesh obtained a private pilot's license in 1931...He obtained his multi-engine rating in a Ford-trimotor in 1938...From January 1942 to August 1946 he served with the military service...Beginning in 1947, he was with the U.S. Forest Service, as head of the Western United States aerial smokejumper project...In 1962 he went to the Indus River in Pakistan/India ...In 1968 he was back overseas to Biafra, feeding people from the air...He was in Indonesia, where

he helped survey for oil exploration. As of 1994 he was still flying and had accumulated more than 40,000 hours. His wife, Lavelle, was a WASP (Women's Air Force Service Pilot) during WW II." Many jumpers flew with Ken. If it had not been for such pilots, there would not have been any smokejumpers.

We are working on a story about the "Safety Harbor Fire" in Washington during the summer of 1970. It will be in the October issue. This involved fifty Missoula jumpers who had been bused to and from and back again to that fire off Lake Chelan north of Wenatchee. The entire scenario would put a Three Stooges, Charlie Chaplin, or Key Stone Cops film to shame. We have a number of stories already, but would like more. (Some of those who had been involved do not want to talk about it.) Names will not be mentioned, except for several who were more or less bystanders, such as Lowell Hanson and Tom "Otto" Carlsen. The "Butte Kid" was heavily involved. Is the ranger who was at Chelan still alive, and if so, does he have any hair left? What about the rattlesnake one jumper grabbed and took a chunk out of with his teeth in anger while totally "bombed"? Yes, we would like more of those stories. (Floyd Bethke, MSO 58, and Larry Fite, MSO 62, were the two foremen.)

Tony Peiffer, MSO 61, wants us to compile a list of former jumpers and pilots who were paratroopers. We have a number of these people identified on the Smokejumper Profile sheets, but not all of them. He would also like to know how the helicopter programs have affected smokejumping. If you have stories and/or information on these issues, please send them along.

We have also been asked to compile a list of jumpers with names of their brothers, sisters, dads, uncles, cousins, mothers, etc. who were, and are, also smokejumpers and pilots. We have some of that information, but not all of it. Please send what information you might have. Paul Fieldhouse, MSO 83, whose father is Terry

Fieldhouse, CJ 47--of the "Gobi Desert" name-fame--asked if we knew of any third generation jumpers. We don't, but there could be. Do you know of any? I asked Paul if his two daughters might want to be jumpers some day. He replied, "Possibly, one already acts like a base manager."

Dr. Amos R. (Bud) Little, MSO 43, was one of a group of U.S. Army Air Force personnel who trained out of Missoula during the war years for duty in air rescue work--he was deeply involved, along with operations involving smokejumper rescue missions. He wonders if anyone has a listing of the names and addresses of the thirteen jumpers who trained in the fall of 1943 for the armed services. Bud said all but one were physicians from the Second Air Force. Can anyone help here? We do believe there is an Air-Sea Rescue operation made up of retired individuals who might have been so involved. (Dr. Little lives in Helena and has a son, Jim, MSO 63, who has been a practicing physician in Jackson Hole, Wyoming for many years.)

Scott Belknap, active Missoula jumper, said a Russian smokejumper was working with a hot-shot crew out of Logan, Utah this summer--he was not jumping.

We checked with the White Boot Co. in Spokane recently. A pair of White Smokejumper boots with 5" tops costs \$304.00 and one with 10" tops \$315.00. The company bought out the Buffalo Boot Co. in 1989, which was located in Seattle.

Murry Taylor, RED 65, is a topic editor for the "Wildfire" publication. Smokejumping will be featured in the Sept. issue. He is thinking of something like 500 to 3000 words to an article, on a floppy disk if possible, but from 1 to 6 typewritten pages if not. Send your stories to: Murry Taylor, 1513 Gaffney RD, Ft Wainwright, AK 99703--as soon as possible.

We will continue to devote sections in the newsletters to smokejumpers and pilots by the decades when they first starting serving. Keep the pictures and stories coming. (Pictures will be returned.)

**ED THORSRUD, MSO 42:** Ed began his smokejumper career out of the Missoula base in 1942, but WW II interrupted his plans. He became an Army Air Force pilot, flying Douglas

C-47 transports with the 314th Troop Carrier Group in Europe, towing troop-laden gliders to battle areas in the Rhine River area. Following the war he became a pilot for the Johnson Flying Service and flew a number of different type aircraft in jumper operations, as well as hauling cargo to remote airstrips in Montana and Idaho. (He once flew a bridge into the Middle Fork of the Salmon River.) Ed also owned a WW II B-25 medium bomber that he flew as a retardant aircraft. It is resting along the Tanana River southeast of Fairbanks, Alaska and has been there since June 27, 1969. Ed was not flying it at the time. Ed's younger brother Gar is a member of the Association and lives at Tucson. We will have a feature story about Ed in the not-too-distant future. He lives at Polson, MT.

**Roger Wolfertz, CJ 48:** Roger was a long-time Cave Junction jumper who has provided us with much material on the history of smokejumping out of Cave Junction. During March and April of this year he went trekking across the Himalaya's in Nepal in the Gorkha region. He flew into the capital, Kathmandu, and then spent nine days with four others on the trail. Some of the hiking took place at altitudes in excess of 13,000'. They camped on the trail. Included in the group were seven porters, who carried about 100 pounds each on their backs, a Sherpa guide, one group leader, a cook and two kitchen boys. They did not see one wheeled vehicle. Roger said the setting was almost medieval in nature. At times they rode on elephants--one on each corner of wooden platforms on the backs of the animals--for two to three hours a day. Early in the trip, out of Gorkha, a drunken individual came dashing through the camp waving a knife. The leader said it would be best to pay the fellow off, which they did, and that problem was settled, the only difficulty they experienced. He said the people were very friendly and accommodating. Roger Wolfertz lives in Sacramento. Perhaps some of the rest of you would like to experience that high adventure.

**Howard Paul "Jerk" Jernigan, MSO 43:** Paul said he went by the name of "Jerk" in 1943. He has given us quite a story about the days at Nine Mile out of Missoula,

including a near mishap which could have killed him. That story will be in the October issue. Paul lives at Charlotte, NC.

**Walter Morris, Pendleton, 1945:**

Walt said, "I was selected to be the 1st Sgt of the Army's African-American Parachute Company in 1945 during WW II. We were 400 in number and were assigned the mission of fighting forest fires from Canada to California. It was called Operation Firefly." They made more than 1,000 fire jumps that year and suffered one death--one of the troopers fell out of a tall tree after his chute hooked up--and thirty had broken arms, legs and crushed chests. After the fire season they departed their base at Pendleton, Oregon and returned to Camp McCall and Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Walt currently lives at Palm Coast, Florida, north of Daytona Beach.

**Danny O'Rourke, CJ 46:** Danny is an ex-Marine from WW II days who served as a smokejumper out of Cave Junction and later at Missoula. He was with the 82d Airborne Div. at one time. He was later involved in a special project, testing parachuting from B-47 jet bombers, which were quite new at the time. He would drop downward out of the jet and then deploy his chute. Danny had some "hairy" experiences in that work. We remember him as the one who liked his steaks virtually raw. Danny currently resides at Cedaredge, Colorado.

**Bob Filler, MYC 52:** Bob had asked Tom Larson, an artist in Nampa, Idaho, to complete a 30" x 40" oil painting of one of the Ford Tri-motors they once used at McCall. He said the painting should be completed by September. Bud and his partner Wayne King, borrowed a jump suit from Neal Davis at McCall and had Tim take a picture of them in the doorway of Gene Frank's Tri-motor at Caldwell. ( Bud plays the part of the jumper and Wayne the spotter.) The title of the painting is "Checking the Wind Drift." It looks like it will be a tremendous painting. (Gene's Tri-motor, 4-AT-10, is the oldest Tri-motor in existence.) We will be getting back to Bud, who lives in Boise.

**James "Jack" Cole, MYC 56:**

Jack said that in 1957 he had a centerline Mae West on a fire jump. His reserve failed to deploy and he rode the twisted mess into a sidehill,

breaking several minor bones in his back. He was evacuated the following day by helicopter, and after recuperating, made several more jumps that year. Jim lives at Arlington, VA.

**Earl "Tony" Percival, NCSB 54:**

Tony has two brothers who were also jumpers out of Winthrop: Roy, 1957 and Dan, 1965. Tony is still at Tucson, AZ.

**Kenneth E. Wilder, MYC 57:** Ken is presently the Mayor of Camden, Alabama, southwest of Montgomery, near the Alabama River. He has been mayor for eight years. He and Lynn Sprague, MYC 59, jumped on a fire in Yosemite National Park and came close to being burned to death by a pursuing fire.

**John Twiss, RAC 67:** John is the Forest Supervisor for the Black Hills NF of South Dakota and plans on retiring this year. John lives at Custer, SD.

**Dale D. Matlack, Idaho City, 67:** Dale started dropping jumpers for the Forest Service out of Idaho City in 1967, and flew jumpers from the Grangeville, La Grande, Cave Junction and Missoula bases. From 1981 to 1986 he was a Smokejumper, Helitack and Aerial Attack Specialist. He lives in Boise.

**Richard G. Calkins, RDD, 64:** Dick said he was one of the first four jumpers to parachute into the Redwood District of the Six Rivers NF of California. He said that district has the tallest trees in the world--300' plus. He mentioned that their let down ropes looked like watch bobs alongside those trees. Dick said he started jumping at the age of 29 and finished at age 36. Dick retired as District Fire Management Officer on the Mt Pinos Dist. of the Los Padres NF and lives at Atascadero, CA.

**Walter O. Wasser, MYC 79:**

Walt averaged eleven fire jumps per season for seventeen years. He was Assistant Loft Foreman for the Boise BLM and Head Parachute Trainer since 1992, and was assigned as the Boise Parachute Rigger Examiner in the Spring of 1996. He has made 2600 Sport Parachute jumps. Walt lives in Boise.

**Curtis King, RDD 76:** We were told that Curtis suffered two strokes recently and was in a hospital at Redding.

**Bald, John F, RDD 78:** John mentioned that his greatest contribution to smokejumping was the safe, progressive and professional operation of a government parachute facility. He was fortunate to be in a position to implement many improvements in the equipment and systems being used. John lives at Sandy, UT.

**Gary Johnson, AKA 74:** Gary had a major malfunction on his 2nd training jump. He has jumped on fires in Alaska, Canada and the "Lower 48." He is living at Carson City, NV.

**Robert T. Dunton, MSO 88:** Bob was stationed at the West Yellowstone Base during his four years in the jumpers. He was involved in the fires of '88 in Yellowstone Park. Bob has written a book, Turn and Face Into the Wind, which is still unpublished at this time. Bob resides at Lehi, UT.

**Steven W. Bierman, RAC, 86:** Steve rookied at Redmond, Oregon and was given the chance to switch to Redding, since his wife and daughter were nearby at Susanville. He jumped out of there in '86 and '87 and then took a year off. He jumped out of McCall in '89 and took three years off to finish his education and build a home. He returned to Redding and jumped in '93 and '94 and last year he again jumped from McCall and is back there again for this season. He is what we refer to as a "wayfaring jumper." He and his family live at Susanville, CA.

**Gordon M. Woodhead, RDD 83:** Gordon says he is a "Runnin, Jumpin Fool" who has jumped for six years ('83 to '84 and '92 to '96). He is a resident of Susanville, CA.

**Norm Baker, RDD 81:** Norm jumped from '81 to '92 and from '94 to '95--for fourteen seasons. He has been a Forest Service Aerial Observer. Norm lives at Cottage Grove, Oregon near Eugene.

**Brenda M. Tracy, RDD 90:** Brenda jumped for two years out of Redding and is now a Wilderness Ranger in the Mt. Shasta area. She made a jump with the University of Massachusetts Sport Parachute Club and has a total of thirty-seven jumps to her credit. She lives at Cottonwood, CA.

**William L. Blanco, MSO 95:** Bill began jumping last year and immediately after the fire season traveled to the deserted beaches of

Southern Baja California, Mexico where he and four other fellow Missoula rookies, Brian Kopka, Ted McClanahan, Robert Daniels, and Steven Price tested the Ultra-secret "Concept 8". Bill calls Scottsdale, AZ home.

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*FLASH*

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the National Smokejumper Association will have an e-mail address. That address will be as follows:

smokejumpers@marsweb.com

Previously, some messages had been sent to Scott Belknap, Missoula base jumper, who accepted them on our behalf, which we greatly appreciated.

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The N.S.A. Treasurer, Lowell Hanson, is in charge of advertising, preparing items for shipment that have been requested by members, and mailing. Lowell mentioned the new items listed for sale in the last newsletter--bumper stickers, coffee mugs and new caps--and said to hold up on these orders for now. Also, that by the time the 13th newsletter goes out in October, we should be able to accept advertising from members again. Get in touch with us on this matter.

The following items are still available for sale: Buckles, bronze, with the N.S.A. emblem on them, 2 3/4" wide by 2 1/4" deep--\$25.00 plus \$3.50 for shipping; Key Chains, bronze, with the N.S.A. emblem, 3/4" wide, with set of wings and green tree in center-- \$8.00 plus \$3.50 shipping; Old-Style N.S.A. T-shirts--XL only, beige-- \$8.00 plus \$3.50 shipping; copies of past Newsletters-- \$2.50 each, which covers cost of shipping; copies of Master Rosters, with jumper names and addresses arranged by states-- \$7.50 each, which also covers shipping.