

5-26-2022

Smokejumper biographies for 1948 rookie class, J-P

National Smokejumper Association

Smokejumper biographies for 1948 rookie class J-P

Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48)

NSA Life Member Starr Jenkins, 95, died February 15, 2021, in San Luis Obispo, California. He was born in Chicago on June 1, 1925. Starr entered the Navy at 17 during WW-II but was then given an appointment to West Point. Starr liked the Navy and, after six months at West Point, found a way to leave the Army and return to the Navy, being stationed at Treasure Island in the San Francisco Bay. After his discharge at the end of WWII, Starr entered the University of New Mexico where he got his BA in 1948. He rookied at Cave Junction in 1948 and transferred to Missoula for the 1949 season.

Starr got his master's degree at Stanford, and his Ph.D. back at the University of New Mexico. In 1961 Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, hired him to teach English and Literature, a career he loved for 28 years. Summers, he frequently worked as a Park Ranger in Yosemite. His article published in the magazine *Nature* about what needed to be done to control and offset environmental damage from overcrowding in Yosemite was picked up by the U.S. Secretary of Interior, who implemented all 14 of Starr's recommendations.

Starr's non-fiction and fiction articles and stories were published in *Look Magazine*, *Life Magazine*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Man Against Nature*, and he published several books like *Brothers in the Sky-49* about adventures smoke jumping. He was also a frequent contributor to *Smokejumper* magazine over the years. Starr's brother **Hugh** (MSO-49) was killed in Korea December 24, 1953, and posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

Arthur Walter Jensen (Missoula '48)

Art, 33, died October 28, 1960, in the crash of a Northwest Orient Airlines DC-4 in flight from Spokane, Washington, to Missoula, Montana, killing all 12 aboard. He was returning after a trip to inspect firefighting equipment for the Forest Service. "Art was a specialist on fire equipment for the government, having majored in forestry at Iowa State University." He jumped at Missoula 1948-50.

Walt Johnson (Missoula '48)

Walt was born March 3, 1929, in Lynchburg, Virginia. When he was in high school in Montvale, Virginia, he got over 300 hours fighting wildfire in two of the eastern forests due to lack of manpower created by WWII. Walt

went to BYU in Provo, Utah in 1946 and worked for the USFS in Blister Rust Control during the '47 summer. He rookied at Missoula in '48, went to Grangeville and on to Castle Creek R.S. where he spent the summer doing trail maintenance—no fire jumps.

Walt enlisted in the USAF in 1951 and retired in 1971 as a Major. He served as a flight instructor and fighter examiner for T-39 (Saberliner) and C-131 (Convairs) at Andrews AFB. He graduated from the University of Maryland that year and went on to become a flight instructor at two different airports.

Walt related on unscheduled parachute jump while being stationed at Langley AFB, VA, in 1961. "I was the back seat of a T-33 trainer shooting takeoffs and landings when the engine came unglued at about 1,000 feet. I squeezed the triggers on my seat. The chute deployed and I swung about three times before landing in about four feet of water." Walt is living in Rocky Mount, Virginia.

Joseph Gudmond Kaarhus (Cave Junction '48)

Joe died December 17, 1982. He was born August 5, 1926, in Eugene, Oregon. He served in the Navy during WWII 1944-46. His occupation in 1963 was listed as Cabinet maker. He jumped at Cave Junction during the 1948 season. He is pictured in the Oregon State yearbook in 1947.

Lyle O. Kile (North Cascades '48))

Les was born in 1927 in central Wisconsin and became the first person in his family to attend high school. With three older brothers already in the war (WWII), his mother fought hard to keep Les from being drafted. In 1947 he and one of his brothers headed west on a Harley to "see the world." They ended up in Wenatchee and worked picking fruit for the summer.

Les returned to Wenatchee in the spring of 1948, heard the USFS was hiring firefighters to parachute into fires. After an interview, he was signed up a told to report to the smokejumper base at Winthrop.

Francis Lufkin was the head man and Jim Allen was in charge of training. Roy Goss and Elmer Nuefeld were the squadleaders and Ken Benish was the pilot.

Les graduated from Eastern Washington University in 1954 with a teaching degree and taught for 28 years in Chelan County. Along the way he and his wife purchased 3,000 acres and went into the cattle business. Les jumped at NCSB 1948-51 and worked as an aerial observer for the Wenatchee NF 1951-52.

Paul George Kovaleff (Cave Junction '48)

Paul, 64, died January 19, 1994, in Aloha, Oregon, from cancer. He was born July 14, 1929, in Portland, Oregon. Paul joined the Navy in 1949 and later worked for Western Union in a managerial position for 30 years. He jumped at Cave Junction 1948-49.

Raymond E. Kruse (Missoula '48)

Ray, 74, died June 25, 1994, in Fallbrook, CA from emphysema. He was born November 9, 1919, in Jersey City, NJ. He was a paratrooper with the 13th Airborne Division during WWII and moved to California after his retirement in 1979. He jumped at Missoula during the 1948 season.

Gerald J. Linton (Missoula '48)

Jerry, 83, died July 18, 2011, in Spokane, Washington. He was born in Priest River, Idaho, June 24th, 1928, and graduated from West Valley High School in Spokane in 1946. Jerry attended Montana State University in 1948-49 and the Commercial Trades Institute in Chicago in 1950.

He was drafted into the Army in January 1951, serving a two-year stint in the 231st Combat Engineers Battalion "A" Company. Jerry jumped from Missoula in 1948 and 1949, but already had Forest Service experience as he had worked in the Blister Rust Control Project during summers in high school. He volunteered to jump in the Lolo National Forest to help find and recover an injured hunter.

Jerry had a 30-year career with Sears Appliance's in Spokane, Washington. He went skydiving on his 63rd and 80th birthdays and attributed his great physical appearance to attitudes and work from his early jobs with the Forest Service and smokejumping. He was a life member of the NSA.

Jack F. Mathews (Missoula '48)

Jack died January 12, 2001, at his home in Santa Barbara, California. He was one of the early CIA recruits from the smokejumpers and spent his entire career with the agency. Jack is mentioned many times in books about the "Secret War" in SEA. He jumped at Missoula 1948,50-51.

Joe Hugh McCauley (North Cascades '48)

Joe died October 22, 2008, in Twin Falls, Idaho. He was born July 31, 1929, Okanogan, Washington. Joe finished rookie training but quit to go into the Army.

James L. McCormick (McCall '48)

James jumped at McCall 1948, '50, and at Idaho City 1949. Possible but not confirmed: James Louis McCormick born January 15, 1924, Parma, Idaho. Died Oct. 1, 1973, Los Angeles, CA.

Les McDevitt (North Cascades '48)

Les, 87, died May 27, 2016, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. He was born August 1, 1928, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from St. John's Military School in Delafield, Wisconsin, and attended the University of Cincinnati. Les enlisted in the US Navy and served five years as a carrier fighter pilot on the USS Midway. He was a Navy Reservist for fifteen years and retired as a Commander. Following active duty, he was a commercial pilot for Pan American World Airways where he captained 747 jumbo jets for 33 years. Les jumped at NCSB 1948-50 and was a Life Member of the NSA.

Terrence D. McMullen (McCall '48)

Terry died February 4, 2010, in Reno, Nevada. He graduated from Boise High School in 1947 and then from the University of Idaho in 1952 with a degree in business. Terry was a 1st Lt. in the 82nd Airborne during the Korean War. He was a successful businessman in the Reno area for over 40 years. Terry jumped five seasons at McCall and Idaho City.

Philip Rolla McVey (Missoula '48)

Phil, 22, died August 5, 1949, along with 11 other Missoula smokejumpers in the Mann Gulch Fire. He was born April 1, 1927, in Choteau, Montana, and served in the Navy 1945-46. Phil attended grammar schools in North Port, Washington, and graduated from high school at Browning, Montana. He attended the University of Montana for one year and was described as "one of the many semi-pro baseball players among the smokejumpers."

James L. "Jim" Murphy (Missoula '48)

In high school Jim worked three summers as a lookout fireman for the USFS in the Lolo District. In 1948 he became a smoke jumper for the 1948-50 summers while in college making nine fire jumps.

Jim graduated from the Univ. of Montana in 1951 with a degree in accounting and went into the USAF as a 2nd Lt during the Korean war. After release from active duty, he worked for the Univ. of Nevada and then joined a local CPA firm as an accountant,

During his accounting career, he became a partner in the firm which eventually merged with the big national firm of Grant Thornton. "In the

many years until I retired, and I still work, I was Pres of the Nevada CPA organization. I was elected to the Executive Board for six years at Grant which involved the management activities for the then 360 partner firm.”

“After being separated from the Air Force I remained in the reserve forces for a full 30 years and went on active duty annually and occasionally during the year. The last 12 years, until I retired in 1981, I was assigned to the Air Force Academy as a Liaison Officer, became a Colonel, and was the leader of these activities for the state of Nevada, a stressful activity during the Vietnam War.”

“After stepping back from my accounting career, I was elected to the Board of Directors of a major utility company and served for 12 years on various committees including the Audit Committee. I also became a trustee in 1983 of the Bill and Moya Lear Trust (the Learjet founder and other aviation projects) and am currently still active in that position.”

“I credit the USFS for the three summers when in high school and the three summers as a jumper as creating much of my successes in life through all of the fun and adventure that has been so important in my life.”

“In 1948 the Missoula jumpers had some 160 active jumpers, especially those men who visioned and brought to life the whole organization. Many of my high school classmates became jumpers, including my brother, as it was the thing to do in those years.”

“In my first year some of our chutes were of the old army types and were quickly discarded. Because of the large group at Missoula, I did not get a lot of fire jumps. I was lucky to have missed the Mann Gulch fire as I had just made the jump list after returning from a fire in Idaho.”

“One of my jumps was for a movie that became ‘Red Skies of Montana.’ Another was in October to find a lost hunter in the Middle Fork area of Idaho which was written up in the Missoula paper. So, I have concluded that all the many experiences I had as a teenager gave me the confidence and encouragement to do most anything that was productive. It was a great time in my life, and I am proud to have been a jumper all those years ago.”
Jim is NSA Life Member #8.

Harry E. Noel (Missoula '48)

Harry died June 12, 2007. He jumped at Missoula in 1948 and 1949 after working as a fire lookout. Harry graduated from the University of Montana and later was an U.S. Air Force pilot. He retired from the insurance and real estate business in Bozeman, Montana.

Edward Arthur Nurse (Missoula '48)

Ed died March 3, 2003, in Helena, Montana, following a short bout with cancer. He was born June 18, 1928, in Missoula. Ed attended Roosevelt Grade School in Missoula until he moved with his mother and stepfather to Lone pine. There he attended junior high and high school and graduated in 1946. During his high school years, he was involved in every sport and enjoyed playing the drums and sang in the school chorus.

From 1943-1945, Ed was a packer for the U.S. Forest Service in Missoula and in 1948-49 he was a Missoula smokejumper. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served as electricians' mate for 22 months.

Ed worked as an instrument man for the county surveyor in Missoula in 1950-1951 and as student lab assistant at Montana State University-Bozeman in 1952-1953.

He married Marian Louise Sampson in 1951. Ed graduated from Montana State University with a civil engineering degree and after MSU attended the University of California and received a "fast track" master's in engineering. He opened Foundation and Material Consultant Engineering located in Helena, an active business for 40 years.

Herbert M. Oertli (Missoula '48)

Herb, 67, died October 21, 1991, in Missoula, Montana. He was born in Hamilton, Montana November 29, 1923, and graduated from Hamilton High School and went to work for the Todd shipyards in Seattle. Herb served in the Army as a sergeant in charge of a radar unit.

Following his discharge, he went to work for the Forest Service on a trail crew, followed by his time as a smokejumper and later as Fire Control Officer on the Sula Ranger District. He retired in 1974 as a dispatcher at the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula. Herb jumped at Missoula 1948-52, 54-60, and at Grangeville in 1953.

William J. "Bill" Padden (Cave Junction '48)

Bill died October 22, 2008, in Duluth, Minnesota. He jumped at Cave Junction 1948-53 after serving in the U.S. Army Airborne. Bill graduated from St. John's University in 1953, worked for National Cash Register for 20 years and owned Griff and Associates in Hibbing, Minnesota, before retiring.

Donald L. Pape (Idaho City '48)

Don died September 13, 2014, in Boise. He attended Boise Junior College and jumped at Idaho City in 1948 and 1950 before joining the Air Force. He flew the F-86 Safer Jet during the Korean War. Don completed

129 combat missions before being shot down in 1953 and was a POW until the prisoner exchange at the end of the war.

In 1955 he joined the Idaho Air National Guard and attended Creighton University Dental School where he graduated in 1959. He practiced dentistry in Boise from 1960-1993.

Don received the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross and was inducted into the Idaho Aviation Hall of Fame in 2012.

Frederick Charles Pearson (McCall '48)

Fred died March 1, 2011. He was born May 5, 1928. Fred was living in Kenai, Alaska, and jumped at McCall 1948-51.

Richard "Dick" Pennington (Missoula '48)

Dick died January 28, 1996, in Harrisonburg, VA. He was a Navy veteran of WWII. After military service he acquired degrees from the Univ. of Montana (Wildlife Technology) and the Univ. of Minnesota (Forestry). Dick went on to a 35-year career with the U.S. Forest Service.

Lloyd A. "Chuck" Pickard (Missoula '48)

Seventeen-year-old Marine Lloyd Pickard lost his sea bag during the invasion of the Mariana Islands in the South Pacific. A friend, Charles Armstrong, gave him a spare combat jacket with the name "Chuck" stenciled on the back. The young Marine wore it everywhere, even in college after the war. Soon, everyone was calling him "Chuck." They still do.

Born in Brockton, Massachusetts, September 29, 1925, Chuck was a contemporary of Rocky Marciano. "Same neighborhood, different gang. It was an Irish-Italian thing."

Interviewed by *Smokejumper* magazine in 2004, 60-plus years later, Chuck's booming still-Boston-accented voice filled the big enclosure.

He quit high school in 1942 to join the Marines, spending 27 months hopping from one Japanese-held tropical island to the next. Familiar names like Saipan, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Eniwetok and Tinian, and the not-so-familiar: Nuku'alofa and Funafuti. Once the Japanese were supposedly chased off an island, Chuck's anti-aircraft battery was brought in to protect American airfields, bombers and their crews from Japanese nighttime bombings. The reality was that his battery was regularly attacked by fanatical Japanese soldiers bypassed by the Marine assault forces.

Chuck's best friend from high school, who had joined the Marines with him, was killed in action.

Discharged exactly four years after Pearl Harbor Day, Chuck enrolled in Massachusetts State College, studying forestry. The summers of '46 and '47 found him working for the Forest Service in exotic (especially for an Easterner) places like Priest River Falls in the northern tip of the Idaho panhandle. He visited the last of the big Rocky Mountain logging camps in their heyday. Diamond Match Company drove huge white pine logs hundreds of miles down rivers, across lakes, and, where necessary, through spectacular flumes to mills in Newport, Washington. It was the old Wild West, and Chuck saw it all.

Chuck joined the Missoula jumpers in 1948, making squadleader in his first year. In 1949 he trained most of the jumpers that perished at Mann Gulch. "They were college kids that arrived late for training, and that's why I got them." Chuck made six fire jumps over three seasons.

Another time Chuck's crew jumped the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41) offered Chuck a choice of hiking out 18 miles to Yellow Jacket or attempting to raft down the river, using war surplus rubber rafts that would be dropped in. Sliding down the steep slope of the canyon toward the river, Chuck hoped that the rafts would arrive intact. They did, and the first rafting trip down the Salmon was soon history.

Chuck left jumping in the fall of 1950. He and a buddy traveled to Florida to visit an aunt. Three weeks later, he was wearing the uniform of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. "Badge #25. Lots of gunplay." After six months he donned the plain clothes of a detective. Thirteen years later he formed his own private detective agency, selling out in 1977.

Chuck's fond memories of jumping were not exclusively those of falling out of airplanes. He would occasionally visit downtown Missoula, often in the company of **Gar Thorsrud** (MSO-46), to mingle with the city's café society. "Bunch of red-nosed loggers and cowboys would play in a string band on the street outside the Silver Dollar. Some of them were pretty good." *Written in 2004 by John Helmer (RDD-59)*

James Eugene Putnam (North Cascades '48)

Sgt. James E. Putnam (USMC) was killed in combat May 31, 1951, in Korea. He was born February 5, 1926, in Wheatland, Wyoming, and graduated from Aberdeen (WA) H.S. in 1943. Jim 17, enlisted in the Marines and served in the South Pacific being discharged in 1946. He attended and graduated from Washington State in Agriculture Education using the GI Bill for his education. In 1950 he married Evelyn Branch and was called back into the Marine Corps in December 1950 and shipped to

Korea in January 1951. He is buried in the Wenatchee, Washington City Cemetery.

While in Korea his son Kenneth was born. Ken went on to service in the Marine Corps.