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Smokejumper biographies for 1950 rookie class, A-H

National Smokejumper Association

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1950 Rookie Class A-H

Phillip D. Baiamonte (Missoula '50)

Phil was born October 1, 1931, in Monticello, New Mexico. His father was a teacher in a one-room school at the time. He graduated from Albuquerque H.S. in 1949, the University of New Mexico in 1953 and the University of Colorado Law School in 1956. While at the University of New Mexico, Phil jumped two seasons getting two fire jumps in 1950 and seven during the 1951 season.

Phil entered the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant and served the 3rd Armored Division in Germany until his discharge in 1959. He was admitted to practice law in Colorado and New Mexico and was appointed State District Judge for the State of New Mexico where he served 1974-84. Phil was married for 57 years until the death of his wife, Pat, and they had four sons.

“I’m presently 88 years old and my hobby is to drive y Harley Davidson Road King all over North America and Canada.”

Herman E. Ball (Missoula '50)

Herm died April 16, 2014, in Lafayette, Colorado. He graduated from Robertsville High School (Alabama) and spent two years in the merchant marines before attending Auburn University. Herm jumped at Missoula for the 1950-51 seasons before working for the CIA on various projects including the Taiwan Project documented in an October 2005 piece in Smokejumper magazine.

Herm started a career in 1956 with the USFS and retired in Colorado. In his 25-year career with the USFS, he worked in fire suppression and controlled burning in the Rocky Mountain Region. During retirement he started a business putting together forestry management plans for landowners.

Robert Davis Betts (Idaho City '50)

Robert, 88, died July 31, 2010, in Tucson, Arizona. He was born September 15, 1922, in Silver City, New Mexico. Robert served in the Army Air Corps 1942-45. He jumped at Idaho City in 1950.

James A. Blaha (McCall '50)

James, 81, died July 17, 2010, in Littleton, Colorado. He lived in the Denver—Littleton, Colorado, vicinity his entire life except for a brief period in the U.S. Army and smokejumping at McCall, Idaho, the summers of 1950, 51, and 52.

In October 1946, he entered the U.S. Army, and his employer was recorded as being the U.S. Forest Service. By the summer of 1950 he was discharged, and started smokejumping at McCall, Idaho. James had four fire jumps in 1950, six in 1951, and five in 1952.

Lester E. Bradford (Missoula '50)

Lester died March 3, 2019, at his home in Mount Vernon, Washington. Upon his graduation from high school, Lester joined the Army in June 1944 and was trained as a tail gunner.

Lester took advantage of the GI Bill, attending Yale University, graduating with a MS in forestry. Lester had several jobs with the USFS, including smokejumping. In 1950 Lester had seven training jumps and two fire jumps. In 1951 he had two refresher jumps and five fire jumps.

At Yale, Lester met Winifred Smith, a young doctor who as a missionary went to Sierra Leone, West Africa. Lester took a special course for missionaries in agriculture at Cornell University with a plan to join Winifred in Africa. He took a freighter to Sierra Leone, docking in Freetown on December 20, 1952, and they were married on December 23. They continued to live in Sierra Leone for the next 17 years. Winnifred ran a birth and pediatric center and Lester an agricultural test farm. While there, they were joined by five of their children.

In 1968, the family moved to Bogalusa, Louisiana, with Lester working for the Louisiana State University extension service and earned a PhD in education. After several years in Louisiana, the family moved to Mount Vernon, Washington where Lester worked as a County Agent in charge of 4-H programs, education, and forestry for Skagit and Island Counties.

In 1979, Lester accepted a job with a contractor for the U.S State Department's Agency for International Development. He and Winnie travelled to Sudan and Pakistan.

After Lester officially "retired" he travelled overseas for many short-term volunteer jobs in Zimbabwe, Bolivia, Brazil, Ukraine, Indonesia, and Haiti. Lester studied and spoke many languages including, French, Spanish, Latin, German, Russian, and African languages including Kono, Mende, and Krio.

William C. Brennan (Missoula '50)

Bill died March 25, 2018. He started working for the Forest Service at age 14 and attended Montana State University before he was drafted into the Army. Bill served in Korea as a medic for the 187th Airborne. He had many

jobs throughout life but enjoyed being fleet manager at T&W Chevrolet in Belgrade, Montana, the most. Bill jumped at Missoula 1950-51 and 1954.

Andre Paul Brunette (Cave Junction '50)

Andre died May 5, 1985, at Umatilla, Oregon. He was born May 25, 1930, in Bloomfield, Michigan. He rookied at CJ in 1950. Records are marginal, but it looks like he was in the Army May 1951 to May 1953 which would be at the time of the Korean War. He then returned to Cave Junction and jumped the 1953 season.

Tomas F. Clawson (Missoula '50)

Tom died March 2, 2013, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He graduated from Cedar Falls, Iowa, high school in 1948. In the summer of 1950, he was a smokejumper at Missoula, Montana getting seven training and one fire jump. In August 1950 he entered the U.S. Air Force and was deployed to Korea the following year. In the summer of 1953, Tom returned to Missoula and had two refresher and six fire jumps.

In 1954, Tom moved to Minnesota to live the remainder of his life. Tom graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1960 and worked in the field of recreation, becoming a Director of Recreation and Parks in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Del W. Cumley (Missoula '50)

Del died November 26, 2013, at his home in Missoula. He was born in 1927 at the family homestead near Rye Creek, Montana. He served in the Army Air Corps from 1945-48 and later in the Air Force from 1951-53 as a Staff Sergeant. Del jumped at Missoula during the 1950 season. He began his career as a chemist at the pulp mill in Frenchtown in 1957, rose to the position of Production Manager, and retired in 1982.

William "Bill" Cumley (Missoula '50)

Bill, 68, died in Helena, Montana, July 25, 1930, December 24, 1998. He served with the Border Patrol for several years. Bill was born July 25, 1930, in Montana. He jumped during the 1950 season and had two fire and seven practice jumps. Bill was a veteran of the Korean War.

John W. "Jack" Deinema (McCall '50)

Jack is a native of Iowa and got his BS degree in Forestry from Iowa State College. He started as smokejumper in 1950 at McCall, where he made four fire jumps, and then as a Junior Forester on the Challis NF in

1952. He continued working in R-4, including as Regional Director of Personnel and in 1967 was named Forest Supervisor of the Challis NF.

He was an influential FS Manager in the 1970s including being Director of the Job Corp Program in DC and Regional Forester in R-5. Jack is another example of the people who began as smokejumpers and went on to be influential leaders in the USFS. He is currently living in Tigard, Oregon.

James E. Dewey (Missoula '50)

Jim, 71, died Aug. 26, 2000, at his home in Princeton, Idaho. He was born in Coudersport, Pennsylvania, and graduated in 1947 from high school in Coudersport where he was captain of the football team and was active in drama and yearbook.

A Missoula jumper in 1950 and 1952, he graduated with a bachelor's in forestry from Pennsylvania State University. He had worked for the Idaho Department of Forests and Waters as a timber sales supervisor and began permanent employment with the U.S. Forest Service on the Priest Lake District of the Kaniksu National Forest in 1953.

He continued working for the agency for 32 years in various parts of Idaho and Montana, including the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests. Following his retirement, he worked as a consulting forester for many years.

Neil L. Dibble (North Cascades '50)

Neil was born in March 1928, to Clyde and Selma Dibble in Washington. He lived with his family in Winthrop, Washington, through high school.

Neil attended Washington State College in Pullman, Washington, for a short period of time and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1951. He later attended Oregon State College earning a BS degree and taught math in Omak, Washington, in 1954. He also taught science in Pateros, Washington, in 1956. He is currently living in Corvallis, Oregon.

George H. Dwight (Missoula '50)

George, 81, died February 27, 2009, in New York. He graduated from Harvard and then Columbia Law School in 1952, the articles editor of the Law Review. As a young lawyer, George was Special Assistant Corporation Counsel under Mayor Robert Wagner. On the boards of the United Neighborhood Houses of New York, he most recently crusaded to prevent the Washburn Wire Factory site from becoming a mall and to create Vision Harlem, a plan to highlight Harlem's landmarks, re-link its neighborhoods and connect the entire community to the rest of the City. He

was a partner at the firm of Richards & O'Neil and most recently of counsel at McLaughlin & Stern. George jumped at Missoula in 1950-51.

John Roger Evans (Missoula '50)

Roger died in Sandpoint, Idaho, July 23, 2009. He graduated from Oberlin College and from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio.

Roger jumped three summers (50-52) in Missoula while he was in medical school. After his internship in Salt Lake City, Roger completed a general surgery residency in Seattle where he set up a surgery practice in the suburb of Burien. Following his retirement in 1991 he moved to Sandpoint.

Walter F. Fickel (Missoula '50)

Walter died September 4, 2003. He jumped at Missoula during the 1950 season and had one fire jump.

Donald L. Finney (McCall '50)

Don, 85, died July 12, 2012, in Ketchikan, Alaska. He grew up in Southern California and joined the Navy in 1946. He jumped at McCall 1950-51 getting five fire jumps in 1950 and six during the 1951 season. His first fire jump was with fellow rookie, Jack Deinema.

After smokejumping in 1951, Don went to southeast Alaska where he lived in the Sitka and Ketchikan area the remainder of his life. By 1954, Don was working for the Ketchikan Pulp Company, where he worked for the remainder of his career.

In 1976, the clearcutting of timber became a contentious political and conservationist issue when a U.S. District Court decision in Alaska halted a 50-year 8.2 billion board foot timber sale on the Tongass N.F. to the Ketchikan Pulp Company.

Don was a vice president for the Ketchikan Pulp Company in charge of timber for the Ketchikan area. He said the decision "could put 3,600 of our people out of work." A contentious period over several years ensued between the environmentalists and the timber companies, not only in Alaska, but on other national forests throughout the United States. The fisheries industry sided with the environmentalists and Don's wife became involved when in 1988 she wrote an editorial asking why the commercial fisherman "should repeatedly go on record trying to kill the existing timber industry."

The clearcutting issue on national forests throughout the country led (and still does) to legislative actions providing direction for management of national forests. Don was intimately involved as a customer of the Tongass N.F.

Henry G. “Buzz” Florip (Cave Junction '50)

Buzz was born and raised on a small farm near Rogers City, MI. He left high school early to join the Army in 1947. After basic training at Fort Knox (KY), he was transferred to Japan for airborne training with the 11th Airborne Division. He was discharged in 1950.

Buzz learned about the Siskiyou Smokejumpers from **Bud Proctor** (CJ-50) who was also in the 11th Airborne Division in Japan. They were in separate units but met when they were both transferred to the division band which was in “desperate need of musicians.”

Bud was discharged a month ahead of Buzz and headed to Cave Junction and the smokejumpers. He told **Cliff Marshall** (CJ-46) that Buzz would be arriving in Cave Junction in July. “Thanks to Bud and Cliff, I had a job waiting.”

Buzz entered Oregon State in 1950 and went into radio broadcasting in 1955 at KRUL in Corvallis, OR, and started his career in radio. “I became manager at KBCH, Ocean Lake, Or. in 1960 and stayed in that position until 1973, when I was transferred to KNPT, in Newport. In 1975 we moved to Medford and Joined KOB-TV. I was hired as the director of Radio Operations, which I did until 1984.”

Buzz retired in 1999 completing 44 years in the broadcasting industry. During his career he served on the Oregon Association of Broadcasters and was the State President in 1977.

As a volunteer, Buzz spent 30 years in search and rescue flying teaching mountain flying to new pilots and managing search missions for lost aircraft, hunters, and hikers. Buzz is currently living in Medford, Oregon.

Thomas L. Gennette (McCall '50)

Tom died July 2, 2001, of Lung Cancer. He received in bachelor's degree from the University of Portland in 1952 and his master's from the University of Oregon in 1953.

Tom taught elementary school in Oregon and Washington and was an Elementary School Principal in Kelso, Washington. He jumped at McCall 1950-53.

William R. Godden (McCall '50)

Bill died February 5, 2017, in Blanco, Texas. He grew up in Idaho and moved to Ogden, Utah, where he graduated from high school. Bill's father, Floyd, had a career in the USFS and in 1950 when he started smokejumping, his father was Regional Fire Control Director for Region Four. Bill was a smokejumper in 1950 and 1951 at McCall, Idaho, and had five fire jumps in 1950 and eight in 1951.

In 1950, he attended Colorado A&M College enrolling in the school of Veterinary Medicine, receiving his DVM in 1954. Upon graduation from Veterinarian School, Bill began a twenty-three-career with the Air force.

While in the Air Force, he received a MS degree in Radiation Biology from the University of Rochester in 1962 and graduated from the Armed Forces Staff College in 1966. By 1969, he was a Lieutenant Colonel and was assigned to the Defense Atomic Support Agency at Brooks AFB, Texas, retiring in 1978.

Ralph R. Gregerson (McCall '50)

Ralph, 92, was born October 30, 1927, in Pasadena, California. He moved to Boise, Idaho, shortly after he was born and grew up there graduating from high school in 1945. Ralph was drafted into the Army 1946-47 and attended Aviation Flight and Maintenance school after his discharge. He was a mechanic for West Coast Airlines for two years before going to Pan American World Airway where he spent the next 29 years as a flight engineer.

Ralph jumped out of McCall 1950 and 1952 getting three fire jumps during the '50 season and six during the '52 season. He is living in Santa Rosa, California. (Sept. 2020)

Joseph J. "Joe" Gutkoski (Missoula '50)

Joe, 94, died August 5, 2021. He was born and raised in Wilkes-Barre, PA., and graduated from the township high school. Joe enlisted in the Navy in WW II where he served on the Destroyer Lansdowne. He graduated from Penn State University under the WW II GI Bill with a BS degree in Landscape Architecture. He began work with the US Forest Service in the late 1940s as a firefighter in Idaho. He transferred to Missoula where he jumped 1950-62.

Joe then transferred to Bozeman where he worked as a Landscape Architect for the Forest Service Regional Lands Office doing land planning and design. In 1964 he was assigned to the Gallatin N.F. in Bozeman. He retired from the USFS In 1982 with 32 years of service.

He then started a licensed practice in land planning and design up to the time of his death. Joe was a lifelong environmentalist and defender of public lands and waters. Joe was President and founding member of Montana Rivers and Yellowstone Buffalo Foundation. He also served as President of Gallatin Wildlife Association, member of Montanans for Gallatin Wilderness, and Vice President of Montana Wildlife Federation. Joe was an NSA Life Member.

Edwin W. Harmening (Missoula '50)

Ed died October 16, 2012, at Fort Wayne, Indiana, at the age of 81. He was born January 8, 1931, in Waverly, Iowa. While still in high school, he headed west with his brother and other friends in 1948 for work in Yellowstone Park (BRC work) though he may not have been fully truthful about his age. His summers continued in this manner through his high school graduation until he was accepted into the jumper program in 1950. This was a slow summer and he only had opportunity for one fire jump before the base began early terminations.

Ed went back to Yellowstone in a 1931 Model-A convertible coupe that he purchased for \$100 in Missoula and picked up a labor construction job working on the Park's road maintenance crew until the Park closed. He sold the car to fellow jumper, Chuck Sena (MSO-50), and headed home.

Ed returned to Iowa too late to begin classes in the regular manner and the Korean Conflict was heating up. He enlisted in the Army and headed for Fort Riley, KS, and then to Camp Carson, CO, and assignment to the 547th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. He was recommended for and completed OCS training. Following training, he married and continued his military obligation until his separation from service on December 18, 1953.

Ed resumed his education, attending DePaul University in Chicago, Indiana University and later the University of Dayton receiving a degree in Economics and Business Administration. Ed worked for Old Fort Supply Company, Inc. of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and D & N Micro-Products. He is buried at Highland Park Cemetery in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

John H. Harns (Cave Junction '50)

John died December 17, 2019. He jumped at Cave Junction in 1950 before entering the Navy and starting his career as a Naval Aviator.

John transitioned from WWII piston engine fighters to jets. He flew off 12 different carriers with over 700 carrier landings and logging 89 combat missions in Vietnam. John was in seven different squadrons and was Exe. Office and Command Officer in his last squadron.

John retired in northern Idaho and built a high-performance plane that he used to fly all over the U.S. He flew charters and instructed for many years only stopping in his late 80s. John received the Wilber and Oroville Wright award for over 50 years of continuous flying.

Robert G. Hearst (Missoula '50)

Bob died October 21, 2015, after a brief illness. He was born May 22, 1928, in Seattle, Washington, and lived in the Seattle area his entire life except for smokejumping in the summers of 1950 and 1951 in Missoula where he had nine practice jumps and nine fire jumps.

In 1947 he enlisted in the Army after high school in Plains, MT. Bob was in the 511 Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Bob received a degree in Architecture from the University of Washington in 1969 and enjoyed a 41-year career with the Boeing Company. He was a 1950 Missoula rookie with his brother Roger Orlo Hearst, a career Forest Service employee who died in 2019 in Superior, Montana.

Roger O. Hearst (Missoula '50)

Roger died October 8, 2019. He was born in Plains, Montana, and in 1949, was a Plains High School graduate along with fellow smokejumper Hal Samsel.

Roger was a rookie smokejumper in 1950 with 53 other jumpers, including his brother, Bob. After jumping for the 1950 fire season, Roger served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1951 to 1954. Upon discharge from the Coast Guard, Roger entered Montana State University (now University of Montana) majoring in horticulture, graduating in 1958. During the 1954 and 1955 fire seasons, he returned to smokejumping.

Upon his graduation from MSU, he began a career in fire control for the USFS. Roger started on the Plains RD, Lolo NF and in 1964 worked on the Forest Service Dickinson Job Corps Center in South Dakota. In 1969 he became the District Fire Control Officer in Superior, Montana, serving in that position until his retirement from the Forest Service in 1987.

Arthur A. Henderson (Missoula '50)

Art, 84, of Brookwood, Alabama, died March 27, 2006. He was killed while cutting trees on his property and was found pinned under a large tree. Art was a WWII veteran and fought on Okinawa and had been awarded two purple hearts.

He jumped at Missoula in 1950 while a student at the University of Minnesota on the G.I. Bill and graduated with a degree in Forestry and Wildlife. After graduating, he went to work for the National Park Service at Big Bend NP in Texas. His career took him to California, North Dakota, and Washington D.C. He retired in 1988 and moved to his wife's family land in Brookwood.

Edgar H. "Ed" Hinkle (Cave Junction '50)

Ed was born in Richmond, Virginia, August 1927. He died August 10, 2015. He graduated from high school in Modesto, California, and fought fire in the Stanislaus NF 1945-46 before serving two years in the Marine Corps. Ed jumped at CJ 1950-51 and 1953. He earned his bachelor's (1956) and master's (1957) from the University of Florida. Ed worked for Union Camp Corp. in Savannah, Georgia, USDA in Placerville, California, and was with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Taiwan. He owned Southeastern Antiques in Jacksonville, Florida from 1970-85.

Larry Bruce Howard (Missoula '50)

On January 3rd, 2020, Larry B. Howard, Ph.D., 91, of Colorado Springs, CO, passed away peacefully. Born in Seattle in 1928, Larry grew up in western Montana. Larry attended Menlo High prep school near Palo Alto, CA, where he was a scholar-athlete, finishing in three years and lettering in football, track and field, and swimming.

In 1945, Larry enlisted at 17 to join the WWII effort through the 11th Airborne Division. The war ended before he was deployed, so he ended up in the occupation forces on Hokkaido as a medic. After completing military service, he returned to the US and obtained a BA in Chemistry and Microbiology at the University of Montana in 1949. He jumped at Missoula 1950-53 and 1955.

Larry moved to Minneapolis, where Larry obtained his Ph.D. in Pharmacology at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Upon graduation, Larry accepted a position as the Assistant Director of the Georgia State Crime Lab in Atlanta.

In Atlanta, Larry added post-doctoral education in multiple medical sciences at Emory University, where he eventually joined the staff in the Medical School Anatomy and Pathology Departments. He then spent much of his time driving and flying his airplane all over the state to perform autopsies and investigate crime scenes. In 1969, he became the Director of the Georgia Division of Forensic Sciences and Supervisor of the Georgia

Medical Examiner System, a position he held until his Georgia retirement in 1988.

Larry was perhaps best known for his roles in the 20+ serial Atlanta child murder cases in the 1980s. The child murder cases drew national media and FBI attention. He and his Crime Lab forensic team used blood, rug fibers and dog hairs associated with both the suspect and victims to help convict Wayne Williams, who is still in prison. This was the first-time technology was advanced enough to successfully match textile fibers and dog hair to help convict a suspect.

During his years with the Crime Lab, Larry served as the Vice President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and President of the American Society of Crime Lab Directors. He was on the Editorial Boards of the Journal of Forensic Science and the American Journal of Legal Medicine and Pathology and a member of multiple scientific societies. He also consulted and lectured on various forensic topics, including drug and poison deaths, ballistics, and blood spatter patterns.

Larry's numerous honors include Who's Who in America (2007-2012) and Who's Who in the World (2008). In 1973, he was given the American Bicentennial Research Institute Award in Recognition of Professional and Civil Attainment. In 1981 he was voted Man of the Year by the District Attorneys' Association of Georgia and in 2000 received the Briggs White Award for excellence in forensic science management.

After retiring from the Georgia Crime Lab, Larry moved back home to the rocky mountain west and settled in Colorado Springs to help the Colorado Springs Police Department develop, build, and manage their crime lab (1990-95). From 1995 to 2018 he worked as a forensic science consultant and traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and abroad.

He was a fitness enthusiast and ran and lifted weights regularly into his 60s, resulting in his being given the nickname "Clark Kent" by the neighborhood. In his 40s he made the technical climb of Grand Teton and later took up scuba diving.