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## Smokeyumper biographies for 1950 rookie class, J-W

National Smokeyumper Association

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## **1950 Rookie Class J-W**

### **Edward Blaine Johnson** (Missoula '50)

Ed, 90, died July 12, 2017, in Portland, Oregon. He was born October 30, 1926, in Kennebec, South Dakota. He is buried in the Willamette National Cemetery in Portland. Ed was a Sergeant in the Army during WWII. He jumped at Missoula during the 1950-51 seasons making ten practice and ten fire jumps.

### **Rollo Penney Julander** (Missoula '50)

Jul, 44, died July 17, 1971, in a plane crash about 30 miles south of Flagstaff on the Coconino N.F. He was born April 1, 1927, in Monroe, Utah. Jul was a veteran of WWII and a Sergeant in the Marine Corps. He was acting as an aerial observer and was the new ranger on the Flagstaff District.

### **Richard Allan Kielhorn** (Missoula '50)

Richard died December 22, 2016, in Reno, Nevada. He was born in Bakersfield, CA, December 10, 1928. He moved to Williams, Arizona, where he graduated from Williams High School in 1946. Richard served in the Signal Corps, in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He graduated in 1953 from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, with a degree in forestry.

At age 14, Richard started work during the summer months for the U.S. Forest Service due to a shortage of adult men during WWII. After college graduation, Richard started his Forest Service career on the Nez Perce Forest in Idaho. Moving to California, Richard held several positions with the U.S. Forest Service. On the Six Rivers National Forest he was District Ranger. His last position was on the Plumas National Forest, in Quincy, where he served as Fire Suppression Officer, ending his 37-year career with USFS. Richard jumped the 1950 season at Missoula.

### **Doug Michaelson** (Missoula '50)

Doug was killed in an auto accident in October 1957 in Iowa. He was returning from a visit to Bob Hewitt (Missoula '56) when he fell asleep at the wheel. He jumped at Missoula during the 1956-57 seasons.

### **Wilford L. "Ole" Olsen** (Cave Junction '50)

Ole died January 21, 2018, in Spokane Valley, Washington, at the age of 88. He was a longtime resident of Townsend, Montana, and had recently moved to the Spokane area to be near family. He was born September 9, 1929, in Jamestown, NY.

Ole graduated from Michigan State University in 1951 with a degree in Forestry and jumped at Cave Junction during the 1950 season. He was a Marine Corps veteran having served in the Korean War from 1951 until 1953. Ole worked in the private timber industry for nine years after his discharge. He finished his career with the USFS putting in the next 24 years in Washington State and Montana.

Ole was an avid hunter and fisherman and longtime supporter of Ducks Unlimited. He carved thousands of working wooden duck decoys, many of which he contributed to DU events.

### **G. George Ostrom** (Missoula '50)

Glenn George Ostrom was born in Missoula, Montana, on July 24, 1928, and grew up in Sanders County during the heart of the Depression. He started a newspaper in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and lied about his age to get a job fighting fires at the age of 15. George left Flathead County High School at the age of 17 to join the Army and served in the Signal Corps in Germany during the Occupation.

George trained with the Missoula smokejumpers in 1950, eventually rising to position of squadleader and trainer. He jumped five years before a broken leg ended his jumping career. His passion for hiking never subsided and he's hiked 25,000 miles in and around Glacier National Park and has written three books about his beloved mountains.

George has been a fixture in the Flathead Valley since joining the announcing staff at KOFI-AM in 1956. Ostrom, a writer, broadcaster, and photographer, is known as the "Voice of the Flathead Valley." For the past fifty years he served as co-owner, general manager, and news director of KOFI radio. In 1974 he bought the *Kalispell Weekly News* and turned it into the largest circulation weekly newspaper in Montana. His "Trailwatcher" column in the *Hungry Horse News* has won state and national awards and he has been inducted into the Montana Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame. George helped write the Wilderness Bill with Senator Lee Metcalf in 1962. He is a distinguished alumnus of the University of Montana.

George married Iris Ann Wilhelm in Kalispell on April 12. He never will really "retire." He can still be heard occasionally on KGEZ radio and recently completed work on a children's book which was released on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Keith D. Owens** (Missoula '50)

Keith, 85, died October 3, 2010. He majored in journalism at Washington State University and jumped at Missoula in 1950.

A veteran of World War II, the Korean War and the war in Vietnam, Keith was a radio operator/waist gunner in B-24 bombers in World War II, when he was shot down over Yugoslavia. He bailed out of the stricken bomber and was rescued by partisans and returned to Allied lines 19 days later. He was a journalist and photographer for the military newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, and was the Seoul Bureau Chief during the Korean War.

On Keith's retirement from the Army as Command Sergeant-Major, Keith settled in Port St. John, Florida. He loved spending summers at the Owens family cabin in the Mission Mountains in northwestern Montana where he enjoyed fishing, horseshoes, crossword puzzles and his personally designed golf course. An enthusiastic golfer and University of Montana Grizzlies fan, he enjoyed going to the games in Missoula.

**Darrel James "Pete" Peterson** (Missoula '50)

Pete, 90, died December 20, 2018. He was born November 13, 1928, in Sisseton, S.D. Pete graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in education and began his teaching career at Superior in 1950.

Pete moved back to Missoula in 1952, got his master's degree, and began a 42-year career with the Missoula School District. This included 15 years at Hawthorne as a teacher and coach and the remaining years as a Principal at four schools.

Pete had a dual career with the USFS that included dispatcher at the Aerial Fire Depot. When he retired from the USFS in 1994, he drove trucks for the fire cache until age 88. Pete jumped at Missoula 1950-51 and 1961-67.

**Jack Edward Price** (Idaho City '50)

Jack, 92, died June 5, 2021, in Centerville, Virginia. He was born December 24, 1928. Jack earned his degree in Forestry from Utah State University and jumped at Idaho City during the 1950 season. After graduation he joined the USAF and was trained in pararescue. Jack moved to Seattle in 1953 and began working for Boeing while taking night classes in Aerospace Engineering. He joined NASA's Apollo Program and served as part of the design team for the Lunar Rover and worked for NASA until his retirement in 1993.

**Edward G. Sartain** (Missoula '50)

Ed died July 19, 2013, and is interred at the Houston National Cemetery, Houston, Texas. He was born January 27, 1929, in Great Falls, Montana, where he graduated from high school in 1947. Ed was a Missoula smokejumper in 1950, having seven practice jumps and one fire jump. He served in the US Air Force during the Korean Conflict. Ed married in October 1958 in Texas and resided there the remainder of his life.

**Charles Weldon Sena** (Missoula '50)

Chuck, 80, died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 18, 2008. He was born in Gary, Indiana, September 14, 1927. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps on May 30, 1945, soon after WWII came to an end, resulting in his discharge on August 3, 1946. With knowledge that the G.I. Bill gave advantage to veterans with overseas time, he "re-upped" in the U.S. Navy which took him to China at Yeoman Class. Following his discharge, he signed on with the smokejumpers and made one fire jump on the Hungry Rock Fire in the Lolo N.F. during the 1950 season.

Terminations at Missoula began early so Chuck went to Yellowstone Park where he was hired on as a laborer with the maintenance crew. With the on-set of winter he bought a 1931 Model-A Ford convertible coup from fellow jumper, Ed Harmening (MSO-50) for \$100 and headed home.

Using the G.I. Bill, he began his education, majoring in mathematics at Hanover College, in Hanover, Indiana, University of Illinois and the University of Kentucky. He married in 1957. Chuck entered business in a partnership, later buying out his partner and renaming the firm "Systems IV Packaging." He is buried at Island Cemetery at Washington, Door County, Wisconsin.

**Robert Dean Skidmore** (Missoula '50)

Robert died October 12, 2011, in Marysville, California. He was born April 29, 1931, in Logan, Utah. He jumped at Missoula 1950-52. His brother, David, also jumped at Missoula.

**Dennis D. Swift** (Missoula '50)

Denny, 73, passed away Monday, April 14, 2003, at Brendan House in Kalispell. He graduated from the University of Montana in Missoula, where he earned his degree in Forestry and jumped at Missoula from 1950-51 and Grangeville 1952. He worked most of his life as a forester. His last job was with Stoltz Land and Lumber Company in Columbia Falls.

Denny served in the U.S. Army. He was a member of the American Foresters and a past member of the Lions Club. Denny was one of the three founders of the Back Country Horsemen of America in 1973.

### **Robert G. Symes (Idaho City-50)**

Bob Symes, nicknamed “Static” on his first static line jump in McCall in 1950, was born Robert G. Symes in Oakland, California, October 31, 1930. He grew up in Orinda, California, through high school. Bob attended college at Utah State University for two years before leaving school to work in the forest. He held several positions with a sawmill and worked as a logger before applying to the smokejumpers. Bob was drafted into the Army in February 1952 and served two years in the Signal Corps working for the Northern European Command Headquarters in Frankfurt Germany.

After his tour in the Army in 1954, he completed his degree in Forest Management at the University of Montana in 1957 and worked for the state for several years before being hired by the Anaconda Forest Products company in Missoula in 1960.

Bob was married to Alverta Craft of Missoula in 1960 and they had two children, Todd, and Tanya. Bob continued as a Logging Engineer for Anaconda before it sold out to US Plywood in 1972. Bob retired in 1992 and currently lives in Milwaukie Oregon. Bob and his wife ran a public display garden near Bonner Montana for about 20 years before she passed in 2014. Since retiring he has done a lot of traveling, hiking hunting and fly-fishing streams in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Bob’s passion is fly-fishing and gardening.

Bob said his firefighting career got started at the age of 16—when many WWII veterans were getting degrees in college after the war, and they needed young men to fight fire. He worked with a fire crew for the State of California Department of Forestry near Redding, CA, in 1947, gaining the experience he would need to be hired by the smokejumpers. He worked one more year for the Forest Service before he started jump training in McCall. Bob was assigned to the Idaho City jump base in the summer of 1950. A wet winter meant there were not going to be a lot of fires further north, but it was a different story in southern Idaho where they were very busy jumping fire out of Idaho City. He jumped on six or seven fires in his one and only season with the smokejumpers before joining the Army. He picked up his nickname from a Squadleader who reminded him before he jumped on his very first parachute jump, on his very first airplane ride, that he probably ought to hook up his static line if he wanted his parachute to open! He did, and it did.

### **Lewis T. Thoman** (Missoula '50)

Lewis, also known as "Bunk," died November 7, 2009. He was from Alabama and attended Auburn University and served in the U.S. Navy. Bunk lived in Missoula for many years and considered the Northwest as his home. He jumped four seasons at Missoula.

### **William Francis "Willie" Unsoeld** (Cave Junction '50)

Willie, 52, died March 4, 1979, in an avalanche on Mt. Rainier, Oregon. He was leading a group of Evergreen State College students at the time. One of his students was also killed in the avalanche. There were 22 climbers in the group when they were hit by the avalanche at the 11,000-foot level. Willie, a philosophy, and religion professor at Evergreen, was leading the group on a week-long climb. He was born October 5, 1926, in Arcata, California and had degrees from Oberlin College, U.C. Berkeley and his Ph.D. from the University of Washington.

In 1963, Willie and his climbing partner Tom Hornbein became the first individuals to scale Mount Everest via the peak's treacherous West Ridge route. The feat has been called one of the great "firsts" of mountaineering history and is regarded by National Geographic as one of the top-five Everest climbs of all time. By 1963, routes along two of Everest's three ridges were well established. The third route, up the West Ridge, was considered too difficult, and had not been ascended.

At 6:50 a.m. on May 22, 1963, Unsoeld and Hornbein left camp to begin their summit attempt. Four hours later, they had traveled only 400 feet. With Unsoeld leading the way through fierce 60-mph winds, they encountered a 60-foot rock wall, which they scaled using two pitons. This marked the point of no return, and they pushed on. They had to make it up and over or die. They reached a point where the ridge narrowed to a steep knife-edge and then arrived at the top. They summited at 6:15 p.m., three hours past what is considered the arrival time needed to survive the climb and get off the summit. Their bivouac at 28,000 feet was (is?) the highest on record.

By all accounts from Cave Junction, Unsoeld was a nice guy. Jumpers who knew him remember a climbing enthusiast who loved travel and books, and who relished crossword puzzles. Above all, he was unflappable. As **Orv Looper** (CJ-49) put it, "Nothing ever bothered him. He was the type of recruit every squadleader dreams of. Willi was very quick to learn, and *nothing* ever bothered him. I had to take away his crossword puzzle to get him into the door on his first jump! After waving his streamer upon landing,

he took the puzzle out of his leg pocket and finished it. He was the calmest person I have ever been around; nothing bothered him.”

Willie jumped the 1950 season at Cave Junction.

### **E. Harland Upole** (Missoula '50)

Harland, 79, died Sept. 17, 2011, in Cumberland, Maryland. He served in the Army during 1952-54 following two stints with the Maryland Department of Forests and Parks, as well as jumping from Missoula in the 1950 season. Harland assisted the Air Force in recovering a B-52, along with two surviving crewmen and the bodies of three others, after the bomber crashed in Savage River State Forest in Maryland in January 1964. He received letters of commendation from Air Force Gens. Curtis Le May and Thomas Power. Upon learning of the crash, Harland immediately organized a search and rescue party, made his home available to the operation's directors, and used his superior knowledge of the area to materially contribute to the success of the operation.

Harland was promoted to regional law enforcement fire control officer in Allegany County in 1967; he retired from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in 1980, after which he operated a Christmas tree farm.

### **Robert H. “Bob” Walkup** (Missoula '50)

Bob died on September 4, 2006, following a stroke. He jumped out of Missoula from 1950 through the 1953 season. He was a student at U.C. Berkeley in 1951 when he met and married his wife, Georgia. In 1952 he transferred to the University of Montana where he finished his studies and got his forestry degree in 1954. Bob was born in Butte and always kept Montana in his heart although most of his career was spent in Oregon.

### **Donald K. Wells** (Missoula '50)

Don jumped at Missoula during the 1950-51 seasons. He is pictured in the University of Montana 1952 yearbook as a member of the Forestry Club.

### **Paul A. “Smokey” Wilson** (Missoula '50)

Paul, 90, died August 11, 2016, in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. After graduation from high school in Wallace, Idaho, he enlisted in the Navy at age 17. Paul serving 1943-47 with a Seabee company in the South Pacific.

He went to work as a miner in Kellogg until he started jumping in 1950 before being recalled into the Navy during the Korean War. In 1951 he returned to smokejumping and began a long career with the USFS. Paul



jumped at Missoula 1952-56 before retiring from the USFS in 1980 after 32 years of service.

After retirement he took part in the NSA Trails Program and took up running where he participated in many runs including several marathons. He took a tandem parachute jump on his 75th birthday and other jumps with his grandsons with his last jump at age 85.