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# Smokejumper Magazine, October 2000

National Smokejumper Association

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
OCTOBER 2000

# SMOKEJUMPER



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## Observations From the Ad Shack



By **Larry Lufkin**  
(Cave Junction '63)  
PRESIDENT

FRANCIS LUFKIN, "THE Old Man" to us kids and "Pappy" to his jumpers (although the only jumper to call him Pappy to his face was Chuck Moseley from Cave Junction), always referred to the airport office building as the "Ad Shack"; thus the name of this column. The Old Man used to sit at his desk and watch the troops through the windows of the Ad Shack. He used those observations to motivate jumpers (they all know what that meant) and to improve operations.

The Old Man told me that he always kept two thoughts in mind when running the jumper base. The first was safety. The second was how can the job be done better and more efficiently. I intend to continue this tradition in the NSA by asking the officers, board members and the

membership to suggest ways that we can do our jobs better and more efficiently, and ways the NSA can provide more and better services to its members. There are a couple of general theories of management regarding progress and change. The first is "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The second is "If you don't continually try new ideas, the world will pass you by." I subscribe to the second theory and believe the NSA should continually look for ways to improve operations and services.

We have already implemented several ideas that were promoted last year during Carl Gidlund's term as president. For example, Webmaster Dan McComb suggested that we centralize the jumper database and set up personalized e-mail accounts for members. Dan took the lead on both ideas, got help from Roger Savage and others, and accomplished both tasks.

How does this affect you, the member of the NSA? Since July 5, people who have accessed the "Jump List" on our Web site have received up-to-date information. If you are looking up an old buddy, send us an e-mail or give us a call and we'll look up their address and phone number for you. Also, since July 5, all NSA members have been able to obtain free e-mail addresses by

contacting our Web site and following Dan's directions. You, too, can have an e-mail address of **Error! Reference source not found.** that can be accessed anywhere in the world.

In case you didn't notice, Dan McComb not only made the suggestion, but he did all of the programming needed for the new systems, rounded up the troops needed to update the old database, and supervised the completion of the project. The key is that we welcome ideas from anyone, but don't expect the executive committee and board to do all of the work. We have more than enough to keep us busy, and we will expect you to coordinate the activity and supervise completion of the project.

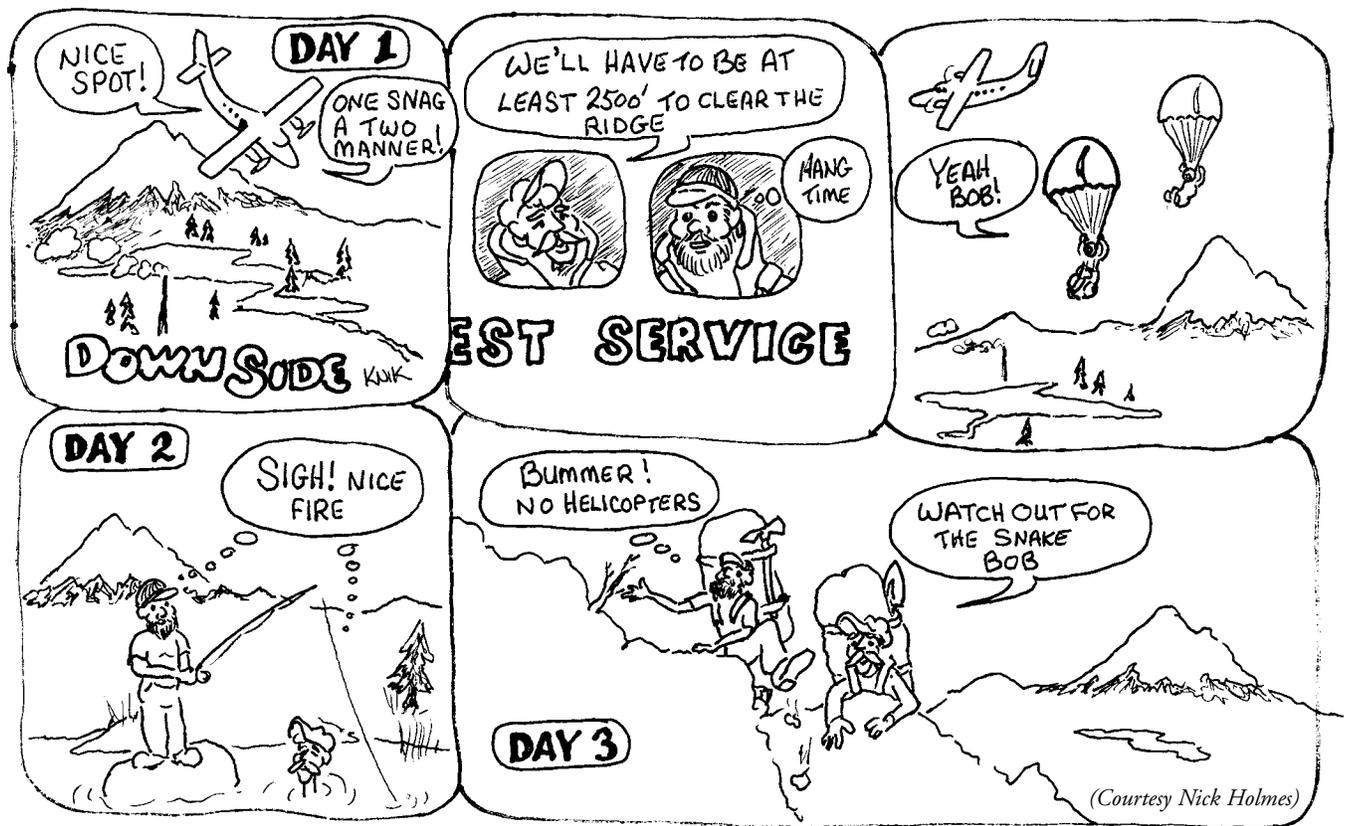
So, what is new for 2000-2001? Fred Cooper and Chuck Sheley, our membership coordinator and membership chair, decided to contract out the mailing of renewal notices rather than personally print and mail each renewal. The nearly 300 of you who received dues renewal notices last summer may have seen that the notices were not quite as personal as previous notices. However, Fred and Chuck saved the NSA money by trying a new system. It also saves Fred hours of making

copies and stuffing envelopes, leaving him time to follow-up on address changes and complete other important membership tasks.

We have also recruited several members to assist the executive committee. Bill Eastman agreed to author the "Jump List" that I previously wrote. Bill will need continued input from all jumpers so that he can let our readers know who is doing what, so be sure to complete the "bio" section on your renewal forms and send us information on other jumpers. Jim Cherry agreed to chair a committee to recruit additional life memberships. These additional funds will be put in a permanent fund, and the interest will be used to improve NSA operations and services to members. Warren Maxon is assisting us by verifying e-mail addresses. We have about 800 e-mail addresses on file and are working to get more because it costs the NSA much less to inform members of NSA activities by e-mail than by snail mail.

If you have an idea, contact me. I guarantee it will be given full consideration.

As the Old Man used to say, "Keep the sunny side up." ☺



# Robert L. Caldwell: Model, Friend, and Colleague

by Bob Evans (Idaho City '53)

**B**ob Caldwell was first to me a smokejumper and, starting 13 years later, a fellow academician and friend.

At the old loft in McCall, the angular-jawed, tall fellow stood out among the other squadleaders. In our fire-fighting classes he implied precision in an imprecise enterprise while coming across as reasoned, methodical, confident. He was stern in calisthenics. When leading exercises he modeled how it should be done, and I could not discern whether his urgings over the moans of jumpers was derision or humor. His impatience with ineptitude struck me.

After training we could request McCall or Idaho City. Foreman **Jim "Smokey" Stover** (McCall '46) was a big factor, a solid, serious professional guy, and Idaho City was to have but 15 jumpers. To me, it sounded like an odd elite, and learning that Caldwell was the Idaho City squadleader clinched my choice.

I can still visualize him outside our Idaho City bunkhouse working with a six-foot bar, two dumbbells and a couple hundred pounds of weights. He had a casual but clear routine of curls, bench presses, military presses, and clean and jerk. But it wasn't a contest; just keeping in shape. And Caldwell was in shape, solid and muscular on his six-foot-two frame; but it cost him. On a fire jump in 1954 he came in hard and bruised his heel. He limped for weeks, missing jumps, a sad way to spend time in Idaho City.

Eventually his limping was less apparent, even at the end of a workday as we ambled "downtown" to Wiegel's Bar for an Oly or Rainier. He still managed six fire jumps that season.

Bob was a quiet man so what he said carried more weight. He joked with squadleader **Clyde Hawley** (Idaho City '48) and with **Gene Lewton** (Idaho City '52), who was in graduate school and more of an intellectual, and with Smokey, with whom he had a peer relationship.

It wasn't that he was finishing a master's degree in English literature and reading himself for doctoral studies in philosophy at the University of Washington that appealed to me, but the outlook and thought processes that went with them. Further, he was marrying another bright academician that year. I believe he influenced my ultimate decision to pursue an academic career.

Memories of those days: One is of Bob rigging chutes. He made it an art. Another is jumping from the Norseman. I can see him now crouched in the open door as spotter, squinting into the slipstream. If Smokey was the spotter the guys yelled something that, in those days, was pretty crude, like "Smokey's a hard-ass!" But I can't remember anything

joking or irreverent when Bob was spotting.

As a rookie and hugely excited by smokejumping in 1953, I was not fully aware of Smokey's and Bob's worries, as foreman and squadleader, for the welfare of their "troops." One morning we headed to two fires in the Noorduyn, the first a wobbly smoke on a ridge above Arrowhead Reservoir on the Boise. That time, Smokey was jumping with Bob Gara and Caldwell was spotting.

Smokey hit the ridge, and Bob went out on the second pass. Caldwell was concerned about the wind, and he was screaming out the door as if Gara could hear him, "Cut your oscillation, cut your oscillation!" as my friend banged into the rocky slope. His streamer did not appear as the "L" to mean OK, and we circled down for a closer look. Without radio contact, we didn't know he had severely sprained his right knee.

We flew on to the second fire. Not until we returned to base several days later did I learn of Gara's bad luck. He was hospitalized in Boise, afterward went on active duty in the



Top row (L-R): Carl Roselli and Lloyd Johnson. Kneeling (L-R): Smokey Stover, Gene Ellis and Bob Caldwell. (Courtesy Bob Evans)

Air Force, and we didn't meet again until 20 years later when he was Professor Robert Gara in the College of Forest Resources at Caldwell's alma mater, the University of Washington.

On my second acquaintance with Caldwell, he was Dr. Robert Caldwell, philosophy professor at the University of Arizona. I joined the faculty as assistant professor of sociology in 1967, then learned he was just two floors below in our Liberal Arts Building. He seemed quite as serious about philosophy as he had about jumping 20-odd years before, but we didn't talk much of philosophy. Instead, we talked about jumping, and the guys and adventures.

When I'd drop by his office to invite him to coffee, he seemed troubled to be distracted from grading papers or writing. But he did come along, and then made a test of whether the coffee was hot. I could not figure how his mouth tolerated the brew that felt scalding to mine.

While I think the coffee temperature was more of an excuse not to waste time he might devote to his writing, occasionally we'd invite each other. He didn't try to educate me in philosophy (though often, more recently, I've wished he had) and we skipped my social psychology too. Despite his reputation as master teacher, I thought he disliked it. When as friend-therapist-in-training I worried about his increasing depression, he seemed displeased, rather than letting me know of his Parkinson's diagnosis. That came later. He was a private person.

On a trip he and Marguerite took to Greece he

fractured his elbow. As tour co-leader he continued without proper medical attention, and never again could quite straighten his arm. How it interfered with his weight lifting routine seemed to bother him as much as his asymmetry and he joked about both, but not about his perfectionism.

His humor was similarly even and subtle at bridge. My wife and I would rather converse than concentrate on the game, but Bob and Marguerite took the game and even the subjects of before-and-after conversation to be carefully considered. And not having children themselves, they tolerated our three little girls with good humor.

With his health interfering with his teaching and writing, Bob retired from the U of A, and he and his wife returned to the mountains they loved in Cache and Bear Lake Valleys, Utah. I urged him to attend the 1993 McCall Reunion, but he would not or could not. In her compilation of accounts of his life, Marguerite portrayed him as proud, principled, and resolute. Deprived by Parkinson's of his precious ability to communicate, he gambled on an experimental medical procedure that failed.

Like everyone else who knew this marvelously intelligent, wry, strong, and gentle man, I miss him. ☹

*Dr. Robert Evans took his bachelor's and master's degrees from Utah State, worked for the Salt Lake Tribune, and earned his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin. After teaching at the University of Arizona for 22 years, he began a private practice in marriage and counseling in 1989 which he continues today.*

## SMOKEJUMPERS IN THE SKY

(To the tune of "Ghost Riders in the Sky")

C.W.\* went walking down the airstrip one day,  
Upon a rock he rested as he went along his way,  
When all at once the mighty roar of an old Nordine he heard,  
He bowed his head in reverence when he heard that silvery bird ...

Yippee-iy-ayyy  
Yippee-iy-ohhhh  
Nordines in the sky ...

Her wings were warped and rusty, not on an even keel,  
Her exhaust stacks spitting fire, their hot breath he could feel,  
A bolt of fear went through him as she wobbled through the sky,  
For he saw the jumpers hooking up, and he heard their mournful cry ...

Yippee-iy-ayyy  
Yippee-iy-ohhhh  
Smokejumpers in the sky ...

Their chutes were ripped, their harness torn, their faces wet with sweat,  
They're trying hard to find that fire, but they ain't found it yet,  
For they've got to spend forever in that Nordine there on high,  
Just trying to make that one last jump, as they fly on hear them cry ...

Yippee-iy-ayyy  
Yippee-iy-ohhhh  
Smokejumpers in the sky ...

As the jumpers all flew by him, he heard one call his name,  
"If you want to save your soul from hell, a-riding in this plane,  
Then C.W. change your ways today, or with us you will ride,  
Trying to find that Devil, smoke, across these endless skies ..."

Yippee-iy-ayyy  
Yippee-iy-ohhhh  
Smokejumpers in the sky ...

Yippee-iy-ayyy  
Yippee-iy-ohhhh  
Smokejumpers never die ...

—Bob "Rigger" Snyder (Cave Junction '48)

\*C.W. is foreman Cliff Marshall

# The Jump at Red Dawn

by Leo Cromwell (Idaho City '66) as told to Jason Greenlee (Redding '99)

## Part 1

It was 1988, urban smokejumping was in its infancy, and the McCall jumpers were about to receive valuable lessons in that useful art.

**Bob Shoemaker** (McCall '76) thought it would be a great idea to do an exhibition jump at the New Meadows, Idaho elementary school's career day. As if you'd want to encourage impressionable children to become permanent juveniles!

We were jump partners on that fateful morning, **Jim Duzak** and **Scott Anderson**, (both McCall '84) and I. The jump spot was at the school football field just on the edge of town. The sky was overcast and it was windy. We knew we had a small problem when "Shoe" let the streamers fly. They showed at least 400 to 500 yards of drift, and the winds were squirrely. As we approached the field, we noticed a thunderstorm closing in. But Shoe was not going to disappoint the kids. We could see a lot of people in the bleachers, and we wanted to put on a good show. We decided to climb another 1,000 feet, then exit over Highway 95.

"Hump" (**John Humphries**, McCall '79) was first in the door. A little voice told him things were not right when the spotter said, "Oh, just spot yourself." Maybe we weren't supposed to hear that but we did, and it definitely gave us all pause to think. Why was the spotter telling Hump to spot himself? Our worst fears were confirmed when we could see that Hump was having trouble making the edge of the football field. When he landed, he was dragged across it and into a hogwire fence. The kids loved it: "Is that how they do it? Wow!" "Why do they slide along the ground like that?" "Are you supposed to yell those bad words when you land?"

History doesn't record whether Hump tried to call the plane to cancel the jump. If he did, it didn't make much difference because we were already in the door on final. We weren't happy puppies at that stage, and a call from Hump might have been just the excuse we needed to abort. Nevertheless, we were sucked into the historic events that followed like lemmings pulled inexorably toward the sea. No force or logic could have averted the mounting aerial invasion of the sleepy town. And there was no training that could prepare the poor smokejumpers of McCall for what they were about to encounter.

## Part 2

Jim exited the plane next. He had a good opening and got nicely oriented into the wind, but then realized he was a dead man. Even with the toggles up, he could see he was going to get blown backwards way past the field and into the town itself. Planing wasn't going to help. What difference would that make when he was already drifting over houses? He had no idea where his jump partner was, but he was certain that Scott was

involved in the same bad deal as himself.

Jim remembers turning to quarter downwind at some point. It was just too uncomfortable coming in backwards into an urban landing zone. You have to remember that, in 1988, procedures for urban invasion by smokejumpers were only just being worked out. You weren't dealing with snags and boulders and all the sissy stuff mentioned in the manual; you were dealing with power lines, TV antennas, clotheslines and housewives.

With full brakes on, it looked like Jim was going to land atop a pitched roof. Such a landing has been shown to be hazardous, often resulting in jumper and parachute ending up in a ball 'midst rose bushes. Again, the manual says little about how to handle this situation. Improvising, Jim let off the brakes, surged ahead, lifted his legs and barely clipped the roof. He slammed hard into a small vegetable garden in a fenced backyard among a bunch of toys. His chute settled lightly over power lines. And, to add insult to injury, he executed a bad roll. For a moment there was dead silence. He could hear the vegetables growing and his blood pounding.

What happened next is enough to shrink to the size of raisins the gonads of even the most valiant smokejumper. Jim looked into the kitchen window only inches from his facemask. He'll never forget the expression on the housewife's face as she sleepily turned to see what the fuss was outside her window. She was in her curlers and robe, pouring coffee. Time stood still as they gazed at each other. It occurred to Jim as he looked deeply into the lady's widening irises that she was about to let out a scream. He decided that the best thing to do was offer some sort of salutation. Still helmeted, he popped his Capewells, stood, gave a friendly, if somewhat alien-looking wave, and began to get out of his suit. In a flash, "curlers" was gone, presumably to call the cops or get a gun.

## Part 3

Jim decided the best part of valor was a quick exit, so he jumped the fence and ran to the front yard and onto the street. Later he would claim he was not actually fleeing, but was really just looking for his jump partner. It's not clear from the record whether he was looking to help his JP, or if he was looking for help.

Meanwhile, Scotty was doing no better. He remembers holding as soon as he got under his canopy, then for the entire jump. Over the football field at about 500 feet and sailing over the spot backwards, he heard kids shrieking. Whether this was childish delight or horror, he couldn't tell from his height. The next thing he saw was power lines, buildings, streets and a lot of other scary looking stuff passing beneath his feet. He wistfully wished that he were with the screaming kids instead of 500 feet above them. He looked over at Duzak, who was pretty



(Courtesy Bob Wilson)

much even with him. The man had terror in his eyes and his life was obviously flashing before him as he and his chute moved inexorably toward New Meadows. Then he sunk slowly and sadly from sight among the houses and powerlines.

From about 200 feet, Scotty was looking pretty hard for a place, any place, to land. The best option looked like a tiny lawn, and options were disappearing fast. Upwind of his small green landing zone was a garage; downwind was a beautifully sculpted but monstrous cottonwood tree. On either side were a house and the street with power lines. In the middle was a walking sprinkler. To his disbelief, he actually managed to land in the small piece of lawn and miss the sprinkler. He landed backwards, however, and his canopy settled slowly into the cottonwood.

Scotty spotted another jumper come down in a yard downwind. There may have been screaming involved; he's not sure. His sympathy was short-lived, as he had his own problems to deal with. As he got to his feet he saw an elderly woman in a bath towel and curlers emerging rapidly from her house. Not a pretty sight for even the most seasoned smokejumper. The woman appeared to be upset about the parachute in her tree and the lines tangled in her sprinkler, which was now gurgling and making unnaturally small circles on the lawn.

#### Part 4

At about the same time the elderly lady descended on Scotty, an older gentleman pulled up in an old Impala. He wanted to tell Scotty how he'd broken his leg as a parachute jumper on D-Day. Both people were very agitated, talking loudly and gesturing wildly. The woman was telling the gentleman in the Impala that she didn't really care to hear about D-Day just at that moment, thank you.

Just then, Len McNabb (McCall '87) and Mike Tyrrell (McCall '86) pulled up in a Forest Service "six-pack" in which

they'd been patrolling the streets looking for jumpers. They'd found Duzak as he exited the screamer's back yard. Now they were confronted with World War II about to be reenacted. It was not going to be pretty.

Pandemonium was breaking out in all quarters of the town. Never had the inhabitants of New Meadows been subjected to an aerial invasion, and they were not happy. Most had never seen a smokejumper, and many were not interested in having them drop into their gardens. **John Carothers** (McCall '88) had landed in a yard with a dog that was considerably upset by this unwelcome visitor. **Mike Dark** (McCall '87) had collided with some monkey bars in the school playground. **Harold Dramstead** (McCall '87) had landed at the New Meadows airstrip. **John Humphries** (McCall '79), **Ted Spencer** (McCall '88), and **Jack Seagraves** (McCall '63) had miraculously hit the field. Well, to tell the truth, Seagraves more or less crashed after skipping across some unoccupied bleachers.

At this point, the kids across the field were going absolutely berserk. Girls were fainting in pure pleasure; boys were clapping and chanting "huh, huh!" "Big Ernie," awakened by the clamor, blearily gazed upon the scene and smiled.

Meanwhile, Scotty, following SOP, pulled out his Fanno saw and was preparing to saw the cottonwood tree's carefully tended limbs to extricate his chute. The elderly woman with the bath towel, now armed with a broomstick, halted this activity. Good sense dictated a hasty retreat, which Scotty performed in the best smokejumper tradition, reminding onlookers (and by now there were many) of a cowboy being chased from a pen by a bull.

Later that morning, the abashed load of smokejumpers presented themselves to the gleeful mob of kids at New Meadows. To this day, the jumpers are still debating whether the kids were cheering them or laughing. One thing is agreed: it's unlikely that any kid past the third grade on that particular career day was persuaded to become a smokejumper.

The kids did ask some good questions. Every one of them was much more interested in hearing about the jumpers who landed in their town amongst the clotheslines and vegetables than in the jumpers who made it to the field.

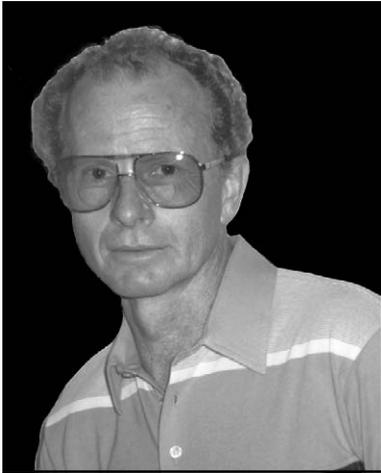
As the kids were interviewing the jumpers, the jump plane was landing in McCall. The spotter leaped from the aircraft, sprinted to the operations desk and filled out a leave form, effective immediately. Better to be some place far away when the jumpers returned. 🌲

*Since that fateful day in 1988, jumpers who witnessed it that early morning in September have told the "Jump at Red Dawn" around campfires and barrooms. The enormous challenge of separating fact from fiction was left to an unbiased author, Jason Greenlee, who went through written accounts and spotting reports, then interviewed participants.*

*Jason Greenlee is a Missoula smokejumper (Redding '99) who started his fire career in 1973. He has a Ph.D. in fire ecology, and is Director of the Fire Research Institute, an international fire library. He can be reached at [fire\\_research\\_institute@hotmail.com](mailto:fire_research_institute@hotmail.com)*

*Leo Cromwell (Idaho City '66) will be jumping at McCall for his 21st season. He will retire from 33 years of teaching this spring and put in his 30th season as a jumper.*

# Sounding Off From the Editor



By **Chuck Sheley**  
(Cave Junction '59)  
MANAGING EDITOR

REUNION 2000 IS now a successful part of smokejumper history. After the registration deadline of May 15th passed with a little over 400 registrants, the Reunion Committee was beginning to have concerns. I felt that we would have the biggest gathering ever, judging on the feel that one gets being in daily contact with so many members. The registration numbers certainly didn't back up that feeling. But procrastination is alive and well in the smokejumper community. The mailbox kept filling and people kept coming with arrivals checking in on Saturday to catch the remaining part of the event.

**Scott Warner** (meals) and **Larry Boggs** (registration) took the brunt of the late arrivals. Adding numbers to the Friday night BBQ is somewhat easy but the meal count for the Saturday night dinner and program is critical due to the expense of the meals. The Committee cut a fine line on expenses in order to keep

costs down. Preparing extra prime rib dinners can quickly cut into the tight budget. We had 860 at the Friday BBQ, a record 873 for the Saturday night program and 575 for the Sunday Memorial Service! Each time I ran into Scott during the hectic weekend, he was smiling—an indication that things were under control in his estimation.

Having spent my jumper career in R-6 and Alaska, I did not know the majority of the Reunion Committee 18 months ago. I knew of **Dave Nelson** through his reputation as one of the top fire management persons in R-5 but had not worked with him during my time as a crew coordinator in R-5. Dave would have been the Incident Commander and I was usually on the end of a Pulaski.

Dave put together a team that did the job. **Larry Boggs** (plans), **Scott Warner & Chuck Sheley** (logistics), **Arlen Cravens** (operations), **Sherry Raley** (finance), **Jim Klump & Jerry Vice** (vendors), **Murry Taylor & Chuck Greer** (information), **Bob Bente** (golf), **Tim Quigley** (run/walk), **Bill Frost** (air operations), **Annette Moore** (registration Forms), **Derrek Hartman** (banquet video), **Josh Mathiesen** (displays), **Monroe "Spud" DeJarnette** (mailing & music), **Redding smokejumpers** (muscle & legwork), **Tim Huntington & Russ Miller** (transportation & communications), **Jerry Reid** (initial brochure), **Doug & Shelli Beck** (group pictures) and **Bob Webber** (video & picture cover-

age). To those I missed, I apologize.

The Hartman video Saturday night that ended the program left the attendees "sky high." The comments from the floor by the jumpers from the varied generations was great. I was impressed with the speed and ability to change directions exhibited by **Jerry Spence** as he moved the floor mike around the Convention Center. **Murry Taylor** was touching in his talks Saturday night and at the Memorial Service. In addition to him being a very successful author (*Jumping Fire*), he is a fine speaker. Having been chained to the merchandise table, I missed the golf, run, base tours, aircraft display and the Sunday practice jumps. Heard all were well received. The display of smokejumper equipment and the accompanying video put together by **Josh Mathiesen** and **Steve Murphy** might have been the best ever assembled.

A special thanks to **Arlen Cravens** (Redding Base manager). With the reluctance of government organizations to become involved with private organizations like the NSA, this reunion would have had been a lesser event without Arlen and the **Redding smokejumpers'** contributions done on their own time.

The Reunion Committee has taken a well-earned rest before doing the wrap-up report. I'm guessing that **Sherry Raley** will still be doing financial reports for a month and I'll still

be mailing out tee-shirts until December. Many asked if we could have reunions more often than every five years? I definitely know that with the wear and tear on the Reunion Committee, the answer would be no. However, it would be great if we did plan something at a halfway point between the National Reunions as a get together for the organization. Something a little more informal with less planning and program where folks could gather to talk and reminisce. That was the bottom line for most of the people in Redding June 2000.

I'm off to the Civilian Public Service (Conscientious Objectors) Smokejumper Reunion in Oskaloosa, Iowa. This group of gentlemen and their families will be meeting for a four-day event at William Penn College. Their invaluable contribution to the smokejumper program during WWII is little known. I hope to record more smokejumper history from this quickly dwindling group. Also hope that the highway patrols in Interstate 80 understand that time is valuable!

#### Postscript on CPS 103 Reunion

Since I have a bit more time before my deadline for this issue, I want to say a bit about the CPS 103 Reunion in Oskaloosa, Iowa. It was 1861 miles from

Chico to Oskaloosa but the people we (my wife and I) met made every mile worth it.

This was the 12th reunion for the CPS 103 group since they handled the smokejumper program during the war years of 1943 to 1945. They are a very close-knit group of some of the greatest people that I have ever met. **Tedford** (Missoula '43) and **Margie Lewis** handled the registration and **Lee** (Missoula '44) and **Edy Hebel** were in charge of programming. **Dick** (Missoula '44) and **Betty Flaharty** were responsible for the address and provided some invaluable information to update NSA records. **Earl Schmidt** (Missoula '43), who jumped all three years, provided some good insight about those years. I had the pleasure to meet **Gregg Phifer** (Missoula '44) who has been my source of CPS articles for the magazine.

Having worked most of the Redding Reunion, it was a pleasure to sit back and enjoy the fellowship of the CPS 103 group. They are talking about holding the next one in two years. Even though I wasn't in the same smokejumper generation as these folks, I'm excited and looking forward to another gathering of this group. It is easy to know that any one of us would have been privileged to build fireline along side these gentlemen! 🍷

### *Volunteer Wanted: Web site Content Manager*

## The National Smokejumper Association Needs Help!!

Want to help the National Smokejumper Association improve its Web site? The NSA needs you!

Our site is growing and currently receives an average of 700 site visitors per day. We're looking for someone with basic Web site maintenance skills to volunteer to help maintain our Web site [www.smokejumpers.com](http://www.smokejumpers.com).

As content manager, you will be working via e-mail and FTP with the NSA webmaster to keep content current on the pages of our site. Among the things you'll be responsible for are:

- a) posting articles from *Smokejumper* magazine to the site.
- b) reviewing photos via e-mail from members and converting them into the appropriate sizes and resolutions for online display and uploading them to the site.

This is a good opportunity for someone who knows a little bit about running a site, but would like to learn more. If you already have a lot of

experience, that's even better.

This volunteer position will require an average of an hour of work per day (some days more, some days less—you can fit it into your schedule). The work can be done from your home regardless of where you live, but you must have a reliable Internet connection, preferably a DSL or cable modem connection because you'll be uploading and downloading image files. It will be helpful to be able to talk on the phone while reviewing pages with the webmaster. If you have a 56K modem connection, that's OK (especially if you have a second phone line).

If you are interested in the position or have any questions, please drop an e-mail to NSA Webmaster Dan McComb ([dan@smokejumpers.com](mailto:dan@smokejumpers.com)).

**Associate Members—feel free to step forward and help. We have associates on the magazine staff as illustrators and they are a valuable asset. This is a great opportunity to work on one of the top Web sites in the market!**



*Chris and Gloria Rodriguez.*  
(Courtesy Ben Musquez)

## Life Member and Associates Provide for Special Reunion Issue

Life member No. 28, **Ben Musquez** (Missoula '56), and associate member **Chris Rodriguez** have provided donations to the NSA to be used for quarterly magazine costs and improvements. The increased number of pages for this special reunion issue is a direct result of their efforts. *Smokejumper* magazine wishes to thank the following sponsors for their financial support:

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**Bob Nolan** (Cave Junction '47)  
Nolan Logging Co.  
Cave Junction OR 97523

## LETTERS

### **A Higher Jump Spot**

Editor:

On page 20 of the July 2000 issue of *Smokejumper*, Karl Brauneis raises a question regarding high elevation fire jumps.

During the summer of 1965, I was on the West Yellowstone crew. This was the summer that a Missoula crew took over for the Park Service. There was no base. We stayed at the Hebgen ranger station in a couple old trailers and used a spot in the new airport next to the Western Airlines ticket counter for our headquarters. It was a very rainy summer, which was great for honing our softball skills. We had only one fire for the whole summer. Our one fire was east of the park in the Absorkis Mountains on the Wapiti district. My memory tells me that we hit the ground at about 10,700 feet. Cliff Dalzell spotted four of us in two trips with the twin beech piloted by George Weatheral. I don't remember the four jumpers. For sure it was Tony Peifer and myself. I think Vern Bush and Jerry Lebsack or Gary Romness were the other two. I remember people saying that at the time it was a record elevation for a fire jump.

—**Jim Thompson** (Missoula '63)

Editor:

I enjoyed the article by Neil Shier. Good article Neil, nice to hear from you. It was a good summer in Cave Junction in '46.

Merle Lundrigan assigned me to pack all the parachutes for the 1946 season as I had rigger training in jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia.

I jumped two fires that year. One with Andy Henry and one with Bob Gerling. Both were lightning fires and the fun part was the packout. I have good memories of Merle, the pilots and all the guys.

I retired from the Colorado State Treasury as chief accountant in 1982 and have been in the income tax preparation business since.

—**John Thach** (Cave Junction '46)

### **READERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO GET INVOLVED**

Send your letter to the editor:

U.S. Mail: Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln. Chico, CA  
95926

E-Mail: [cnkgshley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkgshley@earthlink.net)  
send as e-mail, not an attached document

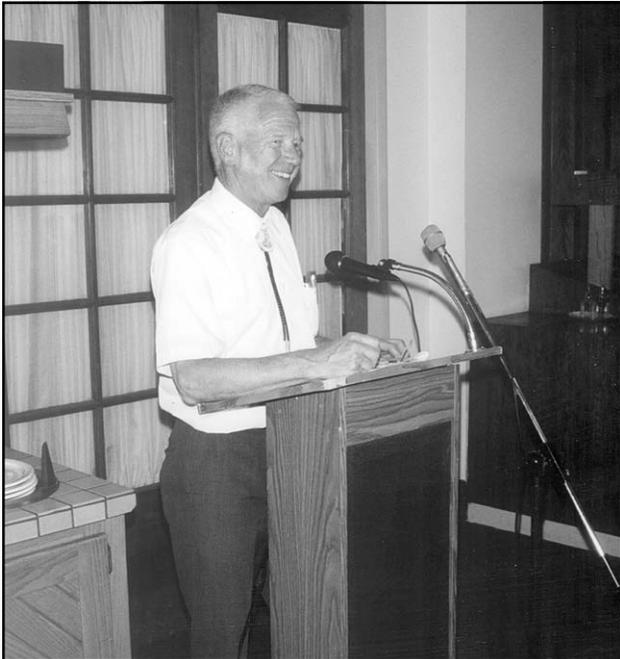
**Deadline for the January issue is November 1st**

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*Thoughts on the Los Alamos Fires*

# Failure of Controlled Burning as the Sole Forest-Fire Management Tool in the Cerro Grande Fire

by Charles R. Mansfield (Cave Junction '59)



*Chuck Mansfield.* (Courtesy Chuck Mansfield)

**T**he wildfire that devastated nearly 50,000 acres of the Jemez Mountains near Los Alamos, N.M., in May 2000 is a major demonstration of the fallacy of using prescribed burns as the sole forest-fire management tool. The policy of relying on prescribed burns is part of a larger policy in the management of government-controlled land.

The emphasis has shifted from a multiple-use concept to one of conservation and preservation. Under the multiple-use concept, the U.S. Forest Service-controlled lands were managed in a way to attempt to bring a balance between recreation, timber, resources, watershed and range. The balance, in a given area, between these factors was dependent on the forest and land.

The argument that the Cerro Grande fire is the result of overzealous fire suppression is vacuous. In the past 100 years there have been relatively few fires to suppress in the Los Alamos area other than major fires. Except for a brief, high fire-danger season in May and early June, it is difficult to get material to burn in the Jemez Mountains. In my years of hunting and hiking in the Jemez Mountains, I have only found the remains of two small fires that had fire lines. I have seen occasional small smoke plumes after thunderstorms, but it appeared that these fires have gone out without human intervention.

There were charred stumps which indicated that there have been fires in the past; however, I know of no studies

that indicate the time and scale of those fires. There have been a number of wild fires on the Pajarito plateau, such as the recent one in Guaje Canyon. With the exception of the canyon bottoms, the vegetation on the Pajarito plateau is sparse, and the potential for spread of fires is small under normal conditions.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, there was extensive logging of the ponderosa pine forests of the Pajarito plateau. The logging technology of that period did not allow logging in the steep canyons of the Pajarito plateau and in the mountains of the Jemez caldera. In the 1970s, there was extensive logging in parts of the Baca Land and Cattle Company holdings. This logging took place because the Baca Company did not hold the rights to the timber on their land, and a lumber company was able to obtain those rights.

The lumber company heavily logged the north rim of the caldera and Redondo Peak. The forests on the eastern boundary of the Baca Company were not logged due to the limited access by road and by the steep terrain. In particular, the forests on Cerro Grande Peak, within the Baca holdings, were not logged during that period. It is doubtful if these lands have ever been logged except for small areas near State Road 502.

In the 1980s, the Baca Company made overtures to transfer the Baca holdings to the federal government. These overtures were first led by Mr. Dunnigan and later by his heirs. The land on the south slope of Cerro Grande (Rio Frijoles watershed) was transferred to the National Park Service (NPS).

The argument that these lands should be controlled by the NPS had some validity as this land was the source of the Rio Frijoles, the centerpiece of the Bandelier National Monument. After nearly 20 years of discussions, it appears that the remainder of the Baca holdings will be transferred to the USFS soon.

There have been two recent, major fires in the Los Alamos area that burned parts of the Bandelier National Monument, Santa Fe National Forest and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The La Mesa fire in 1977 burned onto LANL property and caused much concern about fireproofing the western boundary of LANL and the Los Alamos townsite. An improved road was built past Armstead Spring to the plateau on the north side of Water Canyon. A second road was improved in Valle Canyon onto the plateau on the north side of Valle Canyon.

A series of small logging operations along these roads, as well as cutting operations on the lower reaches of Pajarito Mountain, significantly thinned some of the forest. Thinning operations were also conducted along State Road 502

between the Lab and the forest and along the western boundary of the townsite. A small, selective cut logging operation on USFS land, next to the NPS boundary on the lower end of the ridge leading to the south from Cerro Grande, created a series of meadows on the part of the ridge under USFS control.

Extensive thinning of trees along SR 502 was also conducted on LANL lands. The felled trees were made available to the public for firewood. A Caterpillar tractor fire line between the north end of the Cerro Grande ridge logging operation and the Armstead Springs road figured in the early stages of the Cerro Grande fire.

The thinning operations along SR 502 stopped at the bottom of Water Canyon. The few acres of unthinned forest on the south side of Water Canyon may also have contributed to the spread of the Cerro Grande fire onto LANL property.

The Dome fire in 1996 was farther to the south and burned mainly in the Santa Fe NF and Bandelier NM. This fire should have rekindled interest in forest-thinning operations. However, pressure from environmental groups, as well as conservation policies set in Washington, D.C., had essentially stopped any attempts at thinning the forests by means other than controlled burns.

In 1998, a man-caused fire burned several hundred acres on the north side of the ridge north of Santa Clara Canyon. This fire should have caused more concern to the Los Alamos citizens and government agencies, but it was too far away to create much public interest. A man-caused forest fire occurred in the area between Water Canyon and Pajarito Canyon in the late 1950s or early 1960s. It burned about 500 acres on the mesas west of LANL between Water Canyon and Pajarito Canyon. This fire resulted in a fire break that provided some control over the Cerro Grande fire.

Another factor that had some effect on the spread of the Cerro Grande fire was the Pajarito Mountain ski area.

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## Had the fire advanced into these canyons, the entire Los Alamos townsite would probably have been lost.

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Strong efforts were made to protect the ski area during the fire. The combination of the fire control efforts and the fire breaks formed by the ski runs seem to have been effective in controlling the fire in the ski area and the area around Camp May.

By the spring of 2000, the forests of the Jemez Mountains were not in a healthy state. In the upper reaches of many of the canyons, thickets of fir reproduction had developed, were killed by insects, and then new reproduction had grown in the insect-killed areas. In places, the

thickets were nearly impossible to penetrate off the game trails. The "old growth" timber was far past maturity and beginning to die. Most of the areas that had been thinned after the Dome fire were beginning to regrow in brush and conifer reproduction.

The Cerro Grande fire had a complex pattern of spread over the two-week period of its growth. This fire was driven by two main factors. The predominant factor was the wind; the second was the pattern of thick forest and previous fire barriers. The fire was started May 5 by the NPS against the advice of the USFS, Los Alamos Laboratories and the Weather Service. The objective was to clear the thick forestation on the south slope of Cerro Grande Peak.

The fire burned downhill and upwind until early in the morning of May 8. The wind increased that day and the fire began a run through thick timber toward the NPS-USFS boundary. The fire jumped over a ridge into the thickets at the head of Water Canyon and made a run directly toward the Los Alamos townsite. The fire was temporarily contained on the southeast side by the roads and previous thinning operations near Armstead Spring and on the mesa north of Water Canyon. The previous thinning operations along SR 502 and the LANL boundary held the fire, while burnout operations could have improved that area of the fireline.

The winds abated May 9 and the burnout operations along SR 502 continued. An attempt was made to improve the thinning and clearing along the western boundary of the townsite. There are reports that these efforts were resisted by some citizens who wanted to preserve the green boundary of the community. The fire burned slowly through the thinned area on the mesa north of Water Canyon and moved toward the top of Pajarito Mountain. Had the weather been favorable, the fire would probably have been contained at this point.

The winds increased May 10. At this time the fire was held along SR 502 and the Camp May road. The wind speed was more than 50 mph May 10 and 11, with gusts to 75 mph recorded at the Los Alamos airport. Three elements must be present for a fire to burn: fuel, oxygen and heat. A fire spreads by three main means: conduction, radiation, and convection.

In a no-wind situation, convection carries heat upward and creates winds into a fire area. If the rate of burning is not too high, due to fuel concentration, then the effect of radiation will be to dry the surrounding fire area. Conduction in forest floor fuels will be the prime means of fire spread, however. A strong wind changes the balance of fire behavior. The convection column is brought nearer the unburned fuels and increases the chance of fire spread.

The combination of steep terrain and strong wind eliminates the chance of fire control. The flow of oxygen is increased and at sufficiently high wind speeds there is little that can be done to check fire spread. In the extreme conditions that developed in the Cerro Grande fire, burning branches were torn from trees and cast at least a mile ahead of the fire. The energy release may have been in the multi-megaton-per-hour range.

Practically all that can be done in these conditions is to

attempt to control the direction of fire spread. Even this attempt at fire control is extremely hazardous. In the unstable spread conditions, fire fighters can become trapped in a few seconds, and their chance of survival would be very small. Only heroic action on the part of both structure and wildland fire fighters kept the fire from spreading down Los Alamos Canyon and the deepest reaches of Pueblo Canyon.

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## The fire-control planning in Los Alamos County was essentially good, but in some respects, it did not go far enough.

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Had the fire advanced into these canyons, the entire Los Alamos townsite would probably have been lost.

On May 25, I flew a member of the Ski Club over the Pajarito ski area to photograph the ski area for insurance purposes. My comments on the first stages of the Cerro Grande fire are, in part, based on my observations from the air. The forest canopy in the mesa area above SR 502 is still green and the trees may survive the fire. In the fir forest above the mesas, the devastation is nearly complete.

“Controlled burning” is a viable tool among several other tools that can be used to control wildfires in forests and communities. Most of my firefighting experience is in the forests of western Oregon. In those forests, the time of greatest fire danger generally includes the months of June, July and August. Controlled burning would not even be considered in those forests during the summer months except in rare summers with low fire conditions.

The time of greatest fire danger in New Mexico and Arizona is during the months of May and June. For many years the smokejumper base at Silver City, N.M., is activated in April, and its operations nearly cease in July with the arrival of the monsoon season.

Other tools that can and should be employed in a balanced manner include logging, thinning by various means including firewood gathering by the public, road and trail construction, brush removal and grazing by livestock. Aggressive fire suppression must be employed during the times of greatest fire danger whether the land is maintained by the NPS or USFS.

The charters of the NPS and USFS differ greatly. The NPS mission is to preserve a few areas of especially scenic and/or cultural value. This mission for the NPS should be maintained as such, and not used as a means of conserving land that would be better-managed by the Forest Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture) or Bureau of Land Management (U.S. Department of the Interior).

The USFS should be allowed to carry out its traditional mission of managing the USFS lands under a multiple-use

plan that makes the resource of wild lands available to all citizens. Reasonable people may disagree on the balance of usage of USFS lands, but the needs for timber, grazing, watershed, minerals and recreation have been a part of the American culture in the past, and will be felt in the future.

The USFS has set some of its lands aside for many years as “wild” or “wilderness” areas to be used primarily for recreation. There are other areas, although they have some scenic value, that are primarily suitable for timber and watershed management.

The fire-control planning in Los Alamos County was essentially good, but in some respects, it did not go far enough. Given the weather preceding and during the Cerro Grande fire, it might have been difficult to contain the fire even if stronger measures in fireproofing the forests of the Jemez Mountains had taken place. From one’s armchair, it is easy to point out that there were weak spots in the defense, such as the thickets on the south side of Water Canyon and near “Never Shine Corner” on the Camp May road.

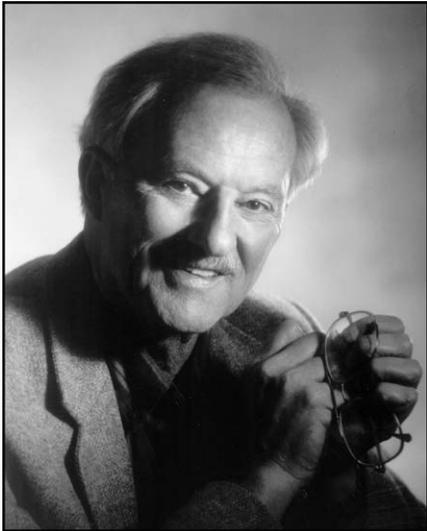
The thinning of the ponderosa forests west of the LANL property appears to have done some good in delaying the fire, but thinning in the sub-alpine fir forests was not done for a multitude of reasons. A considerable source of danger to the community remains. The vegetation in Los Alamos Canyon, Pueblo Canyon and the side drainages such as Deer Canyon is far too dense.

A prime example is the pine reproduction near the airport fire station. While a green area on the approach to the community is attractive, the loss of this fire station during a major fire would be catastrophic. As the forests of the Jemez Mountains regrow, management of those forests from the standpoint of fire control must be a major consideration. A balance must be struck between the desire of having a beautiful wilderness setting for the community and having a community.

The national decisions that have lead away from a balanced multiple-use policy in forest management to a policy of preservation must also be examined. The cornerstone of the preservation movement has been the use of “controlled burns” to remove excess materials from the forest. As we have seen in the case of the Cerro Grande fire as well as the cases of the fires near the Grand Canyon and near Redding, Calif., and even the Yellowstone NP fire, these fires can rapidly become uncontrolled. An uncontrolled fire can do far more ecological damage than the use of other forest management tools. 🌲

*Chuck Mansfield began his fire fighting career early when his father, a district ranger on the Malheur N.F., took him on a small fire at age seven. He was a rookie at Cave Junction in 1959 and jumped until 1969 while going to college. Chuck received a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Idaho in 1970. His career included a postdoctoral at the Manned Spacecraft Center and 17 years as a senior scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. He retired in 1993 and now operates Coyote Aviation, Coyote Publishing and Coyote Aerospace. He may be contacted at <http://www.CoyoteAAerospace.com>.*

# Checking The Canopy



By Rev. Stan Tate  
(McCall '53)

## A Prayer for the Mann Gulch Smokejumpers

WE GIVE YOU THANKS, most blessed God, for creating a bios cathedral, or living cathedral, throughout the Montana forests; for majestic mountain peaks and living rivers; for the green hillside where our brothers made their supreme sacrifice upon thirteen forested altars: and for bright eternal stars that enlighten their young lives in our grateful hearts.

Today we ask your blessing upon this bronze monument honoring these thirteen heroic men who glorified Mann Gulch by offering themselves upon the highest natural altar in a cathedral not made with human hands.

We dedicate this bronze with the cherished memory of our fallen brothers, who died fifty years ago to this day, in the sure and certain hope they will never be forgotten. We feel their presence today as they continue to touch the imagination of us who seek spiritual solitude in the Ameri-

can wilderness.

Their love and devotion for nature transcends the years and shall forever exemplify national devotion to our living forests.

That hillside—Mann Gulch by a river—has grown skyward into a magnificent mountain towering over the Northwest as a sentinel of forested fortitude. Their courageous spirits have ascended beyond this and all mountain peaks to a special garden in heaven reserved for those who honor and protect God's creation.

Their valiant souls surround us this Montana day, inspiring us to give you thanks for everlasting hills to climb; for pristine rivers to cross; for wildlife to encounter; and for all things which brighten our earthly pilgrimage.

We thank you, Gracious God, for the splendor and beauty of this world.

We offer special thanks for the splendor and beauty of these brave persons and those from Storm King Mountain and for wildland fire

fighters everywhere. Make them aware that your Co-creator, Jesus, loved mountains, wildernesses, rivers, lakes and lilies on hillsides.

O Blessed Creator, these Montana smokejumpers have blessed our lives and nation. Now grant that each of us may honor their costly sacrifices by doing our part to uphold the wonder and mystery of your sacred wilderness.

And now, "Support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen and evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest, and peace at last." Amen ☪

*The preceding prayer was given by Rev. Stan Tate August 5, 1999, in Helena, Montana, at the 50 Year Commemoration Ceremony remembering the Mann Gulch tragedy.*



(Illustration courtesy Ken Morris)

# A Visit with Bob Nolan

by Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48)

**O**n a recent trip through Cave Junction, Ore., site of the R-6 Oregon smokejumper base from 1946 through 1981, I called Bob Nolan and we had a good visit. He regaled me with a dozen fascinating smokejumper tales in a couple of hours.

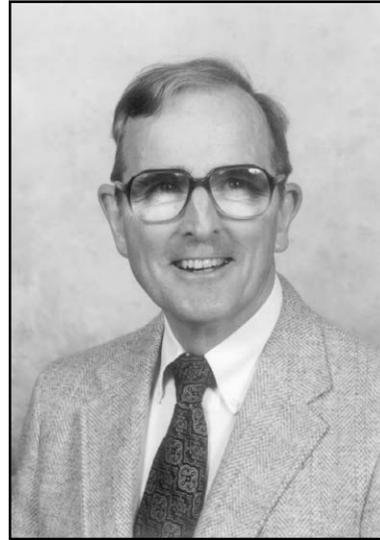
I jumped out of Cave Junction in 1948 when Bob was already a very able squad leader in foreman Cliff Marshall's 30-man organization. Bob mentioned right away that Cliff, our former boss, had died from a heart condition some time ago.

[I found out the first half of this story from my brother Hugh, not from Bob.] Bob Nolan, as a free-fall parachute artist before skydiving was invented, had in 1951 won the national accuracy-in-landing championship in Detroit, which rewarded him with \$2,000. George Harpole of Missoula finished fourth. Since that was the biggest national honor ever won by anyone from Cave Junction, Bob was assigned P.O. Box 1 from the postmaster upon returning home—which is the address he still holds. And, since Bob lived out on the edge of town on a little dirt lane with no other houses and no name (and wanted it to stay that way), the city decided it ought to be called “Nolan Lane.”

Bob also prevented a Mann Gulch-type disaster on one fire. He and his men, about eight jumpers, were busily building a line along the fire's edge when he looked up and noticed some fresh spot fires that had started behind them. He shouted to the men, “Hey, guys! Stop! This fire is going to blow up on us. Drop tools and run!” The direction to run was obvious. They all raced down the gulch. One guy fell and hurt his leg and was crawling along, jabbering like an idiot in panic. Bob and one other guy ran back, picked him up and made it out of there with their shirts starting to smoke from the heat. All three made it out safely. A big blow-up followed.

The following anecdote illustrates how Bob Nolan left the smokejumper program in 1950 as a third-year squad leader who loved the work, and that very day became a logger. He was happy in that work for 40 years, doing all phases of the operation. He settled down happily, married, had kids, then grandkids, and now even some great-grandkids—right there in Cave Junction. Bob prospered and eventually began buying land around there until he became one of the landed gentry, though he never could get himself to enjoy or do well in playing golf, as much as he tried.

One day in the summer of 1950 Cliff Marshall called him in and said, “Bob, I have new orders from the supervisor's office that you'll have to give up doing that free-fall jumping at air shows and county fairs on weekends. It's because the SO doesn't want any of its smokejumpers getting hurt or killed in that kind of recreational activity.”



*Author Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48) is a retired English professor from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.*

“Recreational!” Bob replied. “But I do it only for pay. I'm a pro.”

“Yeah, but orders are that you have to quit doing it during the fire season,” Cliff said.

“Okay; I will after this coming Sunday's air show at Rogue River.”

“Can't allow you to do that, Bob.”

“But I've promised them, and they've advertised it. That means I have a verbal contract with them.”

“You can't do it, Bob.”

“I can't? Okay. I quit.”

Feeling rotten, and having nothing to do, he walked down to the local bar and had a beer. Two of his friends who were loggers showed up and asked how come he wasn't working. He told them the story, and one of them immediately said: “Hey! We're looking for a guy who can drive a log truck for us. We even know where you can get a used, repossessed log truck for just \$200 down. We'll take you over and you can close the deal and start right away.”

“I've never driven a log truck in my life,” Bob said.

“It's easy. We'll show you how and we can start today,” was the reply.

The next day Bob was up on the mountain learning to drive the truck by getting his first load of logs lowered onto the back of his “new” rig, with his two mentors hanging on both sides of the cab, giving instructions. The loading area was just above a pitch of road so steep that a Caterpillar was needed to pull the log-rig up the grade backward just to get there, and that steep part would be where Bob Nolan would start his log-driving career.

He started down and his mentors shouted, “Hit the brakes!” and Bob hit them.



Bob Nolan. (Courtesy Bob Nolan)

“No, not those! Pull the trailer brakes first!” This required the use of an overhead lever. “No, not all at once! Do the trailer brakes gradually—a little bit at a time! *Then* the truck brakes!”

The truck was trying to jackknife, was shaking like it was in an earthquake, and was sliding down this steep pitch with its big load and its brand-new driver struggling to control it. The two mentors leaped for their lives, and Bob fought on alone to apply enough brakes

to slow this monster without wrecking it.

With all 18 of his wheels finally locked, he skidded down the slope to the bottom of the hill. When he climbed out of the truck, heart in mouth, all 18 of his newly acquired tires were totally flat. That’s how Bob Nolan became a logger.

After the smokejumper base was moved to Redmond, Ore. in 1981, Bob was the only ex-smokejumper to stay around Cave Junction. He slowly prospered and began to buy property around the area—one day buying 40 acres, with the Illinois River bisecting it diagonally, for a mere \$6,000. And once, when he did not have enough to make his payments on the loan for that property, he went out with his chain saw to cut a few logs off the property to sell for that payment.

He walked up to a big, beautiful yellow pine and looked at it for falling, but then just couldn’t do it—a professional logger who couldn’t do it to one of his own trees. Then he walked away and found some other way to make the payment.

There are several other interesting stories that I can’t fit in here. But I can report that Robert Nolan, born in Ely, Nev. and raised for a while in Reno—gambler, logger, landowner, and former squad leader in the smokejumpers—is looking fit and active in Cave Junction. 🍷

## Bob Marshall Smokejumper Trail Project 1999

by Hal Howell (Missoula ’55)

We hiked into Silvertip on a clear sunny day, it was an easy walk, flat all the way.

Kurt, the intern, from the BME, was a Kamikaze Kid, before he left.

The Forest Service cabin made a great cook shack, we pitched our tents all around, even in back.

Wendy, the game warden, was as good as the best, and Bill from Dillon seldom took a rest.

The river was cold, and deep and wide, but we waded everyday, and took it in stride.

Chuck, the walker, kept us moving at a pace, as Cliff told stories just to our taste.

The trail went up, then level, then down and we walked it daily with never a frown.

John, from the South, and Dennis, from the North, are the best the Carolinas have ever put forth.

Jon, our boss, was a prince of a guy, and Tom our cook was a gift from the sky.

Finally, Hal wrote this poem, and from his view, this was the best smokejumper trail crew.

*Editor’s note: Howell was a participant in the 1999 Trail Rehabilitation Program in Montana’s Bob Marshall Wilderness. “Jon” is Jon McBride (Missoula ’54) and honcho of one of last year’s two crews. “Tom” is Associate Member Tom Blunn. “Kurt” is Kurt Kress, an intern with the non-profit Bob Marshall Foundation. “Wendy” is Wendy Kamm (Missoula ’82). “Bill” is Bill Kolar (Missoula ’59). “Chuck” is Charles Fricke (Missoula ’61). “Cliff” is Cliff Dalzell (Missoula ’61). “John” is John McIntosh (Missoula ’60). “Dennis” is Dennis Pearson (Missoula ’62).*

## Smokejumper Magazine Needs Help

I am in need of at least two people who will edit articles for the magazine. It is necessary to have a computer and e-mail. Is there anyone who did some newspaper work along the way?

The task of producing this magazine is very time consuming. Having help in editing is a major need at this time. If you are interested, please e-mail: [cnkgsheley@earthlink.net](mailto:cnkgsheley@earthlink.net) 🍷

# Touching All Bases

THE "TOUCHING ALL BASES" COLUMN is short this time due to my failing to contact the base liaisons prior to deadline. Reunion 2000 took priority during this quarter. My thanks to Grangeville Base Manager Jerry Zumalt who had noted this deadline ahead of time and sent in this report from GAC. Look forward to a full end of the season report in the January issue of *Smokeyjumper*. —Chuck Sheley

## Grangeville

Jerry Zumalt (Redding '70)

Grangeville contributed early season smoke-jumper and aircraft support to BLM operations in Alaska and the Great Basin. GAC jumpers also saw action out of Silver City, N.M. These commitments reduced Grangeville's early season preparedness and capability to staff incidents in our primary coverage areas, and placed us well behind preparedness expectations.

We staffed our first fire from Grangeville June 28, dropping all five available jumpers on a Clearwater incident that burned 350 acres, destroyed decked timber, threatened logging equipment and required the commitment of a Type II team. An almost-identical fire started in a private logging operation near Powell July 28 with similar results, despite the best efforts of five of Missoula's finest.

Suppression activity since mid-July has been consistently steady across the northern region as conditions worsen, but GAC jumpers have been successful in catching the subsequent fires they've staffed. Temperatures are approaching the 100-degree mark, relative humidity is running below 15 percent, and fire is increasingly resistant to control measures. August lightning, as usual, will tell the story in central Idaho.

Grangeville has received solid aircraft service and support from the R-4, WCF Twin Otter and pilots who have provided rotational coverage since June 5. R-4 has also provided timely and effective aircraft mechanic services, and this has enabled us to utilize the plane well for a variety of fire- and resource-management activities. We continue to accrue substantial mission hours in support of the land managers we serve.

Other items of note include the national smoke-jumper base review and inspection completed at the Grangeville Base in July. The review went well, and we would like to thank Dewey Warner and Dan Torrence from Redmond, Jon Rollens, W.O.-Boise and Pat Wilson, MTDC for their participation and constructive insight. Finally, GAC squad leader Chris Young will be detailed to West Yellowstone for the month of August and Hardy Bloemeke, MSO, will come over and lend a hand at Grangeville. 🧯



## Items From the Fire Pack

### Jumpers in Flathead Lake?

It was July or August of 1953. We were returning from a dry run in the Mission Range. The aircraft was a Ford-Tri-Motor piloted by Jackie Hughes.

I was riding in the back of the aircraft with Hal Samsel (Missoula '49). Returning to base can be a long ride, especially after the anticipation of making a fire jump. Just south of

Finley Point at the lower end of Flathead Lake, one of the drift chutes "accidentally" got kicked out of the plane.

This would have probably gone unnoticed except that Jack Hughes, looking for a little diversion from the long trip, circled the chute several times as it descended. We had a good laugh as several boats converged in the area.

When we landed at Hale Field,

we learned that the press had been alerted to a parachute descending into Flathead Lake and was making inquiries. I was never confronted by Fred Brauer, but the spotter and some of the crew had to do some fast talking. Jack came to our defense by relating that the chute fell out during some turbulence. I believe there was a brief story relating to this in the Missoulian. 🧯

—Dan Stohr (Missoula '51)

**Items from the Fire Rack**  
(continued from page 17)

### **Torture Rack Champs**

Freddy Michellotti and I were both students at the University of Washington when we rookied in 1949. We were the class champions in the '49 group on the "Torture Rack" and were goaded into a competition. With everyone standing around and cheering, we both got to 50 of the backbends on the rack. I realized at that point that Freddy could go on indefinitely so I quit and let him get 51 and collect the money.

Several years later, after graduating from the College of Forestry at UW, Freddy was killed in a logging accident. 🦌

—Don Wallace (Cave Junction '49)

### **Getting the Best of a Teenager**

Bobby looked out the window of the grumbling old Ford Tri-Motor and shouted, "Uncle Jim, I sure wish I had a parachute! I'd jump into that meadow—look at all those elk!"

We had loaded two tons of cement for the new Indian Creek pack bridge, and we were halfway to the middle fork of the Salmon River. Bobby was the 15-year-old son of Maxine's sister, Marie. Precocious and enthusiastic, he was a typical teenager, bubbling over with life. In the 40 minutes since leaving McCall, this meadow was the fifth jump spot he had selected and we were hardly halfway!

We were in smokejumper configuration. Within minutes, we could be turned around and be headed for a fire, completely equipped to put eight jumpers on a fire. The door was off, the jump cable was rigged, ready for jumper hook-up, and the old biffy in the aft fuselage was loaded with cargo chutes, ready to be strapped to the fire packs.

While unloading, like in the

newspaper cartoons, a light bulb flashed in my head, and—lo!—Bob was about to get his wish. Cargo chutes were old, condemned 24-foot personnel chutes, modified to encompass a 36-inch strap, complete with a snap and buckle to make the cargo hook-up. Coincidentally, it was just the right length to circle Bobby's young waist.

I was saying, "Bobby, all the way in, you really wanted to jump. Here's just the ticket. I'll snap this around your waist, hook up to the jump cable, and when you see your jump spot, just step out the door!" I didn't tell him the strap would cut him in two, but I didn't need to.

Bob's face turned pasty-white as he stammered: "I don't wanna jump! I don't wanna jump! I don't wanna jump!"

I stowed the gear and followed Bob up the sloping floor to the pilot seats ... a very quiet flight back toward McCall. Ten minutes out, approaching Jughandle, I see a light bulb glimmer in Bobby's head as he shouts, "All right, if you're so smart, you jump!"

Waiting for this, I said: "That's a great idea! I've been wanting to do this for a long time!"

Now, a Ford will fly for 30 minutes all by itself, so I popped my belt, jumped down onto the cabin floor and headed for the back door. You could have heard the anguished wail all the way back to McCall: "Don't jump, Uncle Jim! I can't fly it and I'll be killed!"

Smearing slightly, I nonchalantly resumed my seat, landed my crest-fallen passenger at McCall, and chalked up a win against the teenager. Doesn't happen very often! 🦌

—Jim Larkin (Pilot)

### **"That Was Me!"**

—Wayne Webb

I was fortunate to have been a rookie under some of the best: Del Catlin, Smokey Stover, Bob Caldwell, Reid

Jackson, Seymour Petersen, Paper-legs Petersen, and Wayne Webb.

I write this about Wayne Webb. Somehow he made each of us feel like he singled "Me" as someone special. He taught me to rig. When I finally got a chute rigged to his satisfaction, he handed it to me and said, "Put it in your locker." I jumped that chute with total confidence. Scared as usual, but I knew the chute was right.

In 1944, I managed to get my legs between two tractors. As part of the healing process, I spent the summer of 1945 with my aunt and uncle on William's Peak lookout. One of the highlights of the summer was watching smokejumpers jump a fire. The chute of the first jumper snagged the top of a tree, collapsed and let the jumper fall a long way to the ground. From where we were, it looked like the jumper was just laying there with the chute strung out above him. The plane relayed a message through McCall to see if we had a better view because they couldn't see an "L" and no movement of the jumper. We couldn't see a signal streamer either, and it surely looked like a body at the end of the chute. They then jumped three others. When they got to the ground, they found the jump suit laid out at the end of the risers but no body. The body was on the fireline!

During the summer of 1952, I jumped a fire with Wayne and two others above the Little Salmon. After controlling the fire, we were sitting around the campfire telling tales and I told the above story. The silence was defining. After awhile, Wayne said, "That was me!"

It turns out Wayne was addled by the impact after the long fall, stripped off his jump gear, forgot the streamer and went to the fire. At that point, I knew why Wayne ragged on us so much about laying out the "Ls as soon as you know all the parts are working." 🦌

—Jac Caward (McCall '51)

# EARLY WATER BOMBING LESS THAN SUCCESS



Wally Henderson prior to first jump, 1946. (Courtesy Wally Henderson)

by Wally Henderson (McCall '46)

**R**eading *Baker 30* brought back a long suppressed memory of the first attempt at aerial fire suppression, or at least the first well publicized attempt. In 1946, shortly after completing jump training at Missoula, I was one of a group assigned to participate in an aerial fire suppression demonstration in the Lolo ranger district somewhere close to Missoula (54 years have dimmed memory on the exact location).

I believe the chief of the Forest Service as well as Air Corps brass were present since the event was to be covered by RKO Newsreel. The drop aircraft were a B-17 and at least one if not two P51s as dive bombers. Bombing accuracy on the set fire was very good, resulting in almost a direct hit by every “water bomb.” The only problem was

that the bombs were P51 drop tanks and the retardant solution was straight water. Each hit put out a small circle of fire, but scattered embers for several times the dimension of the original fire. The newsreel made the exercise out to be a big success. How could it not be with all the brass in attendance? However, it took the safety crew of smokejumpers more than a day to put out all of the scattered fires caused by the widely scattered burning embers.

When the newsreel was shown in Missoula, several smokejumpers in the theater were positively rude in their comments on the “great success” of the experiment. If the Forest Service didn't get all copies of the film destroyed it would be an interesting addition to the NSA archives. 🦋

*A NSA Life Member, Wally trained at Nine Mile near Missoula, was sent to McCall in June 1946, then jumped from Missoula in 1947. He flew 72 combat missions in Korea as a radar observer, surviving four crash landings and a bailout. Retiring as a colonel from the Air Force in 1973, he continued with the Defense Department as director of the Intelligence and Warning Systems Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Since 1979, he has worked in the private sector and is now chairman of a company that is commercializing the global positioning system. His awards include three Legions of Merit, a Distinguished Flying Cross, two Air Medals, and membership in national engineering and physics honor societies.*



“Water bombs? I thought you said water balloons!” (Courtesy Dan Veenendaal-Associate)

# Region 8 Smokejumping— The Untold Story

by Delos Dutton (Missoula '51)

**T**he first fire jumps in Region 8 were made on the Jefferson National Forest, on the Clinch Ranger District. The date was March 31, 1971 and four smokejumpers made the jump on the Skeggs fire, which was burning on state of Virginia land and was rapidly approaching National Forest land.

The jumpers stopped the leading edge of the fire and linked up with the state warden crew on the east flank of the fire. The fire was stopped at 54 acres and had been moving faster than the ground crew could

walk. The jumpers had the advantage of being in the right place at the right time and were in better physical condition to fight the fire.

What were smokejumpers doing in R-8 and how did they get there? The concept was introduced at a fire management meeting on the Jefferson NF by Clyde Todd, who was the ranger on the Clinch district. Their object was to stop 90 percent of the fires at 10 acres or smaller because of their high land value in critical areas. Their crews were not even close to



*Test group for the first smokejumper project in the Eastern U.S. Standing (L-R): Bob McCray, Ray Farinetti, Gary Mills and Walt*

*Congelton. Kneeling (L-R): Delos Dutton (project air officer) and Hal Ewing (pilot). (Courtesy Bob McCray)*

accomplishing that goal; they would come close to stopping the fires but would lose because they could not catch up with the leading edge.

The fire management people on the Jefferson NF wanted a small centralized force to help their six-ranger district to get control of the fire situation. They wanted personnel in top physical condition and well-trained in fire suppression. This presented a problem because their fire season was short (six weeks) and the people they hired were required to do other work, with fire being an incidental part of the job. Their people became skilled in other work and generally unavailable until the fire situation became extreme.

A helitack crew was considered but ruled out for several reasons. Small helicopters could not haul a large enough crew to slow the spread of the fires, and large ones were too expensive. Furthermore, their forests were heavily covered with timber, and the clearings and meadows were on slopes and too small for helispots. The forests in the Appalachian Mountains are very long and narrow, making speed and range a limiting factor. Helispot construction would be difficult because large numbers of the trees would have to be cut down due to the rounded ridge tops.

Smokejumping was considered, but this caused a lot of concern. Their forest had a very extensive road system and most of their fires started close to roads, and they had a hardwood forest that was dormant during fire season. Could men parachute into such a forest on an operational basis without injuries? As they pushed their demands they found that R-8 had already been evaluated and found lacking, but they pressed on and gained authorization for a new study.

The project air officer at the Siskiyou Smokejumper base was selected to re-evaluate R-8 for the possible use of smokejumpers. The job went to R-6 because R-1 and R-4 jumpers were involved in the R-3 fire season, and R-5 had an early fire season of its own. A 10-day trip was scheduled for the study and observation of the R-8 fire problems. The reason for selecting Siskiyou Smokejumper Base was the best-kept secret for years.

Most of the people knew it was because we were the best people for the job—but now I must confess it was only because I knew people in high places. My jump partner at Missoula, with whom I hunted elk, was in the national office and so was the ex-Siskiyou pilot who flew the Noorduyn airplane out of Deming, NM, in 1953. The forest supervisor of the Jefferson NF was also an ex-Missoula smokejumper.

The Jefferson NF had limited money planned for the project, so it had to be kept small and we made a plan that was similar to a helitack operation. In using

Forest Service aircraft, a pilot and trained fire fighters, we were very competitive financially with the helitack program and had the advantage by being able to jump close to the fire. A three-year trial program was adopted. It consisted of C-45H aircraft, pilot, project leader and four smokejumpers. The project would be reinforced as needed with the use of emergency fire funds.

The original smokejumper crew was selected and retrained in early March 1971. The selection process was complicated because we were faced with the problem of selecting our very best men or taking the ones who were expendable—or as I should say, ones who were easily replaced.

**Walt Congleton** (Cave Junction '68), **Ray Farinetti** (Cave Junction '64), **Bob McCray** (Cave Junction '67) and **Gary Mills** (Cave Junction '66) were selected. **Hal Ewing** would pilot Twin Beech 166Z and I would go as project leader and spotter. Our parachutes and protective clothing were shipped at an earlier date by commercial truck freight and delivered on time.

The base for our operation was set up at the Lonesome Pine Airport, near Wise, Va. The airport facilities were rented at \$30 per week and consisted of an office and one break room that doubled as a gear-storage area. Parachutes were packed in the hangar on portable tables provided by Flatwoods CCC. The crew was quartered at the Western Hills Motel in Corburn, which was adequate and inexpensive.

An implementation meeting was held March 24. The Daniel Boone and Jefferson NF ranger district units were represented. We let them know that we were there to help and that we wanted our crew to team up with their fire fighters to suppress fires.

I arranged a fire training session for our crew to familiarize them with fire fighting in R-8. This did not sit well with my men because, after all, they already knew all there was to know about firefighting. The fuel that carries the fire in R-8 consists of leaves that are very dry, they are in deep piles, and the strong spring winds cause the fires to spread rapidly. When the trees leaf out, the ground becomes shaded and the fire season is over.

Most of the fires in R-8 are man-caused by careless acts such as burning trash in a barrel, clearing fields, unattended camp fires, smokers and a few incendiary sets. One set was caused by a lady who was frightened by a large snake that crawled away in the leaves. She set a fire to kill the snake but she lacked the knowledge and the tools to put the fire out.

Fire rakes were used to rake away the leaves down to mineral soil to rob the fire of fuel. When the fire is

too hot for close attack, the jumpers would back away for a few yards or whatever distance was required to get away from the heat. They would burn out fuel that was between their fire line and the main fire.

On some fires they would back off a considerable distance and make a backfire from the fireline, which would be sucked into the main fire. Leaf blowers were used on some occasions with good success because they were able to blow the leaves, and the burn out fire, towards the main fire.

Region 8 has more than its share of wind, and it was a problem on all of the fires on which we took action. One of the fires was near a long, narrow meadow which was selected for the jump spot. However, there was a low-level ground wind which caused this to be a timber jump, and one of the cargo packages drifted into the trees. Our pilot, Hal Ewing, was disturbed by this and I wasn't "happy about putting four men into the trees," so we took our truck and retrieved all of the parachutes and jump gear.

How many fires have you jumped on where the pilot and the boss retrieved your gear and parachute when you landed in a tree?

The jumpers manned two fires during the first 10 days, but fire conditions indicated that the base was undermanned, so reinforcements were ordered April 12. Two men were sent from each R-6 base and arrived the next day by commercial air flight. The crew became involved in a lot of action during that week, so a reinforcement order was made again April 19 for six more jumpers and a Twin Beech aircraft.

Bad weather delayed the crew and they arrived April 24; only three men on this crew would make fire jumps. The trees were getting their leaves now and the fire season was about over.

The 1971 fire season ended May 1 with a five-man jump on the Yellow Cliff fire, in the Daniel Boone NF. This completed 82 fire jumps on 23 fires in a 32-day period. The original crew had made 12 fire jumps apiece and the first reinforcement crew had made five per jumper. The R-8 people were favorably impressed and they agreed to continue the trial use of smokejumpers.

In the R-8 fire season of 1972, the crew was stationed at Tri-City in Tennessee because of work on runways at Lonesome Pine. The original crew was sent again with the late **Mick Swift** (Cave Junction '56) as project leader. The R-8 Beech 99 aircraft, piloted by **Duane Myler**, was used for the trip but **Chris Hanes** would be the pilot for the fire season. The aircraft was fast, and flight times to fires were reduced by at least 25 percent.

The crew was reinforced March 20 by Hal Ewing with a Twin Beech 166Z. He picked up three Redmond and three North Cascades jumpers at Redmond. The first fire jump was made on the Ground Hog fire in the Red Bird district of Daniel Boone NF. The fire season was slow because of wet weather and the crew only made 28 fire jumps on seven fires.

For the 1973 fire season the crew was back at the Lonesome Pine Airport near Wise, Va. Swift, Mills and Farinetti made the trip with **Wes Brown** (Cave Junction '66), **Troop Emonds** (Cave Junction '66), and **Lonnie Oswalt** (Cave Junction '65) added to the crew. This was another slow season with 41 fire jumps on 11 fires.

The three-year trial use of smokejumpers was completed. Fire jumps had been made from Wise, Va., Tri-City, Tenn. and Fort Smith, Ark. A total of 151 fire jumps had been made on 41 fires. There were no jump injuries and the jumpers claimed that the most dangerous part of their job was the ride back from the fires and avoiding small power lines in the forest.

During the three seasons, 35 different jumpers would make fire jumps in R-8. Ewing, Russell and Hanes piloted the aircraft. The jumpers made initial attack on 75 percent of the fires and on the leading edge of all fires.

In the final report for the three-year test project the smokejumpers were praised and complimented for their suppression work, leadership and team work with R-8 fire fighters. Commendation letters were written by the forest supervisor of the Jefferson NF and the Daniel Boone NF. Letters were also written by six different forest rangers, two fire-staff officers, the national RA administrator, park superintendent and a state of Virginia fire warden.

During the past three seasons we had a lot of people asking how men could make parachute jumps over a dormant hardwood forest. One answer was that once you step out of the door of an aircraft in flight you were well on your way. The next question was if it would be safe. The response: "Since when has that ever had any thing to do with smokejumping?"

New jumpers to the area would ask, "Does the wind blow this hard all the time?" The answer was, "No, it will blow a lot harder in the afternoon when you jump on a fire."

Smokejumping continued in 1974 and six smokejumpers, with Gary Mills as project leader and Mick Swift as assistant Jefferson Forest dispatcher (a fox in a chicken coop). **Gregg Schmidt**, **Gar Leyva** and **Hal Ewing** were the pilots. A North Cascades jumper, **Mike Marcuson** (North Cascades '64), infiltrated the

crew. How did he do that? This was a slow fire season, but fire jumps were made out of Ft. Smith on the Ouachita NF, and the crew at Wise, Va., would also break ground by jumping on the George Washington NF. A total of 38 fire jumps were made on eight fires.

Region 8 also had a late fall fire season which ran during the first two weeks of November, in very cold weather. The crew was made up of five Siskiyou and four LaGrande jumpers. The crew traveled by commercial airlines and the only problem was how to get the jumpers to give up the knives that are always attached to their belts. The crew was reinforced by eight Redding jumpers with **Dick Tracy** (Missoula '53) in charge. The crew was infiltrated by the North Cascades project leader. Twenty-seven fire jumps were made on four fires.

In Region 8 the smokejumper operation expanded in 1975. The crew started out at Tri-City and also had jumpers at Fort Smith. The season was short there and they were returned to Tri-City where there was more action. The crew was reinforced and a detail of North Cascades jumpers was set up at Wise. This was a good season and 75 fire jumps were made on 13 fires.

The reinforcement crew had traveled by commercial air and in Chicago they were booked on first-class accommodations to Tri-City. The airline stewardess, observing their staged off-black jeans and high-top boots, asked one of the jumpers if their band was going to Tennessee to participate in a rock concert.

The crew jumped on one fire that was set by a group of local people. It was on a Saturday and these people just wanted to watch an air show where smokejumpers and retardant aircraft would be used. On another occasion while jumping they noted a man was going down the road starting more fires. They caught him and held him for authorities.

The smokejumpers' projects were poorly financed and equipped, but the men were very good at adapting



to the situation. Two old double-wide house trailers were obtained and cleaned out and made into rooms that were used for rigging parachutes. "Trooper Tom" Emonds was there. Being a good carpenter, he converted a dump truck into an open-air bus for transporting the jumpers.

On one fire a jumper injured his arm, and two jumpers walked him down to the road where the ground crew had transportation. It was getting dark as the men started to return to the fire line. A nearby farmer remarked to them, "You're not going back to that fire, are you? There are a lot of large snakes up that ridge." Needless to say the men were very nervous that night as they worked the fire line.

On another fire, jumpers learned a new trick on how to make friends and impress the local people. A gust of wind carried one stick of jumpers beyond the intended jump spot to a home in the woods. The family was surprised to find that one jumper had landed on the roof of their house, another in the corn patch in their small garden and third in a shade tree in the front yard.

The 1976 R-8 fire season was very severe and the jumpers had a lot of action. The crew was reinforced several times with more jumpers and aircraft. In the end they had two DC-3 and three Beech 99 aircrafts. Sixty-three jumpers made 484 fire jumps on 59 fires.

In less than a month's time, 13 jumpers made 14 or more fire jumps. The smokejumpers and the pilots were all professionals and they accomplished an outstanding job of preventing a lot of escaped wild-land fires.

The crew operated out of Ft. Smith, Tri-City, and Andrews Murphy, N.C. The pilots were Basset, Larkins, Mey, Mertens, the late Hachmeister, and Schmidt. It was a great job, well-done.

As usual there were a few interesting stories to come out of this season. In the Cadet fire in the Jefferson forest, two planeloads of jumpers were dropped and they had a difficult time. On one occasion a jumper was sent back to the cargo-drop spot to get a power saw, and when he got there, he found the drop area had been burned over and the power saw was erupting smoke that appeared like Old Faithful in Yellowstone Park.

There was considerable fire damage that season and the forest was not the only thing that got burned. The R-8 smokejumper project was discontinued after the 1976 fire season. It was sad because they had performed very well and in very tough situations. Over the six years of operations they had made 775 fire

jumps on 126 fires. Over the years of operation 92 different men jumped on fires with only two injuries.

The jumpers would say that the only dangerous parts of the job were riding with district people from fires, jumping in strong wind conditions, snakes on the fire line, watching out for small power and telephone lines in the woods, and being spotted by those Cave Junction spotters.

Budget cuts were made nationwide in fire management, and R-8 informed the Siskiyou base on Dec. 7, 1976, that it could not finance a presuppression smokejumper force. Since that time there have been no smokejumper jumps in R-8.

I want to thank the following people who supplied data for this story:

**Mark Corbet** (LaGrande '74), **John Button** (North Cascades '75), **Doug Houston** (Redmond '73), **Larry Nelsen** (Missoula '56) and **Wayne Williams** (Missoula '77). 🐼

*The statements in this article are mine and do not necessarily represent the views of NSA, the Forest Service or the smokejumpers.—Delos Dutton*

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## ODDS & ENDS

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**Australian Smokejumpers?** This interesting information found its way to our desk. I don't know how accurate it is, but it's a great bit. It seems that in 1979 one of the fire managers in the Northern Territory figured that they could use smokejumpers to cover the vast land areas for which they were responsible. He recruited six guys for the job. He contacted the British Army to obtain parachutes. The provided chutes were for Gurkha jumpers, which probably meant that they were smaller than the normal chutes used by their airborne troops. On their first and only jump, three of the bigger Australian guys broke their legs. This ended the Australian smokejumper operation.

**Albert Gray** (Cave Junction '45) writes that he was part of the group of conscientious objectors who jumped out of Cave during the 1945 season. **Jack Heintzelman** (Cave Junction '43) was the group leader. Albert is emeritis professor of economics at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio.

**Greg Whipple** (Missoula '59) reports from Silver City that this is the driest year since 1904 in New Mexico. At the same time **Chuck Mansfield** (Cave

Junction '59) is reporting daily about the evacuation in his community of Los Alamos where the National Park Service set off a controlled burn which has destroyed a large portion of the town's houses. The BLM set off a controlled burn last summer in Northern California that destroyed 23 houses. The temperatures that week were in the 105-110 degree range.

Former smokejumper pilot **Jim Larkin** of Boise, Idaho headed a list of 25 aviators to be inducted into the Idaho Aviation Hall of Fame in April.

Larkin, who got his first taste of flying in 1927 when his mother bought him a ride in a barnstormer's stunt plane, himself began flying in 1939. He finished at the top of his military-training class.

Larkin and his brother developed the Donnelly Airstrip in 1946 to provide air support to ranches, mines, river rafting and other back-country activities. He was dropping smokejumpers for the U.S. Forest Service by 1949, and was the first to pilot the fire-retardant tankers in use today. Larkin also helped develop the Airplane Pilot Qualification Card for Forest Service pilots.

He was also the director, chief pilot, helicopter and fixed-wing check pilot for the Western Zone Air Unit, predecessor to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Hundred of fire fighters were on hand last May in Boise for the dedication of the Wildland Fire Fighters Monument. The half-acre monument is set within the NIFC building complex. The focus of the monument is three larger-than-life bronze statues of fire fighters which were primarily financed with private funds. Artist Larry Nowlan worked as a fire fighter on the Bull and Tower fires in Oregon in the late 1990s.

Any of your **Cave Junction jumpers** who want to purchase one of the **Gobi caps** that some were wearing at the reunion, contact **Larry Lufkin**. Check the "Jump List" for Larry's phone/e-mail info.

**NSA Life Members:** If you did not pick up your cap in Redding at the Red Lion meeting, contact Larry Lufkin.

Helena District Ranger **David Turner** reports that a new marble stone bearing the Star of David will be installed at the Mann Gulch historical site to replace the concrete cross at David R. Navon's site.

Contributions from David's sister, Anita Navon, **Jack Rose**, and other former smokejumpers totalled over \$1000 and have paid for the stone and its installation.

**Doug Douston**, base manager at North Cascades, informs us that **Dale Longanecker** (Redmond '74) is on course to break **Bill Moody's** (North Cascades '57) all-time jump record of 616 jumps. Dale, who is the loft foreman at NCSB, currently has 608 total jumps of which 257 are fire jumps. With a "normal" fire season, Dale should pass Bill as the all-time jump leader.

Are any of you **collectors of pins, patches or whatever?** Associate member Ken Morris is looking for anyone interested in trading or dealing with these items from your organization or base. Contact Ken at 2341 Beardslee St., Duarte, CA 91010. You will see Ken's illustrations in *Smokejumper* magazine.

**Fred Rohrbach** (Missoula '65) informed us that the University of Montana dedicated a plaque for smokejumpers who died in Vietnam. The plaque is located at Davidson's Honors College at the U of M. 🦋

## Viewers Comment on NSA Video

"No doubt your e-mail bin has been full of letters of praise for the video. Count mine as one of those."

**Chris Demarest** (Associate)

"Just sat down to watch for a few minutes. Two hours later just one comment-fantastic!"

**Frank Guilfoyle** (Missoula '54)

"In the film, the story told itself, as it always has, through uniquely different personalities operating with one common thread—there are no one-manners."

**Dick Hughes** (Missoula '64)

"The video was as well done as a NOVA special (and those are the best). My wife was especially moved by the Storm King tragedy and how I had jumped with Jim Thrash. If a fire could catch Thrash, it could catch anyone. Above all, there is now an accurate portrayal of jumpers, made by jumpers, that will stand the test of time."

**Jerry Dixon** (McCall '71)

"The video is very powerful. Everything was presented from the thrills to the blemishes."

**Ted Burgon** (Idaho City '52)

"Simply OUTSTANDING !!! You could see the pride

among the individuals from the old-timers to the rookies."

**Dennis Beaty** (Associate)

"My wife and I saw the video, and we were both impressed. It is broadcast quality and could be shown on the 'Learning Channel.'"

**Larry Jackson** (publisher, Heidelberg Graphics)

"What a great video!!! It brought back so many memories of my nine years of jumping and I was pleased to see and hear from several of my jump partners as they spun their silk stories. I may calm down in a week or so."

**Don Mathis** (Missoula '52)

### Video Donors

The NSA thanks the following additional donors since the July issue:

Jim Browne ..... \$50.00

John Helmer ..... \$50.00

John Lindlan ..... \$50.00

This is an ongoing project and you can see that the result has been a tremendous success. Send your donation to the NSA office in Missoula.

# The Video Project—“It started as just a summer job. . . .”

by Steve Smith, producer

When Fred Rohrbach talked with me about the video project, it sounded like I'd shoot in the summer, edit in the winter and cash a check from the NSA in the spring. One year exploring the job of a smokejumper. It wasn't to be that simple; but then, that's not very different from the way a lot of jumpers got started.

I can't help but wonder if Fred knew I was overconfident jumping into a project that would consume the next three years of my life. If he knew, he didn't say anything. With the help of Bill Moody's research and project outline, we were soon on our way to refresher training in Missoula. If Bill Moody knew I was over my head, he didn't let on either.

Cameraman T.J. Williams and I were busy exploring the world of a smokejumper. The problem is that when you're not a smokejumper, you explore that world on foot. (Later that year my curiosity got the best of me and I jumped a "square" for the first time in my 51 years. What a hoot!) The first fire we walked into was near Livengood, Alaska. The walk to the fire was somewhere between one and one hundred miles of trudging through tussocks. That was when the reality of this project should have sunk in. Great clouds of mosquitoes circled our heads, we were in slop up to our knees and the tussocks (grass bowling balls) were tripping us every chance they got.

In the lead was Bill Moody. Halfway in we had a staredown with a moose, and I was grateful Bill was there to coax her into wandering off. There were a lot of lessons on that first fire. I tried to sleep on the permafrost and ended up standing in the fire for two hours shivering. I was grateful for the generosity of the Alaska jumpers who were quick to share their sleeping bags, water, food and knowledge. After hiking in and out of that fire, I decided burning was the highest and best use of tussocks.

Each time I'd walk into a fire, I wondered how the smokejumpers would feel about the guy in the clean fire shirt with the camera. There must be something magical about being on a fire with a bunch of smokejumpers. In three years I didn't think a foot of fireline (although, I wandered off once and stumbled upon a spot fire), and yet, I was always treated super. I want to thank all the jumpers that allowed me to witness and feel like a small part of the great working relationship that jumpers share.

I met a lot of the jumpers, more than 250, and there's something special about those I got to know. From a strictly crass prospective, smokejumpers are just a bunch of part-time government employees. The government and the

taxpayer just don't know how lucky they are to have these fine young men and women choose this "summer job."

If someone gave me the power to influence smokejumper training, here is what I would do.

I would add three evening

sessions to rookie training. The first night they would sit in a circle around Fred Brauer and learn from the man that many smokejumpers call "the best boss I ever had." Eric Hipke and I had the chance to interview Fred for three hours. We both sat spellbound. What a treasure of experience he is.

An evening with Bob Sallee would be next. Bob is a gentleman, and in his own quiet, classy way, he communicates the kind of experience that might help keep these jumpers alive in a crisis.

The third night would be with Bobby Montoya. About the time your body is suffering from the physical demands of rookie training, you need the laughter and inspiration that comes from being around Bobby. He embodies the spirit of smokejumping.

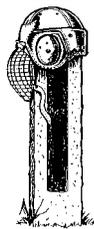
I would advise all the active jumpers of today to get to know these men and the others who have gone before. They are a valuable resource that can bring perspective to the job you have now and can be very helpful when you decide to hang up the Whites.

In the end, the documentary went from thirty minutes to two hours. It expanded from one year to three years work. If you haven't seen it, it's a great place to meet Bob Sallee, Fred Brauer, Hal Sampsel, Bobby Montoya and 75 other smokejumpers to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Sure, they're the reason this became more than a summer job.

They made this the experience of a lifetime. 🍄



*"Paperlegs" Peterson at Fort Bragg, N.C. in 1945. Photo taken by Life Member George Cross when they were both serving in the 82nd Airborne. (Courtesy George Cross)*



# Off The List

## JOHN J. HARPER (Missoula '69)

John J. Harper, 52, died peacefully July 24, 2000, at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Denver after a long battle with cancer. John was born March 12, 1948, and raised in Lewistown. He graduated from St. Leo's High School in 1966 and served in the U.S. Marine Corp, touring Vietnam. After graduating from the University of Montana, John was a smokejumper for the U.S. Forest Service for 15 years. A history buff, John compiled the history of smokejumping for the Forest Service. Through his efforts, a display on smokejumping was created at The Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. He returned to Lewistown where he worked as a drug and alcohol counselor and as a paralegal. John enjoyed the outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman.

He is survived by his best friend "Bunns." He is also survived by his sisters and brothers, Lee and Marie (Harper) Hoyer, Richard and Marlene Harper, Marcie (Harper) Timmons, Greg and Charlene (Harper) Houska, Charles and Therese Harper; and numerous nieces and nephews.

## ROBERT E. REED (McCall '46)

Robert Reed died July 4 of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 76. Bob was born in Seattle and moved to Boise as a youth. During WWII, he served in the U.S. Army in Europe and earned the Bronze Star. After the war, he jumped at McCall before earning a degree from the University of Washington.

He then worked for the *Seattle Post-Intelligence* until 1958 and was a press secretary for Gov. Albert

We want to know! If you learn of the serious illness or death of a member of the smokejumper community, whether or not he or she is a member, your Association wants to know about it. We would like to express your Associations's sentiments and

spread the word to others. Please phone, write or e-mail our Missoula headquarters and/or our webmaster (webmaster-@smokejumpers.com) including the name, address and phone number of the subject's next of kin. We'll take it from there.

Rosellini from 1958 to 1962. Bob then joined the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland as a public information officer and held that position until retiring in 1990. He had lived in Woodland, Wash., since 1972 and was a free-lance writer and photographer. His works have been published in various Northwest magazines and newsletters.

He is survived by his wife Asa.

## JAMES PHILIP OGILVIE (Alaska '72)

Ogilvie, 54, of Carson City, Nev., died April 27, 2000, at his residence. A native of Bakersfield, Calif., he was born Dec. 13, 1945, to Oscar O. and Evelyn (Harney) Ogilvie and had lived in Carson City since 1990.

Ogilvie worked for Forest Service trail and engine crews in the Sequoia, El Dorado, Angeles and Toiyabe Na-

tional Forests. He also worked as a smokejumper for the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska and as supervisor of an inmate fire crew for the Kern County Fire Department in Bakersfield, Calif. He was superintendent of both the Silver State Hot Shots in Carson City and the Chilao Hot Shots, a member of the Fulton Hot Shot Crew, Ducks Unlimited and the Catholic Church. He graduated from the University of California in Bakersfield in 1977. His parents preceded him in death.

Surviving are his wife Joan, and son, Tom both of Carson City; daughter, Adriane Ogilvie of Gardnerville, Nev.; two brothers and a sister; 21 nieces and nephews; and several great-nieces and nephews.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Joan Ogilvie, 1120 Kingsley Ln, Carson City NV 89701-6462.

## NSA AND CURRENT JUMPERS ESTABLISH LISTON MEMORIAL FUND

The NSA has been contacted by the Alaska Smokejumpers to work together on the establishment of a memorial fund in honor of David Liston who was killed in a training jump in Fairbanks in April.

The intent of the fund is to make monies available to help smokejumpers and their families in the event of future tragedies. Jumpers from all the bases would be invited to become involved. The NSA would be the holder of the funds. Guidelines for distribution are in the process of being decided. Only the interest would be available for distribution with the principal not being touched.

The NSA Board of Directors approved the concept of the plan in their June meet-

ing in Redding. The NSA will match donations up to \$1,000 to get the funding started.

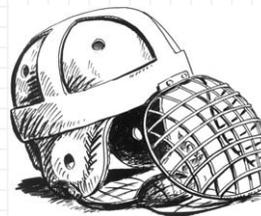
We have been looking for ways in which the NSA can become a viable partner with the working jumpers. This is a solid and worthy project. The NSA is

pleased to have been thought of as an instrument to help the current day jumpers. We proudly accept the task.

Make checks payable to NSA and mail any contributions to NSA treasurer:

Dean Longanecker, PO Box 643, Watterville, WA 98858

Note the check for the "Liston Memorial Fund"



# Blast From the Past

## Frozen In Time

In 1947, the word “smokejumping” was not in the regular vocabulary of people even in forested strongholds such as Idaho and Montana. Helen Miller of the *Boise Statesman* newspaper solved that problem, writing a lengthy piece to educate the readers on the strenuous training regimen prospective smokejumpers had to endure. McCall’s training site was greeting its first crew of men.

“The smokejumper’s job is a dangerous one,” the story explains. “It demands courage, nerve, strength and skill. ... All are wiry, well-knit, strong, hard-as-steel. All have unquenchable courage and quick resourcefulness. They are ready for anything in the way of fun, or danger, or work. Their devil-may-care spirit grins from their eyes.”

Accompanied by three descriptive photos, the story describes such training activities as the “torture rack,” meant to build strength in the legs, back and abdomen. The Allen roll is illustrated in great detail.

“Twenty-five new and experienced recruits will arrive in McCall June 15,” the story says, adding that 75 percent of the 50 men in training were ex-paratroopers from World War II.

Lloyd Johnson of McCall was the foreman of all training squads, the story reports. Squad leaders were James Stover of Boise, Ralph Wild of McCall, Wayne Webb of Weiser, Don Jorgenson of Utah, and Seymour Peterson of Minnesota.

*Boise Statesman*

Courtesy Ted Burgon (Idaho City '52)

## Forest Service Copter Crashes

A U.S. Forest Service helicopter, with three persons aboard, suffered extensive damage Thursday when it lost power and crashed in a wooded area of the Gila N.F. eight miles northeast of the Me Own airstrip.

The accident occurred about 7:45 a.m., seconds after the “chopper” had lifted off following the pickup up two smokejumpers from a fire. The craft lost power slightly above the tree line and plowed into a hillside.

The pilot, Dave Lorrimer and the smokejumpers, Arthur Cranmer and Fred Rohrbach were uninjured.

*Silver City Daily Press*

July 7, 1967

## Smokejumpers Make Long Flight South

The longest flight made from the local smokejumper base was on September 19, when the Sequoia National Forest in Central California requested nine smokejumpers. The men were flown down in the Tri-Motor Ford that is based in Mt. Shasta, California. The trip took six hours.

The men jumped at daylight the next morning and did their work well. The Sequoia Forest is now enthusiastic about the future use of smokejumpers. The jumpers returned with two Sequoia seedlings which will be planted in front of the bunkhouse. At this writing, all the men are on fires in California on the Shasta and Klamath forests.

*Cave Junction Weekly*

Sept. 19, 1949

Courtesy Bob Snyder (Cave Jct. '48)



Jump into the “Big Trees” from the Tri-motor, 1949. (Courtesy Bob Moffitt)

## Parachutists Make Mass Jumps

Parachutists leaped in a mass exhibition at Hale Field over the weekend, before crowds of several hundred persons. All of the jumpers used their own equipment in the long-delayed free-fall type of jump which requires precision timing and daring.

One of the jumpers, George Harpole, after falling some 1,500 feet on a delay, eased out his ripcord and his chute tore badly at the impact. He opened his reserve chute and landed safely as the crowd cheered. Dave Burt showed up with a new trick, remaining on his feet as he hit the ground. Stan Sykes bailed out over Hale Field six times in long delayed opening jumps. These jumps were not connected with the smokejumper units.

Those taking part in the exhibitions were:

- John Scicek, 21, of Hamilton, who has 23 jumps to his credit and two years with the forest service smokejumpers.

- Stan Sykes, 22, of Livingston, 40 jumps and four years with the smokejumpers.

- “Chuck” Pickard, 24, of Plymouth, Mass., with 36 jumps to his credit, three years as a member of the smokejumpers.

- Jack Knott, 23, of White Sulphur Springs, who has made 51 jumps and has four years as a smokejumper.

- Willis Rude, 25, of East Jordan, Mich., 20 jumps and two years as a smokejumper.

- George Harpole, 21, Los Angeles, 24 jumps and two years as a smokejumper.

- Dave Burt, 23, Albuquerque, N.M., 60 parachute jumps and a smokejumper for four years.

*The Daily Missoulian*  
Tuesday, Aug. 29, 1950



*Not the best place to land! Hale Field 1950. (Courtesy George Harpole)*

### Lifelong Remembering—

## A Message to the Membership from Jim Cherry

It only took two summers. Even one would have done the job. The end result was a personal sense of accomplishment along with the knowledge that I now stood with a small group of special people sharing a tradition I would always carry with pride. The reward of those brief summers continues to provide a treasure store of memories that will last a lifetime. That brief time gave shape to the person I am today.

Attending the Redding Reunion 2000 dusted the cobwebs from some of those memories, renewed some long past relationships and formed new friendships. A couple of weeks later I had the opportunity to share in the CPS Smokejumper Reunion of the 1943-45 years, and that continued to tighten the bond across the decades of our shared history. Preserving that history and that bond is important to us all.

The NSA Board asked if I would be willing to help strengthen the NSA and its commitment to preserving our history and our bond by chairing the Life Membership effort. I have agreed to do that, but only upon becoming a Life Member of the NSA on my own part. (If someone is asked to lead, they better be prepared to set an example for everyone they hope will be following.)

I am establishing a Life Membership with the NSA because I have been impressed with the mission of the NSA, the commitment of the lead-

ership and with the quality of the work being done. One needs to look no further than the NSA web site, the magazine, the new video and the recent reunion. They speak for themselves as to mission, commitment and quality.



Of great importance to me is the fact that the NSA is using Life Memberships to provide a perpetual source of funding for the organization. It is true that the Life Member receives a cap and a plaque as expressions of appreciation along with a lifetime subscription to the *Smokejumper* magazine. However, for me the best part is knowing that I have made an investment that will

not disappear tomorrow. Only the earnings of that investment will be used to provide an annual base of support for the NSA.

In the weeks ahead the NSA Board will be exploring routes to Life Membership that will be easier to travel. You will be kept informed about details relating to Life Membership. In the meantime, will you give serious consideration to becoming a Life Member of the NSA? A Life Membership is \$1000.

We all know what it is to take a leap of faith. Do me a favor and let me know what it would take for you to take the leap and join this special group. Let me know how we can make this an easier journey for you. Contact me at [jjcherry@netins.net](mailto:jjcherry@netins.net) or 515/927-4428.

Jim Cherry, Missoula '57, '59  
Life Membership Chair



# Jump List— October 2000

by **Larry Lufkin** (Cave Junction '63), NSA PRESIDENT

*The "Jump List" is a compilation of information the NSA receives from members, associates, and friends. It is intended to inform our readers what jumpers are doing and where they reside. You can mail your information to Larry Lufkin: 7101 Alderwood Ct. SE, Olympia, WA 98503 or send e-mail to [jumpercj63@aol.com](mailto:jumpercj63@aol.com). Phone (360) 459-2534*

THE "JUMP LIST" IS A compilation of information the NSA receives from members, associates and friends. It is intended to inform our readers about what jumpers are doing and where they reside. **Bill Eastman** (North Cascades '54) will be taking over this column as Larry assumes the duties of NSA president.

You can mail your information to Bill Eastman: **PO Box 306, East Greenbush, NY 12061** or e-mail to [eastman@earthlink.net](mailto:eastman@earthlink.net).

## Alaska

**Norman Hill**, '63 is a ramp agent for Northwest Airlines and has held the same job with several other airlines since 1967. Norman, who lives in Memphis, Tennessee, also owns a home woodcraft business.

**Karl Maerzluft**, '66 is a pilot for Southwest Airlines and has done so since 1991. Prior to that he flew for several other airlines. Karl lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

**Don Havel**, '66 lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, since retiring in 1997. Don currently works for the United Nations International Police Task Force in East Timor, Indonesia. Prior to retirement, Don was a police officer in St. Paul.

**Victor Nicholas**, '68 owns a grocery store in Nulcato, Alaska. He is also a pilot and serves as a command pilot in the Galena area.

**Bruce (Buck) Nelson**, '81 lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. Buck currently works as a smokejumper in Fairbanks.

**Jon Larson**, '89 lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, where he is currently a smokejumper. Prior to working as a smokejumper, Jon worked for the Forest Service, Boise Interagency Fire Center and the National Park Service.

## Cave Junction

**Philip Clarke**, '51 lives in Palmetto, Florida, where he volunteers for the American Legion. Prior to retirement in 1994, Phil worked for the Service Company and Alyeska Pipeline Company.

**Phillip (Mike) Hodge**, '54 retired in 1999 as a Marshall for the 19th Judicial Circuit in Missouri. Prior to that, he was a Marshall for the Missouri Supreme Court, owned and operated a lodge in Canada and was a pilot for the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Mike lives in Jefferson

City, Missouri.

**Michael Byrne**, '57 plans to retire in 2002 after a career as the county administrator for Mason County, Washington. Mike, who lives in Shelton, Washington, was previously commissioner of public works for the city of Shelton.

**Russell Beem**, '59 worked all over the western U.S. as a pipefitter before retiring. Russell, who lives in Grants Pass, Oregon, also served with the Navy on the destroyer *Charles F. Adams*.

**Paul Boyer**, retired from teaching in 1998 and currently does interior trim work in custom-built homes in Basalt, Colorado. Paul taught high school in Toledo, Oregon, from 1966 to 1998 where he developed the school's cross-country track program.

**Robert Hooper**, '67 lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he is a physician's assistant for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Previous to that, Bob worked as a middle and high school teacher at several locations.

**Fernando Abeita**, '70 lives in Isleta, New Mexico, where he works in fire management for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

## Idaho City

**Fred Rensmeyer**, '58 lives in Glendale, Arizona. Fred works in Phoenix, Arizona, where he sells Lexus automobiles. Previously, Fred worked in sales for Sperry (Honeywell) and Bell Helicopter.

**Tony Beltran**, '69 has retired and lives in Lakeview, Oregon. He says that retirement is great.

## McCall

**James (Smokey) Stover**, '46 retired in 1992 and spends his time fishing. Smokey currently lives in Waldport, Oregon.

**Max Glaves**, '47 retired in 1997 as an insurance agent and lives in Valley Center, California. Max worked in the insurance industry for 40 years.

**Jack Deinema**, '50 lives in Borrego Springs, California. He retired in 1978 as deputy chief for administration in the Washington Office of the Forest Service. Jack also worked on the Challis and Teton National Forests, was personnel officer in Region 4 and regional forester for Region 5.

**Robert Gara**, '51 is a professor at the College of Forest

Practices, University of Washington, Seattle. Bob lives in Seattle, Washington.

**Jerry Ogawa**, '67 is a 4th grade teacher for the Nyssa, Oregon, School District. Jerry, who lives in Fruitland, Idaho, is currently a squadleader at McCall and plans to retire from jumping soon. He also plans to retire from teaching in about three years.

**A.B. Tibbetts**, '66 lives in St. Anthony, Idaho, where he works as an M.D. He reports that at 54 he is "still doing it." A.B. has been married for 25 years and has two boys and two girls.

**Steve Norrod**, '78 has been in practice since 1993 as a licensed clinical professional counselor and school psychologist. Steve, who lives in Billings, Montana, also enjoys "mountain climbing, coin collecting, and shoplifting non-combustible discount merchandise."

### Missoula

**Herman Ratcliff**, '54 has worked his entire career with Phillips Petroleum Company, beginning in 1957 in Smackover, Arkansas. After that, he moved all over the southwest. He currently lives in El Dorado, Colorado.

**Peter Hoirup**, '55 lives in Bonney Lake, Washington. Peter has worked for Alaska Airlines since 1967 as an aircraft mechanic. He is currently stationed at Prudoe Bay, Alaska, where he works two weeks on and two weeks off.

**F James (Jim) Clatworthy**, '56 is associate dean, School of Education and Human Services, Oakland University, in Rochester, Michigan. Jim plans to retire in December 2000. He is an active synecologist and will be patrolling St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. His group, the St. Clair Channel Keepers, plans to take action against polluters.

**Tom Oswald**, '58 lives in Kent, Ohio, where he retired after 32 years as a teacher. Tom currently works full-time as a technology consultant for a PBS station in Kent.

**Ben Mitchell**, '60 retired in 1984 as the regional transportation planning officer in the Forest Service Region 10. After that, Ben worked for British Petroleum in Alaska for five years. He currently lives in Sitka, Alaska, "just bums around" and takes care of his grandkids.

**Larry Loritz**, '60 lives in Evergreen, Colorado, where he works as a manufacturer's representative for Loritz Controls Inc. Larry, who has a degree in mechanical engineering, previously was a design and sales engineer.

**Bill Werhane**, '66 lives in Belgrade, Montana, and plans to retire in 2001. Bill built three businesses and is ready to start construction of a mill in 2000 or 2001. He reports that he spends two months a year in the Philippines and Thailand.

**Jay Kittams**, '67 retired in 1994 from the Forest Service. Jay, who lives in Molalla, Oregon, currently is self-employed as a Christmas tree farmer.

**Thomas Carlsen**, '70 worked as a smokejumper from 1970 to 1998 when he retired from smokejumping. Tom lives in Huson, Montana, where he works for the state of Montana DNRC as an engine boss.

**John Kirkendall**, '74 lives in Hamilton, Montana,

where he works as a forest fire management officer for the Bitterroot National Forest. Previously, he worked on the Payette, Lolo and Targee National Forests

**Bruce Anderson**, '77 joined the Navy in 1979 and is still in. He is a naval aviator and has served tours on both coasts and around the world on aircraft carriers. He commanded a helicopter squadron in 1997-98. Bruce reports that he is getting his masters degree and will do a tour in London. He can be reached through his parents at 121 Sourdough Ridge Rd, Bozeman, Montana 59715.

**Robert Kautz**, '79 earned a degree as a veterinarian and currently owns and operates the All Pet Animal Clinic, LLC, in Greeley, Colorado.

**David Petteys**, '80 lives in Thompson Falls, Montana, where he is an Initial Attack foreman on the Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District. David is waiting for hunting season.

**Mike Patten**, '87 worked for six years for the National Park Service as a seasonal fire fighter. In 1992, he transferred back to the smokejumper base where he continues to the present. Mike lives in Clinton, Montana.

### Nine Mile

**Richard Zehr**, '43 retired in 1985 and enjoys life. During his career, he owned and operated a Standard Oil gas station and worked as a parts manager for a farm implement dealer. Richard, who lives in Flanagan, Illinois, has been married 52 years and enjoys his hobby as an amateur radio operator.

**Charles Frantz**, '45 retired and lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he has a casual association with the University of Pennsylvania. Charles, who earned a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, taught anthropology and did research in Canada, Nigeria, Rhodesia, Zimbabwe, Camerons, England, Switzerland and the U.S.

**Hugh Fowler**, '47 retired in 1979 from the Executive Office of the president of the United States. He retired again in 1988 as director of the Washington State Department of Emergency Management and for the third time in 1997 from the Arizona Department of Emergency Management. Hugh, who lives in Mesa, Arizona, is now working at Bethany Christian Elementary School in Tempe, Arizona.

**Charles Burk**, '47 lives in Sequim, Washington, after retiring in 1984 from the Gallatin National Forest. Charles also worked on the Lassen, Shasta Trinity, and Klamath National Forests. Charles now spends his time volunteering for Volunteer Chore Services and Habitat for Humanity and does some fishing.

**Al Pappenhagen**, '47 does consulting work for three firms since retiring in 1996. Al lives in Concord, California. He earned a Ph.D. from Purdue in 1959 and worked until retirement for Cutter Laboratories.

**Bill Covey**, '47 retired from the Forest Service in 1985 and now lives in Kalispell, Montana. During his career, Bill worked for the Nez Perce, Flathead, Klamath and Siskiyou Forests and for Region 1.

**Wally Dobbins**, '47 lives in Tucson, Arizona, since retiring in 1987. Wally was a teacher for 24 years and also

worked for the U.S. government for 12 years.

**Charles Parker**, '47 lives in Lolo, Montana, where he is currently taking care of his land and animals and also does some canoeing and traveling. Charles, who earned a Ph.D., retired in 1987 from the University of Montana, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

**Donald Durland**, '47 lives on a 120-acre ranch in St. Regis, Montana, where he raises hay, tends honeybees and sells honey. Donald spent 35 years with the Forest Service in Alaska, Montana and Idaho.

**Eugene (Jake) Dougherty**, '48 retired in 1980 from the Ft. Lauderdale Fire Department as a lieutenant. Jake lives in Palm City, Florida, where he has worked for Sears and Publix Grocery Market since retirement.

**John Heckman**, '49 retired from the Forest Service in 1983 and lives in Bozeman, Montana. While in federal service, John was also in the U.S. Army Reserve from 1955 until 1980. After retirement, he worked for 10 years as a logger. He winters in New Mexico and summers in Montana.

**Bill Tucker**, '50 lives in Arlington, Virginia.

**Harold McElroy**, '51 retired in 1982 and spends his time traveling and working with his church and the Elks. Harold, who lives in Grass Valley, California, previously worked on the Angeles, Los Plumas, Inyo, Modoc and Tahoe National Forests.

**Joe Blackburn**, 51 was elected sheriff of Benewah County, Idaho, and lives in Plummer, Idaho. Prior to being elected, Joe was a marine deputy for Benewah County, investigator for the Idaho Outfitter and Guides Board, and conservation officer for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Joe recently received Executive Certification from the Idaho Peace Officer Standards and Training Academy.

**Joe McDonald**, '51 earned a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Montana and had a career working as a teacher, athletic coach and college president. Joe lives in Ronan, Montana.

**Henry Jones**, '53 lives in Coolin, Idaho. During his career, he was a park ranger and park superintendent for the National Park Service serving in Arizona, Wyoming, Missouri and California.

### North Cascades

**Louis Stevens**, '51 earned degrees as a pharmacist and a medical doctor. He worked as a pharmacist for three years and, since 1971, has worked as a rheumatologist. Louis, who doesn't plan to retire for another couple of years, lives in Olean, New York.

**Joe Primm**, '60 lives in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Joe worked 26 years for the Forest Service, retiring in 1987. He

**Deadline for  
articles, news and  
features for the January  
issue of *Smokejumper* is  
November 1**

worked for another 12 years in the logging industry and retired again in 1999.

**Larry Zutter**, '62 lives in Snohomish, Washington, where he is a journeyman produce manager for Top Foods. Larry previously was a long haul truck driver and general contractor.

**Mike Ahern**, '64 informed us that the rumors of his demise are greatly exaggerated and that he is not dead as is shown on our web site database. Mike currently lives in El Reno, Oklahoma, where he flies for the FAA. Mike also flew helicopters for the Army in Vietnam.

**Hal Hawley**, '67 received a Ph.D. in education and worked 30 years as a K-12 teacher and school principal. Hal now farms 200 pear trees in Entiat, Washington, where he lives.

**Zeke Reister**, '70 recently received the Washington State Excellence in Education Award. Zeke lives in Leavenworth, Washington.

### Redding

**Vernon Stevenson**, '62 retired in 1999 from the Stanislaus National Forest as an equipment operator foreman. He also worked on the San Bernardino National Forest. He believes he is the only person to make three fire jumps as an equipment operator. Vernon, who lives in Sonora, California, is restoring old cars, building a street rod and traveling.

**Roy Ashbrook**, '63 mostly lives in Europe, but calls Exeter, California, home. He is an international business consultant. Roy also owned a trucking company.

**Richard Grandalski**, '64 retired in 1995 as assistant director for law enforcement for the Washington office of the Forest Service. Richard, who lives in Anacortes, Washington, does law enforcement consulting for Greece, World Bank Albania, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. He spends most of his time in South East Asia.

**Dave Moody**, '70 lives in Challenge, California, since retiring in 1994 as a fuels management officer. Dave currently does consulting work in fuels, manages property and rentals, and whatever else he wants to do.

**Stanley Hill Jr.**, '97 is currently a smokejumper in Redding. He lives in La Mesa, California.

### Redmond

**Scott M. (Scotty) Fairchild**, '74 lives in Juneau, Alaska. He is Region 10 aviation officer for the Forest Service. Scotty maintains his jumper pilot status while enjoying the outdoors with his family.

**Calvin Robinson**, '90 lives in Florence, Montana. He earned a degree in business at the University of Montana and currently works in inside sales for Diversified Plastics Company.

### Pilots

**Kenneth Hoffner** flew Tanker 124 out of Billings, Montana; White River, Battle Mountain, and Minden, Nevada; Medford, Oregon; and McCall, Idaho. Ken, who lives in Sandwich, Massachusetts, is currently a pilot for Continental Airlines. 🍄

# It Isn't a Smokejumper Story But It's "The Mother of All Jump Stories"

by Ken Wright, Associate Editor, B-17 Combat Crewman & Wingmen Newsletter

Many aircrew often believed that if one crewmember's chute was destroyed, he could "buddy" down with another on one chute. Basic problem: no escape hatch on a plane was designed for two people to exit together. Also, with the jerk of opening, there is no way a man could hang onto his buddy and make it. Having said that, there is one case of it having been done.

In November of 1944, this incredible event did happen. Two men were blown out of a Halifax of RAF Bomber Command, one with a chute and one without, 17,000 feet over Germany.

At 5,000 feet, the man with the chute pulled his rip cord. As his chute began to open, the other man collided with him in mid-air and grabbed his legs. They continued down to earth together.

The players in this mid-air drama were two Australians, Flt. Lt. Joe Herman and Flt. Sgt. John Vivash. Members of Halifax squadron No. 466, Herman was the pilot and Vivash the mid-upper gunner.

It was 4 November, 1944. Twice near the target, they were coned by searchlights and twice they peeled away to avoid being nailed by flak. A great deal of flak was bursting around them and Herman took it as a bad omen that if they got coned again, they'd have had it. For the first time in 33 operations, he suggested the crew put on their chutes. They all did, except Herman, who was too occupied on the run up to the target to have the engineer bring his up to him.

A minute later, the bomb-aimer yelled "bombs gone," and they flew out of the worst of the flak and set course for home. They had just started to lose height down to 10,000 feet as per the briefing, when they were hit by flak just behind the rear spar. Two more hits set



(Illustration courtesy Chris Demarest)

each wing on fire from root to tip.

Herman gave the order to jump while he kept the plane level. The engineer said his leg was broken and asked for help. Herman suggested that Vivash give him a hand as he couldn't leave the seat. Herman was relieved to see Vivash coming forward with his chute in his hand.

The Halifax flicked on its back as the right wing folded and Herman was thrown against the roof. The Halifax exploded and Herman found himself falling in the cold night air amid a shower of debris. He was fully conscious—most of all of the fact that he had no parachute.

Realizing the dreadful inevitability of it all, he relaxed his body, resigned to die somewhere far below, very soon. He remembered that they had been about 17,500 feet when the plane blew up. He

didn't know how long it took a man to fall from 17,500 feet, but guessed it wasn't much more than a minute.

A three-quarter moon bathed the countryside below. Herman noticed that various broken metal pieces of the aircraft were apparently stationary with him and then he realized why; they were falling at the same rate he was. Looking at the shapes, he hoped that one of them might be his chute, but nothing of the shape of a parachute pack was among the debris.

Suddenly his body hit something with a thump. The thump winded him and as he fought for breath, he became aware that he was clinging to an object with both arms. Then he was startled to hear a voice that he knew; it was Vivash—and he was gripping Vivash's legs. Above them was a parachute, fully open.

Both men were still dazed from the

explosion that had flung them into mid-air. For them in that moment, there was no drama, no miracle. Later, when they reconstructed the incident, they agreed the dialogue was:

**Vivash:** Is there anyone around?

**Herman:** Yes, I'm down here.

**Vivash:** Where? Where are you?

**Herman:** Here, just below. I'm hanging onto your legs.

**Vivash:** Be careful of my right leg. I think it is broken.

In fact it wasn't, though both legs had been punctured in seven places by shrapnel and were numb, which, plus the fact that he was still suffering from the shock of the explosion, explains why he couldn't feel Herman hanging there.

They fell in silence for some distance, neither man fully comprehending the situation. Herman was aware, if he wasn't dreaming, only that his life had been spared and for its continuance he must not for an instant relax his grip.

**Vivash:** When we get near the deck, d'you think you might manage to drop off?

**Herman:** Maybe.

Then Herman saw the black bowl of the horizon coming up around them, then the tops of the trees and, before he could release his grip, his feet hit the ground and he rolled over. Vivash landed on Herman's chest and broke two of Herman's ribs. For a few minutes, they lay gasping on the ground. Herman, who recovered first, got up.

As well as the broken ribs, his ears and face were split open and bleeding, his left leg was cut, and he was bruised from head to feet. His left flying boot was missing and the left leg of his trousers was in tatters. He was alive and he could walk; he could ask for no more.

They had come down in a small clearing in a pine wood. The parachute hung above them, hooked on a tree.

As the numbness in his legs wore off, Vivash began to feel the full agony of his wounds. But after Herman stopped the bleeding and bandaged the wounds with strips of silk torn from the chute, he was able to walk after a fashion. They evaded capture for four days but on the 8th of November, they were captured.



During their four days of freedom, they were able to analyze the events that had resulted in their mid-air collision. When the Halifax exploded at 17,500 feet, they had both been blown out. Apart from a few seconds' mental void after the explosion, Herman had been fully conscious when he fell. Fortunately for Herman, Vivash blacked out—otherwise, he would have pulled his rip-cord much sooner than he did and there would have been no mid-air reunion.

They had fallen for what they estimated must have been about 12,000 feet, dropping through the darkness at a rate of about 175 feet per second amid a shower of debris, keeping perfect station a few yards from each other. Vivash would not have seen Herman, being unconscious for the greater part of the free fall. Herman realized later that one of the objects he had seen falling near him

might well have been Vivash.

At about 5,000 feet from the ground (they estimated this height from the time they judged it took them to descend together), Vivash had partly recovered consciousness and pulled the rip-cord. He did not remember doing it but did so automatically.

As the chute streamed from the pack on his chest, Vivash began to swing out under it like a pendulum. This oscillation is quite normal. Herman owes his life to it, for here the odds were piled against him. At the end of Vivash's first swing toward Herman, it just happened that Herman was at a point in his head-over-heels tumbling cycle where he was face-down and almost-horizontal.

In this position, he smashed into Vivash's legs, which were almost horizontal at the end of his swing. A second or so later, Vivash's chute would have been fully deployed and Vivash would have decelerated from 120 mph to about 11 mph, and Herman, still falling at 120 mph, would have bounced off. But at the moment they collided, Vivash was still at 120 mph, Herman's grip above his knees held, and as the canopy bumped open, they both decelerated together.

Before they met, they had fallen more than two miles, which took them just more than a minute. Herman worked out that at that point, he would have had less than a half-minute to live. Instead, thanks to Vivash, he covered the last mile to the ground in the much less terrifying time of three to four minutes.

All of Herman's crew came down safely.

Both Herman and Vivash returned to Australia after the war. Vivash died a few years later in a motorcycle accident.

Herman survived a crash in a Tiger Moth on an aerial spraying flight in 1954 when a crosswind hurled him upside-down onto a log heap. We do not know whether he is still with us today. 🙏

*This article reprinted from the January/February 2000 edition of the association newsletter of B-17 Combat Crewmen & Wingmen. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. Michael Steppe (Idaho City '61) thought that this story would be interesting reading. We agree.*

## REUNION HELP LIST

The Reunion 2000 Committee and the NSA wishes to thank the following sponsors & workers:

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### DISPLAYS

<b>Josh Mathiesen</b>	Jerry Spence	Deborah Yoder
Steve Murphy (video)		

### BASE TOURS

<b>Jerry Spence</b>	Peter Briant	Greg Fashano	Dennis Golik	Rico Gonzalez
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Pete Stephenson	Chris Stevens	Robert Turner	Susie Stingley/Russell	Deborah Yoder

### MUSIC ON THE GREEN

<b>Jerry Vice</b>	Rod Dow
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### BANQUET PROGRAM

<b>Mark Youmans</b>	Jerry Spence	Matt Loe	Robert Turner
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## A RESPONSE TO JOHN N. MACLEAN'S ARTICLE, "BLM POLICIES FORCE FIRE OFFICIAL'S RETIREMENT"

I do not doubt the veracity of the pressure put on Les Rosenkrance by the director and deputy director of the Bureau of Land Management to hire a "diversified" candidate to a position requiring certain qualifying experience. And it is also interesting to note that not much diversity was exercised in selecting his replacement. Nevertheless, I do find his overall reaction curious and self-serving.

Rosenkrance came to the bureau's top fire management post riding a wave of confidence, optimism and high expectations among career fire management personnel. Finally, we were getting someone who was not only savvy upper management but was equally knowledgeable of the wildland fire business. A business that at best has always been the bastard child of the bureau's resource dominated programs and initiatives. Especially coming off the disaster that occurred under the auspices of the bureau at South Canyon. There was elation that we were going to pick up the pieces and take this opportunity to become a leader in the interagency wildland firefighting community. We would be disappointed.

Rosenkrance began filling vacant positions and creating new ones. Some of these were filled by highly qualified individuals but a great many were filled with his old cronies. Of the old crony type,

few had more than a modicum of fire experience and what little they possessed was extremely dated and had been picked up primarily through the osmotic process. While they could almost talk the talk, they really didn't have a clue as to the translation. The importing of these highly paid staffers contributed not a whit to the bureau's fire program. Instead it skimmed funds that would have otherwise trickled down to where the rubber meets the road—the fireline.

Diversity at any price in fire will cost plenty. Nina Hatfield and Tom Fry would do well to pay heed to advice they surely heard from their parents, "Don't play with fire!" Otherwise the result is predictable—another tragedy, large or small, after which there will be an untold number of reviews and studies accompanied by much soul searching and hand wringing. And all the while they will have met the enemy and failed to recognize it as themselves. The BLM would be better served if it got out of the suppression business altogether and simply contracted the services.

As for Les Rosenkrance, it is unfortunate that in the end a "directed assignment" resulted in his retirement. But Rosenkrance was absolutely no stranger to the tactic. What goes around comes around.

—Rodger Vorce (Alaska '82) retired

# Reactions to the Redding 60th Reunion of Smokejumpers

"I truly appreciate the opportunity of attending the Redding Reunion. It was so much fun putting the faces with my endless list of names. I had a GREAT TIME!"

**Shirley Braxton** (NSA Office)

"My hats off to the reunion committee, lots of work was done and went off with great fan fare."

**Mike Marcuson** (North Cascades '64)

"My experience and the experience of those I talked to was extremely positive. The time consuming work done by the committee was very apparent. And by the way, a special salute for the dinner and brunch. They were great!"

**Tom Albert** (Cave Junction '64)

"My wife and I had a great time in Redding. I know I speak for all the attendees in congratulating the reunion committee for a very well managed and successful event. The huge preparation effort was both evident and productive."

**John Helmer** (Redding '59)

"This was my first reunion. Makes me wish I'd attended all the others. Very impressive. Huge turnout. Well-planned events were much enjoyed. Only exceptions was very minor grumbling about quality & music style of the dance band (is that the kind of stuff smkjs danced to in '40s & '50s??) [Definitely not—editor]. My display, at Redding Base, of some of my old, out-of-print books, pamphlets, mad articles on smokejumping, parachuting, & firefighting, seemed popular.

"Enjoyed visiting with old-timers at

the loft, demonstrating our new sissy-boy FS-14 three-sizes main canopy, explaining all the new-fangled modifications vs. the rugged old 28-footers you used to jump.

"Friday evening's barbecue was great for visiting, but "free" beer proved too tempting for some as the night wore on. I was designated driver for an SUV full of young drunks who hung-on till midnight closing (did smokejumpers ever drink in the old days??). A personal BIG THANKS from me for all the MANY hours volunteered by reunion organizers.

"The NSA keeps getting better. I had to say something before the crowd in tribute to Wayne Webb & Dick Tracy, but was damn nervous. Wish I could bullshit like Rod Dow."

**Dennis (Big D) Golik** (McCall '74)

"Let me extend to the reunion committee my deep appreciation and heartfelt thanks for the absolutely superb Smokejumper Reunion 2000! From the outset there was a tangible aura of bonding permeating the entire proceedings which reached its peak at the excellent banquet. The attendant adrenaline rush was akin to that one experiences after each parachute jump. The Sunday memorial was very appropriate and moving. Each and every one who worked so long and hard to achieve such superlative results is to be commended to the highest degree."

**Neil T. Shier** (Cave Junction '46)

"Just a note to tell you how much I appreciated this reunion. It was the very best. The memorial service with Rev. Stan Tate was impressive."

**Delos Dutton** (Missoula '51)

"Thanks again for one of the best reunions I have been blessed to attend. Six out of the 18 rookies that trained in Cave Junction in 1960 were in attendance. We had a lot of time to talk over old times, tell lies and meet other jumpers, both current and ex's like ourselves.

"I have talked with several jumpers by phone since the reunion, jumpers that missed for one reason or the other. They all say they will not miss the next reunion."

**Gary (Tex) Welch** (Cave Junction '60)

"When I popped into the reunion last weekend, I sort of thought I would not know/recognize anybody at all. It had been literally back in the mid-1950s when I left Intercity Airport in Winthrop and had been to no smokejumper activities at all in all those interim years.

"I was pleasantly surprised last weekend to find myself talking to a number of people last weekend, who I had not seen for a full 45 years—something of a record for me. Thanks again (to Larry Lufkin) for "donating" your extra barbecue ticket to me. At the time I introduced myself to you, I was already just about to depart—before things even got started.

"Tonight I visited your Web site for the first time (a good Web site) and joined the NSA."

**Sterling Pickering** (North Cascades '54)

*(Continued on back page)*

## Reunion 2000 Group Pictures, Pins & T-Shirts

For any information on the group photos contact: **Douglas Beck** (707) 443-2639.

Photos can be viewed at [PMPROOF.COM](http://PMPROOF.COM) password 2000. Price is \$18 per 8x10.

The front/back design Reunion 2000 t-shirt created by **Brad Hughes** can be special ordered for \$15 plus shipping. Use the NSA merchandise order form and be sure to include your size.

*We still have some of the Reunion 2000 commemorative pins left. Super-looking smokejumper/parachute enameled designs on both pins:*

<b>Reunion 2000 Pin</b>	<b>Item #133</b>	<b>\$1.00</b>
<b>Memorial Brunch Pin</b>	<b>Item #134</b>	<b>\$1.00</b>

*Use the Merchandise Order Form.*

# Missoula Jumper Leads Largest Professional Foresters Society

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Just before boarding a Johnson Flying Service Ford Trimotor for his first jump on a June day in 1957, **Fred Ebel** (Missoula '57) took aside fellow Missoula trainee **Herb Fischer** (Missoula '57) to ask him an important question: "If I can't go, will you push me?"

Fischer, now a retired Delta Airlines captain and also a NSA member, didn't have to shove. When their spotter slapped Ebel on his shoulder, he went with Fischer right behind.

Ebel, 64, now a consulting forester and president of the 18,000-member Society of American Foresters, was typical of most smokejumpers of the '50s. They were the "second generation," the young men who followed the program's pioneers and World War II vets. Most were college students who jumped one, two or three years to put themselves through school, then entered their professions. They left smokejumping behind, but carry through life memories of their adventurous youths.

Ebel was studying forestry at the University of Montana and qualified for the jumpers between his sophomore and junior years.

By today's standards, his clothing and the equipment he used were primitive: blue jeans and cotton shirt were his fire fighting clothes. His jump suit also was cotton, padded with felt, over which he strapped a cotton parachute harness with a single-point release box. In those pre-"D-bag" days that harness had to be cinched so tight to lessen opening shock that photos of that era's jumpers invariably depict them hunched over, appearing far shorter than they were. When Ebel's 28-foot flat circular canopy cracked open above him, it might be pure white or one of those relatively new "candy stripes."

Ebel wasn't a "rookie" in 1957, he was a "new man." It would be 24 years before **Deanne Shulman** would leap the gender barrier by graduating from smokejumper training at McCall.

Ebel jumped a single season, seven training and eight fire jumps, then moved on to begin practicing his nascent profession with the Bureau of Land Management as a forester trainee out of Boise.

Following his graduation in 1959, Ebel entered Naval Officer Candidate School, then served three years' active duty as a line officer on a helicopter carrier. He later joined the Naval Reserve and has retired as a captain after 28 years of active and reserve duty.

In 1966, the Boise-Cascade Corp. hired him as a forester. During his 21 years with that firm, Ebel was a logging supervisor, timberland manager, and then chief forester for Eastern Oregon.

In 1987, he accepted an offer from WTD Industries, which supplied manufacturing plants and sawmills from the West Coast to New England. He became a regional timberland manager, responsible for feeding seven mills in Oregon, Washington, Montana and South Dakota.

A colon cancer operation and chemotherapy treatments in 1989 prompted an injunction from his wife, Nancy, to slow down, so he formed a consulting firm, Ebel & Associates, in Spokane. He, a partner and up to six associates give advice and help to about 10 small to medium-sized timber firms each year. In addition, he owns and manages about 1,000 acres of timberland from eastern Oregon to Montana.

Ebel has moved through the ranks to the top job in America's



*Fred Ebel, president, Society of American Foresters. Insert shows Fred Ebel, smokejumper, 1957. (Courtesy Fred Ebel)*

largest foresters' society by taking on many jobs. Those include chair of SAF's Oregon State Society, participation in the association's national task force on endangered species, chair of the national policy committee and, in 1999, he served as vice president.

His professional, military and personal achievements (he has two daughters and two grandkids) are matters of pride, of course, but Ebel is also intensely proud of being a smokejumper.

"I was in the best condition of my life, not only because of the training, but also the work," he recalls. He tells of a packout from a fire on the Bitterroot National Forest through lodgepole windfalls so dense that he and his jump partner were unable to shoulder their packs, but had to pass them hand-to-hand over and through dead-falls.

"It took us six hours to make it to the trail with rain-soaked chutes and suits, and the distance was only a quarter-mile."

Ebel recently visited the Missoula base to retrieve his smokejumping records. It's obvious those are precious to him.

"It was only a single season, but those three months were a real high point in my life. I stay in touch with several other jumpers and now and then look at some of the pictures I took.

"Great days. I'd never trade them." 🍄

# This Could Affect Your Retirement!!!

In the April issue of the NSA news letter, an editorial was submitted concerning a grievance that current and former smokejumpers have initiated against the U.S. Forest Service for recovery of retirement credit. Several individuals feel that the issue needs more broad coverage because the grievance could impact a very large number of current and retired USFS employees, and therefore, the following comments will review the issue and bring interested parties up to date on how the grievance is progressing.

On May 4, 1984, the United States Forest Service, in response to an employee grievance, directed all field offices to grant an additional six months of retirement credit to the actual number of days a permanent-seasonal fire fighter was employed during any fire season. The Forest Service recognized that many permanent-seasonal fire fighters would not be able to make the twenty years of service by age fifty if the policy did not compensate those individuals who were not able to work large portions of any year due to the lack of a full-time position. However, in making this change in direction, the Forest Service did not provide the six-month additional credit to permanent-seasonal employees who held a civil service appointment prior to May 1984. This contrasts with the Bureau of Land Management who has granted additional retirement credit to fire fighters since the inception of the fire fighter retirement program during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

In response to this arbitrary treatment, eight current and former Missoula, MT, fire fighters, in

October 1997, grieved the Forest Service's failure to provide those pre-1984 fire fighters the additional retirement credit. For various reasons, the U.S. Forest Service rejected even ruling on the merits of the grievance. In response, Craig James, a Boise, ID, lawyer in the law firm of Mauk and Burgoyne, was retained to file an appeal with the Department of Agriculture on the Forest Service decision. In early November 1999, the director of human resources for the Department of Agriculture denied the appeal on the grounds that he did not have the authority to make a decision on this issue. In mid-December 1999, the eight fire fighters filed an appeal with the Merit Systems Protection Board in Denver, CO, asking that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service grant the additional six months of retirement credit for pre-1984 employment.

The Merit Systems Protection Board rejected the appeal by the eight fire fighters by stating that the USFS needed to make a decision on the grievance. Late this past winter, the USFS formally denied the grievance, and the Merit Systems Protection Board will have a hearing on the grievance in mid-November 2000 in Missoula, MT.

Any retiree or an individual contemplating retirement can quickly figure that additional retirement credit at 2% per year can have a significant impact over a short period of time not to mention the total amount of one's retirement. Remember, this includes EVERYONE who has retired as a primary or secondary fire fighter or who has used their fire fighter time

to meet other retirement criteria.

A number of individuals not mentioned in the suit have asked if the grievance could be turned into a "class action suit" which would effectively cover all current or future retirees. In response, the grievants asked the Merit Systems Protection Board to incorporate all eight appeals and any other retiree potentially affected by a favorable ruling into a class action suit.

The MSPB judge denied the class action appeal. However, the legal counsel (Mr. James) believes that with a favorable ruling for the eight grievants by the MSPB, any current or future retiree should file the necessary forms to the USFS for a recalculation of their retirement benefits.

As one can see, this has been a lengthy legal process, and the "major event" is yet to occur. At this point, a number of very generous individuals have contributed a significant amount of money to meet the legal fees. Over \$12,000 has been raised and spent, and it is estimated that another \$5,000 to \$7,000 will be needed for the Merit Systems Protection Board hearing.

Therefore, the fund-raising continues. Interested parties are asked to contribute \$50 per each fire season in which they could gain retirement credit. Your contribution is documented, and a successful resolution will ask for legal fees to be covered by the USFS. In such a settlement, those who contributed will have their money refunded. You can send your contributions to Willis Curdy, 11280 Kona Ranch Road, Missoula, MT 59804. Your support is greatly appreciated. 🙏

# Running the Yampa

by George Harpole (Missoula '49)

The Yampa was everything I'd heard experienced rafters say, and more. The high point of the 90-mile river trip across northern Colorado into Utah was going through the Warm Spring Rapids (Class 10, 13,000 cubic feet per second) with my son-in-law, Russell Huff. Since this was risky rafting, Russ didn't want me to go, but I begged and he gave in. Everyone else in our raft hiked the portage.

Russ was on the oars and I was the bailer. Soon after we kicked off, he lost an oar on a rock behind the first "haystack." We then slid helplessly into the big one. It happened in a blink. The wave curled and the raft came back over the top of us. When I saw what was coming, I gasped for a deep breath. Before I got it, the air turned to muddy water and I went to the bottom of the dark hole and banged around on rocks.

It seemed like a long, long time before I could see any light from above and I was running out of air. In spite of the lifejacket, the currents had carried me about 35 yards before I surfaced, then went down again.

Later, I told my wife my experience must have been similar to what a sock goes through

in the washing machine. Rafters call it "The Maytag." Now that I've done that, I'd rather have a line-over, hit a snag or eat K-rations for a week.

When I got into shallower water, I started banging on rocks. I knew I couldn't take much more of that crap. Then, a kayaker came from behind and said, "Grab On!" I was successful on my third attempt. He pulled me to the riverbank. As I flopped on it, the sun's warmth made me realize how cold the water was in early June.

A paramedic in our group was the first to get to me. My watch was gone, there were a couple of deep gouges on the back of my hand, but otherwise I was okay. It had happened so fast that my heart rate was normal. However, I'd hit a lot of rocks and the black-and-blue and soreness didn't start to show until a day later. Oh well, in the spirit of John Wayne, I made a complete recovery in a matter of minutes. Others in our group recovered our gear, which had taken water in spite of being sealed in a "watertight" bag. The steel raft frame was bent and one of the oars was broken.

That's what can happen to grandpas on



George Harpole. (Courtesy George Harpole)

the Yampa. The five days' rafting on that river were the most exciting I've had in my life. The "Maytag," of course, was the high point of the trip. And, yes, my heart rate now jumps at the sight of anything that looks like a "haystack."

George Harpole jumped at Missoula from 1949 to 1951 while a student at the University of Montana. He followed a forestry career path and finished with a 25-year stint with the U.S. Forest Service in economics research. George is semi-retired in Grand Junction, Colo., where he competes in the 70-74 year division in Masters swim meets.

## NSA MEMBER PROFILE

- Chris Demarest, associate
- *Smokejumper* magazine illustrator
- Chris Demarest is an artist and author/illustrator of children's books. Born and raised in New England, he studied art at the University of Mass. and after a short stint in Seattle, settled in Boston to start a career as a freelance illustrator eventually working for several publications including the *Atlantic*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Forbes* magazines. Eventually this led to doing children's books which is now his primary focus. Chris has written and illustrated over fifty published books most of which aim at children in the two to eight year range.

His interest in smokejumping and parachuting go back to his childhood in part due to his father having been a pilot who took him aloft on several occasions. In the early 1960s he saw first-hand an international parachuting competition and knew one day he would eventually experience the thrill of jumping.

That thrill, late in coming, is soon to be realized. His latest project is a book for children on smokejumpers. For this book, his research is taking him to the Redding Jump Base and sometime during the course of this project he will experience the thrill of his first jump.

This fall, *FIREFIGHTERS A to Z*, based on his experience as a volunteer fire fighter, is due out. The book, to be published in August, has gotten great reviews with several thousand advance sales requests. The smokejumper book will follow Chris' trip to Redding. *SMOKEJUMPERS 1 to 10* will be published by McElderry Books and will focus on the five to eight year olds. Should make a great gift for your younger kids or grandchildren.

Chris Demarest currently resides with his young son in New Hampshire.



Chris Demarest. (Courtesy Chris Demarest)

## Reactions to the Redding Smokejumpers Reunion 2000

*(continued from page 36)*

“Thanks for the good times and good people at the Redding Reunion. I always feel for the ones who don't know what they are missing.”

**Dick Hughes** (Missoula '64)

“I can not tell you how fortunate I feel for having the opportunity to attend the Reunion. As an active USFS fire program manager and as an NSA member, being there meant much more than I can put into words. What I felt at the celebration, and I now carry with me always, is the tremendous bonding of kinship that has maintained and will continue to do so over time among this fine group of people. This was an occasion where it didn't matter when or where you jumped—but merely that you did it and knew the “whys and wherefores.” I met more people, forged new bonds, healed old scars and just plain had a good time.

“The committee did a great job organizing the event and treating guests very well. The Forest Service was honored that a place at the banquet podium was saved for Janice McDougle, deputy chief of State & Private Forestry, which oversees FS Fire & Aviation Management. Janice shared that it was one of the most inspiring events she had ever been to!

“I also wish to thank the committee for highlighting the diversity and interagency cohesiveness during the celebration. Kasey Rose spoke well, representing the BLM and Great Basin smokejumpers; Murry was outstanding; and the most meaningful moment in all of this for me was Troop and I helping each other up off the ground after the third “gobi-high” photo (his knees—my feet!) Let Doug Beck know that's the photocopy we want! We may be older, we may ache a little more, but our memories live on—now, even more better because of the “refresher” in Redding 2000!

“Last note: Special thanks to Arlen Cravens and to the 'rook class that skipped to RENO for that wonderful shot in the short video; it's a classic—hangs right in there with Swiftie's

cover photo on the NSA documentary—hey, great time—no complaints! See ya on the next one - Appy - CJ '78”

**Mike Apicello** (Cave Junction '78)

### Better Than Hitting the House?



*Scott Anderson. See related article on page 6. (Courtesy Mike Dark)*



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