

1-18-2023

Smokejumper biographies for 1953 rookie class, A-J

National Smokejumper Association

1953 Rookie Class A-J

James J. Abate (McCall '53)

Jim died from a heart attack on November 11, 1997, in Clearfield, UT. He jumped at McCall during the 1953 season. In addition to his seven training jumps, he had 13 fire jumps that season.

Jay R. Anderson (McCall '53)

Jay died March 2, 2015, in his home in Ogden, Utah. Jay graduated from Ogden High School and attended the University of Wyoming before graduating in Civil Engineering from Utah State University. He founded Great Basin Engineering, a consulting civil engineering and land-surveying firm in 1959. Today that business continues as Great Basin Engineering in Ogden and Anderson, Wahlen and Associates in Salt Lake City.

His passion later in life was big game hunting. He was the first person in the State of Utah to successfully take each of the "Once in a Lifetime" Big Game animals in Utah through the draw, accomplishing this in 1998.

He helped found the Bastian Ranch Cooperative Wildlife Management Unit in 1993. He loved being the operator of this property and providing hunting opportunities for people and especially spending time on the mountain with his children and grandchildren. Jay jumped at McCall during the 1953 season.

Richard D. Austin (Missoula '53)

Dick, 78, died at his home in Cove, Oregon, July 11, 2013. He received his master's degree from Montana State University and became a voc-ed teacher in Plevna and Bridger, Montana.

Dick then worked for the State of Washington Highway Dept. as a landscape architect before going back to teaching. He retired in 1995, after 24 years as the horticulture instructor at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington.

Dick jumped at Grangeville in 1953, Missoula (54-57-58), and West Yellowstone 59-61 and was an NSA member.

Leonard L. "Blix" Blixrud (Missoula '53)

Blix was born August 8, 1934, in Choteau, Montana, grew up on a ranch west of there, and graduated from Choteau H.S. in 1953. He took extension courses in real estate and accounting and was the owner of an Independent Insurance Agency, until 1973 when he went into cattle ranching and managing irrigation co.

“When I came home from smokejumping in 1953, I was injured bucking out a horse. It went over backwards, and the result was I almost lost my ankle. The injury was bad with bone infection. It wasn’t until modern medicine that I was able to get it fused.” Blix jumped at Missoula during the 1953 season.

William B. “Bill” Buck (Cave Junction ’53)

“My background is common for kids born during the Depression (5/3/30): broken family, three siblings, competitive sports and taking every job I could find. I was recruited out of high school to run Cross Country and Track for the Univ. of Michigan where I earned a bachelor’s in Forestry in 1954. I jumped at Cave Junction 1953-54.

“I served four years as a Marine Corps Officer and established the first ‘Rock and Ice Climbing School.’ I returned to the USFS in 1958 and served as a District staff man on two Ranger Districts.”

Career:

District Ranger (DR) Mountainair RD, Cibola NF 10/61-8/64

DR Globe RD, Tonto NF 8/64-4/68

Fire/Watershed Staff Officer Apache NF 4/68-9/72

Fire Mgt. Officer Coconino NF 9/72-6/83

Notable accomplishments while serving with USFS

Created, trained two (25 man) firefighting crews (the Los Toros).

Created, trained five (10 man) Globe Hotshot crews-1st in R-3.

Prepared first Multiple Use Management Plan for Globe RD.

Developed prescriptions and conducted large-scale broadcast burns to Convent Chaparral fields back to grasslands.

Trained ninety plus employees in broadcast burning.

Chaired the revision of the National Air Tanker contract

Chairman National Helicopter operations Handbook revision

Authored Yellowstone Fire Rebuttal for Journal of Forestry 1989

Authored Gypsy Moth Control Plan for Maryland State Forests 1989

William Alexander Calder III (Missoula ’53)

Bill, 76, died April 23, 2002, from leukemia. He was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, September 2, 1934. He graduated from the University of Georgia in 1955 and enlisted in the Coast Guard where he became a pilot doing search and rescue operations. Bill obtained his master’s from Washington State (1963) and his Ph.D. from Duke in 1966.

He taught at Virginia Polytechnic before moving to the University of Arizona teaching in the Ecology Department. Bill studied birds and tiny mammals and

had many significant publications in professional journals. He was a regular runner and backpacker often the oldest in his division in annual races. Bill jumped at Missoula 1953-55.

Donald Lee Chapman (Cave Junction '53)

Don, 69, died January 7, 2001, in Waukesha, Wisconsin. He was born November 6, 1935. He graduated from San Jose State University (Calif.) and attended law school at Willamette University in Oregon. Don was a veteran of the Army 11th Airborne Division and received the Bronze Star in Korea.

John B. Jack Coburn (Idaho City '53)

Jack was born May 18, 1934, in Boise where he grew up and graduated from Boise H.S. in 1953. He then went into the Army where he spent two years, most of it in Korea with the Combat Engineers.

Jack was a professional truck driver for 30 years driving over two million miles out of Boise before his retirement in 1996. He jumped at McCall 1953, 1956, and lives in Midvale, Idaho.

James Malone Coleman (Missoula '53)

The Rev. James M. "Jim" Coleman died May 4, 2020, in Baton Rouge, LA. He was born August 26, 1929, in Memphis, TN and was educated at Christian Brothers High School, graduating in 1947.

After serving in the U.S. Army, he continued his education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He later obtained a Master of Divinity at The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and a Doctor of Ministry from the Seminary of the Southwest at Wake Forest University.

After his ordination in 1957, Jim served as priest in the towns of Lebanon, Gallatin, Johnson City, and Memphis, Tennessee as well as Martinsville, Virginia. In 1975 he was called to serve as rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where he remained until 1989. He served as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, Memphis until 1993 when he was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of West Tennessee and served as its Bishop from 1994 until his retirement in 2001.

He held close the memories of daring, work-intensive adventure as a smokejumper during the 1953 season for the U.S. Forestry Service in the Pacific Northwest. Jim hiked the Appalachian Trail with his sons and friends every year for over 40 years. One of his crowning outdoor achievements was a trek to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Africa in 1989.

Robert Paul Conklin (Missoula '53)

Robert, 75, died July 8, 2009, in Butte, Montana. He was born September 7, 1933, in Williston, North Dakota. He earned a master's from Western Montana College and taught high school English 1966-93. He jumped at Missoula 1953-54, 64, 65, and at West Yellowstone 1962-63.

Robert became a Naval Aviator in 1958. During the summers 1968-83 he taught Aviation Education college workshops at West Montana College, Montana Tech, and Carroll College.

Ralph R. Cook (Missoula '53)

Ralph died March 3, 2006, at his home in Sun Lakes, Arizona. He served in the Air Force from 1948 to 1952 before getting his degree in industrial engineering from Montana State University in Bozeman. Ralph started his engineering career with Boeing and then with Honeywell retiring in 1991. He then served with the Peace Corps in Chile. Ralph was an avid whitewater canoeist and continued to participate with a local hiking club until the final months of his life. Ralph jumped at Missoula 1953-55 and 1957.

Harold Gene Crosby (McCall '53)

Gene, 82, died July 13, 2014, in Boise, Idaho. He was a graduate of Oklahoma State University and jumped at McCall 1953-54, 57-59.

Gene brought a plane while at OSU and later worked as a seasonal pilot for the USFS. Gene also flew for the Johnson Air Company flying mail and hunters into the backcountry. His next job was in Boise, Idaho, working for Joe Albertson, as his co-pilot, flying him around the country as the grocery store chain expanded.

Gene got an award for flying one million miles without an accident, quite a feat with a single engine plane over mountainous terrain. He served as a First Lieutenant in the U. S. Army from 1954 to 1957.

James W. Dawson (Missoula '53)

Jim, 77, died April 3, 2010, at his home in Tallahassee, Florida. He graduated from the University of Colorado and later earned his master's degree from Syracuse University. Jim served with the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division and then as a foreign service officer with the U.S. Dept. of State. He was awarded the Medal for Civilian Service for his efforts with USAID while serving in Vietnam. After retiring from USAID, he was the

director of finance at the Lee County Public Health Dept. Jim jumped at Missoula in 1953 and 1956.

Charles “Chuck” Dysart (Missoula '53)

Chuck passed away August 15, 2006, after a courageous battle with ALS. He attended the University of Washington and Eastern Washington University. After Chuck graduated from Eastern, he served several years in the Navy on the Aircraft Carrier the USS Boxer.

He went into 30-year teaching career and taught everything from Cheerleading to Special Education, High School, and Grade School. Chuck was a private pilot and began building a plane that airplane was finished in 2005. In 2003 Chuck was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Throughout his illness he worked for the cause of ALS research, making a trip to Washington D.C. to lobby congress to obtain more funding to research ALS.

Gayne G. “Gus” Erdmann (Missoula '53)

Gus was born at home May 20, 1933, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Together with best friend **Fritz Wolfrum** (MSO-53) he graduated from Wauwatosa H.S. in 1951. He took pre-forestry classes at the University of Wisconsin and drove to Montana in 1952 where he worked for the USFS on a trail crew and as a Lookout. Gus rookied at Missoula in 1953 and jumped the 1957-58 seasons. He was drafted into the Army where he served as a Sergeant in a field artillery division. Gus returned to the University of Montana where he earned his bachelor's and master's in Forest Science in 1960.

Gus worked for the USFS as a Research Forester at Iowa State University for six years. In 1966 he transferred to research in Management and Ecology at the Northern Hardwood Project in Marquette, Michigan, and later spent six years in Wisconsin with the North Central States Experimental Station. During his career, Gus wrote or co-authored more than 40 scientific publications. He retired from the Forest Service in 1989.

“Gus loved smokejumping and 30 years with the old Forest Service.” In later years he liked being a consulting forester with small woodland owners. He is passionate about deer hunting, fishing in Canada, and being in the woods in Wisconsin.

Robert R. Evans (Idaho City '53)

Bob died June 28, 2010, in Tucson, AZ, after a brief illness. He grew up in River Edge, NJ and served in the Korean War as an airplane navigator.

After his military service he attended Utah State University, graduating in 1956 with a BS in Journalism and later a MS in Sociology. During his time at Utah State, he spent the summers of 1953 and 1954 as a smokejumper based in Idaho City. He later earned a PhD in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin and he and his wife Carol had a counseling practice in Tucson for the past 25 years. He also had a private pilot's license and his own Cessna and led an active life with his family.

Arthur B. Flick (West Yellowstone '53)

Art died at his home in Bath, NY, November 15, 1995, from a stroke suffered earlier. He graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in forestry and worked 21 years in resource management for the state of New York. Art jumped at West Yellowstone during the 1953 season.

William Lyman "Bill" "Obe" Floyd (McCall '53)

Bill died June 22, 2020, in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He was born April 9, 1930, in Driggs, Idaho. Bill graduated from Boise H.S. in 1948 and spent four years in the Navy (Seabees) during the Korean War. He jumped at McCall 1953-55. After graduating from the University of Idaho in 1957 with a degree in Business Administration, he spent the next 42 years in agri-business, homebuilding construction and real estate. Obe served two terms in the Idaho State Senate in the early 1980s.

William E. "Bill" Frame (Missoula '53)

"I was born on Valentine's day in 1933. My mother was at my Grandma's house about three miles from Northfield, MN. I understand they were worried about getting my mother to town because of the predicted snow and cold weather, but she made it to the hospital.

"I grew up outside of Northfield on a dairy farm of 200 acres and graduated from Northfield H.S. in 1951. I started college at St. Olaf College in Northfield, but after two years, I was on probation. My father said that it was my sister's turn to go to Carleton College. He couldn't pay for both. I understood and got a job in Heppner, OR, as a fire guard on the Umatilla N.F. Hitchhiking back to MN in the fall, I got a ride with an ex-smokejumper who told me all about it and where to apply. I did apply and began jumping in the summer of 1953." Bill jumped at Missoula 1953, 55, 57, and at Grangeville 1954.

"The next Spring quarter I went back to school, but this time at Mankato State Teachers College in Mankato, MN. It is amazing how my grades improved when I had to pay my own expenses. I continued smokejumping

the next two summers, in fact I went to New Mexico in 1955. The next summer I skipped smoke jumping to go to summer school so I could graduate in 1957. I graduated with degrees in Math and Science. I married Sandy Hamann a week after graduation, June 7, 1957. I had to get to Missoula to do the refresher course the next week.

“I started teaching school in September 1957 and was awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) fellowship to go to San Diego State College for the school year of 1959-1960. I went back to teaching when I returned. I got three more summers through NSF at the University of Montana, finishing my master’s degree in 1966.

“I continued teaching Math at John Marshall H.S. in Rochester, MN. We bought a farm near Pine Island, MN (about 25 miles from school). We had some beef cows, and I did some crop farming on my Dad’s farm in Northfield when he retired his dairy farm. I then retired from teaching in 1991, having completed 33 years at John Marshall.

“We recently sold the farm and now live in a senior living apartment in Rochester, MN. We have one son and two daughters in MN, 10 grandchildren, and 9 great grandchildren, the 3 oldest being in the 8th grade. Pretty bad for a couple that once belonged to the Zero Population Organization in the 70s & 80s!”

Doyle W. Gerrard (Missoula '53)

Doyle, 89, died April 17, 2019, in Missoula. Moving from Ohio, he came to Montana to attend college. Doyle served with the Marine Corps in Korea.

After earning his teaching credential, he taught in Montana, Wyoming, and other western states. Doyle took up distance running in his late 40s and ran marathons and 10K races.

Upon retirement from teaching, he lived in the Bitterroot Valley, became a skilled hunter and was an advocate for the Friends of the Bitterroot. Doyle jumped at Missoula during the 1953-55 seasons.

Wallace J. Greentree (Missoula '53)

Wally died on May 28, 2005, while running the final mile of the Prince of Wales Marathon. His teammates carried his racing number the final 300 yards, thus finishing the race. The following was written by his daughter, Diane Greentree Tschirgi, appearing in the USFS *SourDough Notes* Summer 2005 issue:

“My Dad, Wally Greentree, was a man full of life. He started out as a smokejumper and ended as a marathoner, and never slowed down in between. His Forest Service career began with a stint as a smoke jumper

in Montana. He loved to tell us how the first 18 times he went up in an airplane he never landed. He started college but dropped out for a while, forgetting there was a draft. He was quickly reminded when he was called up. He served two years in the Army from 1958-59. After returning home, he finished his forestry degree and took a job with the U.S. Forest Service in Berkeley, California.

“(Later), he took a research job at a ranger district in Ft. Collins, Colorado in 1976. Tragedy struck in 1978 when his wife, Beth, died of cancer. Suddenly, Dad found himself the sole parent to three teenagers. He took it in stride, working full time, cooking, and raising us kids. Sometimes he would bring me along on road trips, though I thought the lime green USFS vehicles were uncool. We also went on a lot of hikes and camping trips as a family, though I must confess I didn’t care to learn all the common and scientific names of all the plants and trees we saw. What I did enjoy was the obvious love he had for the outdoors, of which his work was an extension.

“Dad took a position on the Tongass National Forest inventory in 1981. We started in Sitka, and then moved onto Petersburg, and then Ketchikan. That was a lot of moving for a teenager, but I got used to it and even did some moving on my own when I applied for and was accepted as a Rotary exchange student and went to the Philippines for a year. The Rotarians there really enjoyed referring to my dad as “Forester Greentree.”

“I believe Dad’s favorite job was in Thorne Bay managing small timber sales. He retired in 1995, after 32 years with the USFS. He decided to stay in Thorne Bay and bought some property with a lot of old growth trees on Setter Lake. One of the first things he did was to inventory and catalogue his trees. Then clear all the underbrush. Then build some trails. After all that was done, he started building his house. I guess the priorities of an old forester are a little different from the rest of us ‘civilians.’ He never did finish

William N. Hale (Missoula '53)

Bill died December 8, 2018, at his home in Spokane, Washington. After graduating from high school in 1948, he attended Clark College where he played baseball. Bill enlisted in the Army and was a member of the 82nd Airborne during the Korean War where he received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

After his enlistment, Bill enrolled at the University of Montana and graduated with a degree in Geology. He jumped at Missoula 1953-57 while attending the university.

Bill worked for the Bureau of Mines from 1961 until his retirement in 1994. He commuted to work throughout his career and twice biked from Spokane to Beach, North Dakota, where he was born.

Donal W. “Don” Halloran (Missoula '53)

Don was born August 3, 1933, in Boston, Massachusetts, and grew up in Newton, MA, where he graduated from high school in 1951. He earned his bachelor's in Forestry from the University of Massachusetts in 1955, with additional graduate work in Ecology at the University of Colorado 1963-64, and the University of British Columbia 1964-65. While in college, Don jumped at Missoula 1953-55. He served in the Navy as a 3rd Class Medic 1956-58.

Career:

1965-97—Associate Professor Biology University Wisconsin System
1973-75—Peace Corps—Establish a Wildlife Education Unit in Botswana
1968-69—Canadian Wildlife Service radio telemetry of Grizzly Bears
U.S. Park Service seasonal naturalist at Bryce Canyon and Glacier NPs
For eleven summers.

“For the past 20 years I have been involved with conservation lectures in Wisconsin. I have rekindled my interest in flying my 1948 Piper Vagabond and restoring Model A Fords. Have also enjoyed wilderness canoe trips in Montana and Utah—have also traveled back to Africa, Europe, and Central America.”

Huntington Talbott Hatch (Missoula '53)

Hunt, 90, died December 7, 2022. He was born March 6, 1932, in Moscow, Idaho. He graduated from high school in 1950 in the bottom quarter of his class. Hunt stated in his memoir, “after the fishing, hunting, and girl chasing, I didn't have much time for studying.” He later graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in Forestry. In 1963 he joined the USAF where he flew jet fighters. After the service, Hunt began flying for Trans World Airlines for 28 years from 1964-92. He was also a commercial fisherman and a tree farmer. In 1995 he was the runner-up for the National Tree Farmer of the Year. Hunt jumped at Missoula 1953-55.

Lowell Sherman Hayes (Missoula '53)

Lowell jumped at Missoula 1953 and at Grangeville 1956 and 1958. He was born January 22, 1934, in Hutchinson, Kansas. Lowell, 42, died May 7, 1976, in Helena, Montana-suicide. Lowell was a member of the Helena

School District teaching staff and had previously taught at Harve, Ennis, and at Coos Bay, Oregon.

Gerald Eugene “Jerry” Helmer (North Cascades '53)

Jerry, 24, died June 23, 1958, in the crash of a Twin-Beech on the Eight Mile Ridge Fire 15 miles north of Winthrop, WA. He was 24 at the time and lived in Sweet Home, OR. Jerry had served as a paratrooper in the Korean War. He enlisted in October 1953 and was discharged August 1955.

He was born June 3, 1933, in Wadena, Minnesota. Jerry is buried in Dallas, Oregon. He jumped at NCSB 1953, 1956-58.

Edward L. Henry (Missoula '53))

Ed died July 25, 2006, after being stuck by a bicyclist while rollerblading on a pathway near Teton Village, Wyoming. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1956 with a forestry degree. Ed jumped at Missoula from 53-55 and at West Yellowstone in 1956. After college, he became a Navy pilot and flew for five years before going back to college and obtaining his master's degree in business administration from U.C. Berkeley in 1967. Ed worked a year for Weyerhaeuser before starting a career as a commercial airline pilot that lasted 25 years.

Edwin T. “Ed” Hermes (Missoula '53)

Ed died June 2, 1963, in the crash of a helicopter that he was flying from Twin Falls, Idaho, to New Mexico where he had a contract to spray crops. The wreckage was found in a remote area near South Powder Horn, Colorado, two months after the crash. Ed jumped at Missoula 1953-54 and 1960.

Arthur L. Jacobs (Cave Junction '53)

Arthur L. Jacobs, 86, died November 25, 2018, in Byron Center, MI. During college he served in the United States Forest Service as a smokejumper. Later in life he excelled as an award-winning watercolor artist. Art jumped the 1953 season at Cave Junction.

Miles L. Johnson (McCall '53)

Miles died from a heart attack at his home in Boise on October 26, 1997 at the age of 63. He was a jumper from 1953 through 1961. Miles worked with the CIA on a part-time basis later moving to full-time and retiring from the agency in 1973. He, along with other smokejumpers, is mentioned in the January 1998 article in the "Air and Space/Smithsonian" magazine in an article titled "Secret Mission to Tibet". These night flights were conducted in

support of the Tibetan revolution against the Red Chinese. Miles jumped at McCall 1953-61.

Henry L. “Hank” Jones (Missoula '53)

Hank received his bachelor's degree from Eastern Washington University in 1962. Prior to that, he jumped at Missoula during the 1953 season, was in the USAF as a Survival Instructor 1954-58, and attended EWU 1955-1962. He was born January 29, 1935, in Stanton, Kentucky.

Hank then started a 30-year career with the National Park Service with positions at Tonto National Monument (62-66), Rocky Mt. NP (66-68), Grand Teton NP (68-71), Ozark National Scenic Riverways (71-73), Glen Canyon National Rec. Area (73-76), Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (76-80), and Sunset Crater Nat. Monuments as Superintendent (80-87), after which he retired. Hank jumped at Missoula during the 1953 season.

William M. “Bill” Joyner (Missoula '53)

Bill attended North Carolina State and Wake Forest Universities 1953-56. Before that time, he was in the Marine Corps 1948-52 where he was a staff sergeant and parachute rigger. Bill worked as a CPA 1957-62, and with the city/county bureau of identification in Fayetteville, NC, (1962-85). He also retired from the Cumberland County Sheriff's Dept. as a Captain in 1985.