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Smokejumper Magazine, October 2001

National Smokejumper Association

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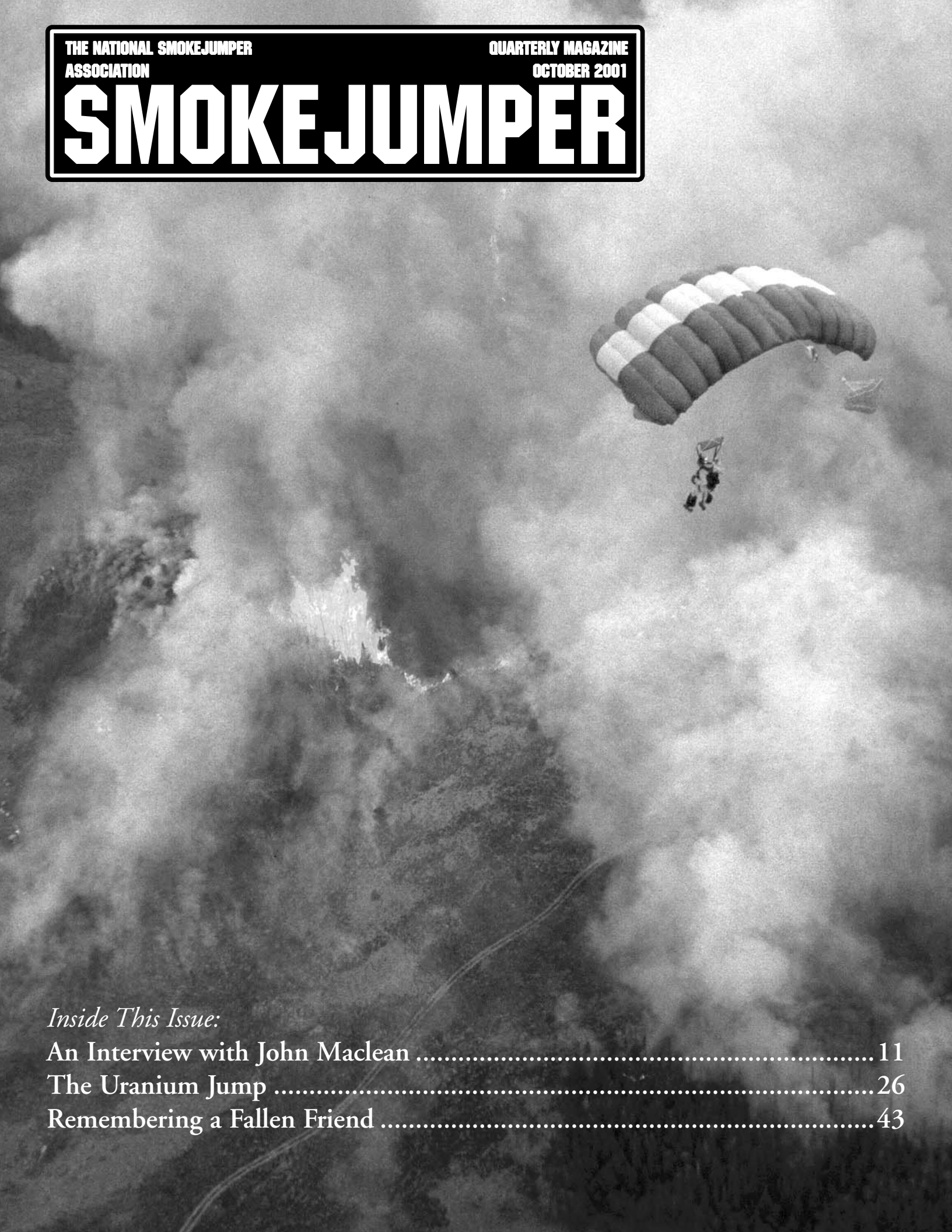
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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2001

SMOKEJUMPER



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Observations from the Ad Shack



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

A MAJOR ORDER OF BUSINESS at the June 2001 NSA board meeting was setting the date for our next NSA smokejumper reunion. And, it seems these days that more smokejumper groups are holding reunions. The West Yellowstone Smokejumpers just held their 50-year reunion. Cave Junction and CPS-103 jumpers will be hosting reunions in June 2002. McCall jumpers will be holding their reunion in the summer of 2003.

Because of the number and popularity of these events, Chuck Sheley plans to include a reunion schedule in each future issue of

Election Results

The following were elected to a three year term in the recent election for the NSA Board of Directors: **Fred Cooper** (North Cascades '62), **Ted Burgon** (Idaho City '52), **Neil Satterwhite** (McCall '65), and **Dave Bennett** (Missoula '61).

Thanks to all of you who took the time to participate in the election process.

Smokejumper magazine.

At our June board meeting, Fred Rohrbach and others suggested that the NSA should not wait five years to host another reunion. None of us are getting any younger and, besides, we all seem to enjoy these reunions. Our last reunion in Redding went over with a bang, and lots of jumpers asked when and where the next one will be held. In response to these comments, your board of directors agreed to hold NSA reunions as often as possible.

Past reunions have been held in Missoula, Boise, and Redding because these were the only jump-base sites that had facilities large enough for our group. Our next reunion will be held in 2004 and we will be going back to Missoula. Barry Hicks will chair the reunion committee, with Chuck Wildes assisting. We have not set a final date yet but will publish that date when it has been determined.

After 2004, your board plans to hold NSA reunions even more often, perhaps as often as every two years. Start marking your calendars for these coming events because we want to see as many of you as possible. If you can, visit other groups and enjoy their reunions. 🍄

Deadline for articles, news and features for the January issue of Smokejumper is October 15

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My Brush with History/CPS 103 Jumpers

by Gregg Phifer (Missoula '44)



The Eagle parachute's opening shock sometimes caused a momentary blackout. (Courtesy of Wally Henderson) Gregg Phifer (inset) 1945. (Courtesy of Gregg Phifer)

Smokejumping Traces Its Origins to 1939

Earl Cooley, one of the pioneer jumpers who spotted me on several fire jumps, recorded smokejumper his story in *Trimotor and Trail* (Mountain Press, Missoula, 1984). Experimentation with jumping into forest areas began in 1939 in Region 6. In 1940 Regions 1 and 6 organized small crews of smokejumpers for that fire season.

Frank Derry of the Eagle Parachute Company served as consultant. He specialized in the design and use of smokejumper parachutes. Region 1 picked seven jumpers and their first fire jump came July 12, 1940, from a Travelair piloted by Dick Johnson of the Johnson Flying Service headquartered in Missoula.

By 1941 the Forest Service consolidated smokejumping in Missoula, center of Region 1, which, at that time, contained 8 million acres of roadless area. Twenty-six men served that year and were divided into three jumper squads. For the first time static lines replaced manual ripcords on refresher and fire jumps. Rainy weather resulted in a mild fire season.

Derry's Slotted Irvin (Nylon) Begins To Replace the Eagle (Silk)

After Pearl Harbor the smokejumper unit had to fight for its existence. By 1942 only five veteran jumpers remained to join new recruits rejected for some reason by the military. Frank Derry developed a slotted nylon parachute to supplement and then replace the silk Eagle which grasshoppers dearly loved. A

light fire season in 1942 enabled remaining jumpers to get through the year.

By the spring of 1943 only five experienced jumpers were available. Regions 4 and 6 entered the program as the Forest Service selected those 60 men from 300 CPS volunteers. Cooley wrote about his discomfort of requiring the service of conscientious objectors, but he testifies (page 52) that: "Undoubtedly we would have had to discontinue the smokejumper project for the years 1943-45, if we had not had the services of the CPS men."

He continues: "We soon began receiving field reports that one jumper was equivalent to the typical eight-man crew after they walked to the fire."

Manpower shortages made it impossible to maintain all Forest Service lookouts during the war years. Patrolling Johnson Flying Service planes took up some of the slack. For three years those of us from CPS 103 became the primary fire fighting

NSA Members—Save This Information

The Missoula office is being staffed by Chuck Fricke on a voluntary basis. Do not call or e-mail that office. Please contact the following persons directly if you have business or questions:

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force in three western Forest Service regions: R-1 in Missoula; R-4 centered in McCall, Idaho; and R-6 located in Cave Junction, Ore., just north of the California border. We also made a few jumps in Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, some in California, and even a few into Canada.

USFS Could Choose from Many CPS Volunteers

Why did we volunteer? The adventure of parachuting to fires attracted men from many CPS base camps where we found project work less than challenging. Smokejumping provided that challenge. Our smokejumper pay? We received \$5 a month, double the standard \$2.50 allowance in camps from which we came. But we had to replace worn or torn clothes and buy jumping boots. The Forest Service fed us well, housed us in old CCC barracks, gave us a one-time clothing allowance, and the Mennonite Central Committee took care of medical insurance. We were a healthy lot, but naturally suffered a number of jumping and firefighting injuries, some of them serious.

CPS jumpers were broken-in during the two fairly light fire seasons of '43 and '44. We enjoyed a dramatic change in '45. We went round and round our jumping ladder.

Having extinguished a fire, or brought it under control for a walk-in crew to mop up, those of us from Region 1 were often taken by the district ranger's pickup to Grangeville, Idaho, picked up there by our Ford Trimotor, flown up the Bitterroot Valley to Missoula and found ourselves once more at or near the top of our jumping rotation.

I made three fire jumps in '44, seven in '45, and others undoubtedly enjoyed even more. These numbers tell the story of smokejumping growth.

Year	Fires Attacked	Fire Jumps
1940	9	19
1941	9	34
1942	28	66
1943*	31	93
1944**	78	240
1945***	170	907
1945****	269	1,236

*1943 was the first year for the sixty CPS jumpers.
 **In 1944, as one of 120 CPS smokejumpers, I made three fire jumps.
 ***In 1945 as one of 200 CPS men I enjoyed seven fire jumps.
 ****Earl Cooley in *Trimotor and Trail* (p. 65) gives even larger figures for 1945,

Japanese Threaten To Set Western Forests Ablaze

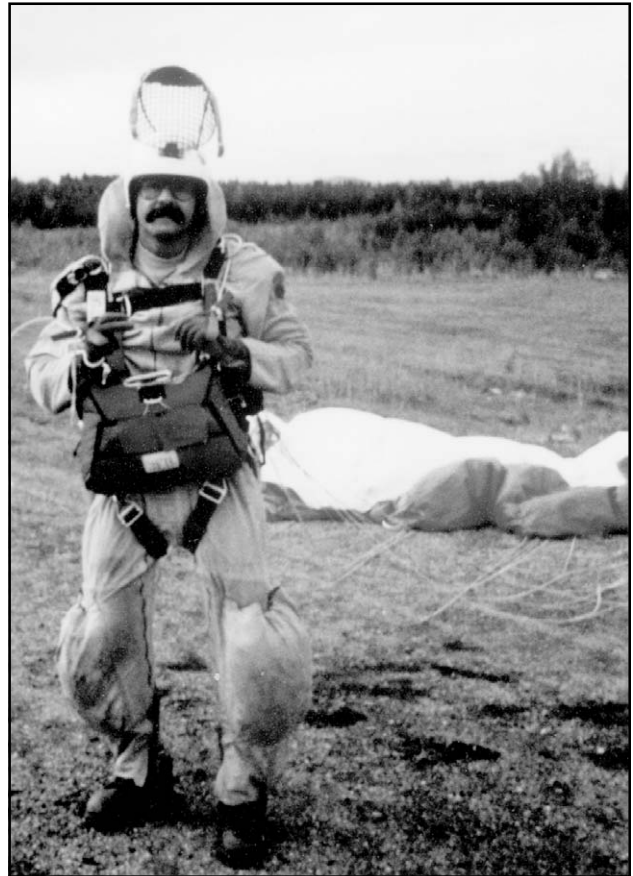
During the winter of 1944-1945 our CPS camp director, Art Wiebe, visited each of the side camps where we spent the winter working on various projects. In my case it was a new Forest Service bridge near Lozeau, Mont. The Japanese, he told us, had begun to take advantage of prevailing wind

currents over the Pacific Ocean to float balloons equipped with explosive and incendiary devices. They hoped to set fires in the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

A few Japanese balloons had reached the continental United States, but as far as Wiebe knew, none had yet set significant fires in our forests. On orders from the Forest Service, probably, Wiebe asked whether any of us objected to fighting fires caused by Japanese incendiaries. No, none of us did! After all, to us, all forest fires offered the same threat and in the '40s, all forest fires were candidates for quick suppression, whether caused by lightning or an incendiary device.

One story about a balloon reaching the Northwest and causing a small fire appeared in a Spokane, Wash., newspaper, but then the censor's lid came on. The Japanese must not learn about any success in their strange but potentially dangerous experiment. I am sure I never fought a fire caused by a Japanese incendiary and if other CPS jumpers did, I never heard about it. 🙏

By 1944, when Gregg joined the CPS/USFS smokejumpers, he had earned his B.A. from Pacific and his M.A. from Iowa. After release from CPS and two years teaching at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, he returned to Iowa for his doctorate. He joined the faculty at Florida State University in 1949 and retired as professor emeritus in 1994. Gregg is a regular contributor to Smokejumper magazine.



Life Member Tony Beltran after his 1st Ram Air jump in Fairbanks 1983. (Courtesy of Tony Beltran)

My Highest Jump and the Hospitality of the Silver Tip Ranch

by Wally Henderson (McCall '46)

The letter from John Thach in the October edition of *Smokejumper* prompted me to relive a fire jump that, for the last 53 years, I thought was the highest landing site of any fire jump. While the Missoula jump records for those very early days that I used to track down the date are not as complete and informative as those of some other sites (McCall, for example) the jump probably occurred August 21, 1947.

The fire was at the top of Cutoff Mountain just outside the northeast corner of Yellowstone National Park. This was in the unenlightened days when every fire, no matter how unlikely it was to spread, was promptly attacked if resources were available. Under this philosophy, a burning snag from a lightning strike on top of a 10,695-foot peak could not be left to just burn itself out.

In 1947 the smokejumpers of Missoula were operating out of Hale Field on the edge of what is still the state fairgrounds in Missoula. For the record, we slept in GI cots in a slightly converted and cleaned-up part of the horse barns.

The jump call came shortly after noon. The two of us on the top of the jump list suited up and boarded the Travelaire with the spotter. The other jumper shall be nameless because I've forgotten his name after all these years. We met for the first time as we suited up, and I never saw him again when we returned to Missoula after the fire.

I think the spotter was Len Krout, but it could have also been Bill Wood. In any case, after about an hour-and-a-half ride through increasingly bumpy air, we spotted the "fire" and made a spotting pass to gauge the wind. The aircraft altitude for the pass was well above 12,500, and even from 1,500 feet above the ground, it was evident that the surface wind contributed to the danger level of the jump.

After the second spotting pass in which the streamers disappeared down the cliff on the north (cutoff) side of the mountain, Len (or Bill) then said, "It doesn't look too bad if you just hang up in the trees on landing."

On the next pass, we jumped well to the south of the top of the mountain from about 1,500 feet above ground level. I don't know if the wind came up just as we left the plane or if we just misjudged the velocity on the spotting passes, but as soon as my chute opened and I checked the canopy, I realized we had a couple of problems.

First, the wind was at least 15 knots and gusting much higher. Second, the spruce trees that had seemed to offer the potential for a soft and safe tree landing were only 10 to 15 feet high. Oh shucks—or words to that effect! To compound the high altitude rate-of-descent problem, it became immediately apparent that for me a strong slip was necessary

to avoid going over the cliff and facing a very long steep climb back to the fire. The slip got me down a hundred yards or so short of the cliff, and a passable landing roll took up most of the impact.

But before I really got things under control, a gust jerked the chute back into the air just enough to flip me onto my back for the second landing. I regained my breath as I bounced between the trees and rolled over on my stomach. After a few more yards of dragging, the chute collapsed and dropped straight down over the cliff. *My head came to rest just over the edge, and I was looking into a lake four or five thousand feet below.* I slowly inched my way backward until I could get a sturdy tree firmly secured in my crotch. I pulled the chute back up and collapsed it with no remembered difficulty.

Retrieving the chute was greatly helped by the general variance of mountain winds that produced a relative lull just after I came to my "cliff-hanger" stop. My jump partner fared a bit better on his landing. Because he weighed about 190 pounds, compared to my 125, he came down faster and lower on the mountain. Although he hit hard, his chute tangled in a group of the small fir trees and he stopped quickly, circumventing the exciting ride to the edge of the mountain.

Len (or whoever) dropped the fire pack from a very low altitude, and it caught in the small trees almost as soon as it was open. If it hadn't caught, it would have meant a hard trip to the valley on the north side of the mountain or else we would have been stuck on a cold windy mountaintop with a burning snag and no tools. It was cold enough that we didn't pack up the jackets to our jump suits, but wore them to keep warm as we "battled" the fire.

We chopped the snag down with our Pulaskis, since the fire pack didn't include a crosscut saw, and cut a fire trench around the small amount of duff that had been ignited along with the snag by the lightning strike. By working very quickly and efficiently, we were able to put out the fire before it died from lack of fuel. By that time it was nearly dark. We discovered that somehow the fire pack was also missing the customary GI "fart sack" sleeping bags. So after we broke out the K rations for dinner we rolled up in our chutes for the night.

For those readers too young to remember the World War II K ration, they were complete meals in waterproof boxes the size of a Crackerjack box. They came in breakfast, lunch and dinner versions, and you could readily tell which was which because it was printed on the box. The best description of the K ration is the line from the *Crocodile Dundee* movie when the hero introduces the lady to "bush tucker" by saying, "You can live on it, but it tastes like shit."

At dawn the next morning we ate a breakfast K ration (it said so on the box) and then covered the small burn area by hand to assure that there were no hot spots. Confident that the fire was out, we then packed up for the hike down the mountain to intercept the trail along Slough Creek.

There was no trail down the mountain so we followed the draw to the west that lead us into Cutoff Creek, and then followed the creek to the trail along Slough Creek in the valley. No trail, but steep slopes, thick fir and spruce forest, and a heavy backpack load of jump gear and fire pack made the going very slow.

By the time we reached the relatively flat and open area of Slough Creek, it was late in the afternoon. When we hit the trail, we made the decision to go north for a mile to something that appeared on the map as Silver Tip Ranch, rather than southwest to the main road. Boy, what a smart decision!

Silver Tip Ranch was, and still is, a very exclusive private retreat surrounded by Yellowstone Park and the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness Area. It consisted of a main lodge and either two or three guest cabins. I think it was Tony Bliss, one of the owners, who greeted us and invited us to stay for dinner and spend the night. It was obviously too late to make it

to the road before dark, and the trail was too rugged to navigate comfortably at night. We gladly accepted and were escorted to one of the guest lodges with the suggestion that we might want to freshen up before dinner.

A good suggestion, since after fighting the fire, sleeping in our clothes and then trudging down the mountain with more than 80 pounds in our packs, we must have smelled much like the silver tip grizzly bear for which the lodge was named.

There were heavy terrycloth robes available in the bathroom and an ample supply of hot water. An attendee seeing to our needs disappeared with our dirty clothes and commented that he would just give them a quick wash. I don't know what sort of laundry facilities were available, but as soon we had enjoyed 10 minutes in the shower and finished our drinks, clean and dry clothes were returned to us. An invitation to join the owners and their other guests in the main lodge for cocktails and dinner was extended. This was the first and last time I've worn freshly ironed Levis and khaki shirt!

We had yet another drink, or perhaps two, so we were well-primed to tell jump stories that the owners and their guests requested to hear. Dinner was served on china with proper



Historic photo: Jim Waite inspects jumpers before 1946 practice jump. Fred Brauer facing the camera on the right. (Courtesy of Wally Henderson)

wineglasses and silver. I don't remember the meal, but it was a whole lot better than the WWII-issue K rations we had on the mountain. After dinner there were after-dinner drinks to keep us talking for an hour or so before everyone went to bed.

The next morning when we reported to the main lodge for breakfast at about 0800. To our surprise, Tony had sent his foreman out with our packs earlier that morning. As you can imagine, we were disappointed that we would not get the exercise of carrying those 80-pound packs the 11 miles to the end of the park-service road. He also informed us that a park ranger had been arranged to meet us once we got there. After a great breakfast and some extended good-byes, we started down the road/trail almost running because of the unaccustomed absence of fire packs and jump gear.

About a mile down the trail we startled a moose cow with calf browsing in the marsh along Slough Creek. My jump partner was either a city kid or still full of his former Marine cockiness, because he picked up a few rocks from the side of the trail and began to annoy the cow moose by throwing them at her and her calf. He would hit one of them which prompted a charge by momma. We would run like hell down the trail and/or through the trees until she gave up. Then he would hit her again. We had several interesting escape-and-evade situations before she tired of the game and went back to the creek to feed.

We arrived at the end of the road where the park ranger was waiting and had already loaded our packs into his pickup. The former Marine took the middle seat and I got the window for the ride to Gardner, Mont., for pickup by the Johnson Flying Service. We hadn't gone more than a mile before a brown bear appeared by the side of the road. When the ranger stopped the bear ambled up and put its front paws on the edge of the window and begged for a handout.

As soon as I rolled down the window with the intent of sharing some of my sandwich (the ranch cook had also packed us a lunch) the Marine let go with a left hook to the bear's nose. The blow was strong enough to knock the bear ass-over-teakettle into the grass. We were all young and foolish enough to think that this was very funny so the drill was repeated three more times before we got out of bear country. When asked about the power of his left hook, my unnamed former Marine jump partner explained that he had been the undefeated light heavyweight boxing champion of the Marine Corps for a couple of years before mustering out in 1946.

After the high-wind landing, the hospitality at Silver Tip Lodge, and the education of bears that begging from cars had unpleasant consequences, the flight back to Missoula was uneventful. When we returned, the former Marine went back to Nine-Mile for trail-maintenance duties and I reported back to the Parachute Loft to resume instruction from Smitty (Glen Smith) to become a certified parachute rigger.

Over the years I've told this story to many people, but now seems the appropriate time to put it in writing to share with the *Smokejumper* community. Silver Tip Ranch is still a going operation and the only active ranch operating within the Montana wilderness. In January 1981 the Bliss family sold 90 percent of the stock in Silver Tip Ranch Corporation to a group lead by George L. Ohrstrom, head of an investment-banking firm in New York City. The Ohrstrom group still owns and

operates the ranch.

The History of Silver Tip Ranch

Since the memory of the stay at the ranch had been the source of a frequently told story for me over the years, it seemed necessary to do a bit of research to get the facts straight in preparing this story.

A blind call to Yellowstone Park seeking information got me Phil Perkins, a former smokejumper who now works for the park. He suggested I contact Doris Whithorn who wrote a book *Twice Told Tales on the Upper Yellowstone*. It covers the history of Silver Tip Ranch and other properties and characters in the early days of the settlement of the area.

Among the characters described in the book are Joseph B. ("Frenchy") Duret, who was the first settler in the region. A silver tip bear killed Frenchy June 19, 1922. The Silver Tip Ranch was originally a homestead granted to G. Milton Ames in September 1913. In his first year on the ranch he killed eight bears and on his eighth and last year, he killed five—two of them full-grown silver tips. In 1947 an account of the "Silver Tip Ranch, 1922–1947" was written, probably by A.A. Tony Bliss, and was reproduced in Doris Whithorn's book.

The chronology of ownership of Silver Tip was extracted from this manuscript. In June of 1918, Ames sold the ranch to two bankers, Burton C. Lacombe and Charles J. Smith. Sometime shortly after Frenchy's death, two other bankers, identified as J.P. Morgan partners Cochran and Hamilton in conjunction with Cornelius Bliss, acquired the Ames ranch and also purchased Frenchy's ranch from his widow.

When S.R. Guggenheim heard about the purchase, he took a third interest in the combined properties. In 1923 the new owners started major construction of the ranch. In 1925 Silver Tip Corporation was formed to take over the properties and Neil Bliss bought out Guggenheim. In 1926 Neil Bliss and Cochran acquired Hamilton's interest. Silver Tip Corporation was liquidated in 1928 and succeeded by Silver Tip Ranch Corporation that still owns and operates the property.

When Tom Cochran died in October 1928, Neill Bliss bought his half of the corporation from his estate. If I have the chronology correct the Bliss family owned and operated the property from October 1928 until January 1981, when most of the stock of the corporation was acquired by a group of New York bankers. Therefore, I assume that Tony Bliss was our host. Over the years, the Bliss family's friends and guests at the ranch included Conger Goodyear, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and many others from the rich and famous during the period from 1920 through 1980.

An interesting point on access to the ranch is that when the property was developed before World War I, the Park Service and Forest Service allowed the owners to build a road through two miles of Yellowstone National Park to bring in the building material to the ranch. After construction, only wagon travel was permitted on the two-mile section through the park, with the exception of vehicles that were to operate on the ranch property. 🦌



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

EVEN THOUGH THERE have been some “bumps” in the road, the NSA continues to move ahead and grow as an organization. Each quarter there are about 1,800 magazines mailed out to members. The Web site, under the direction of Webmaster **Dan McComb**, is continually changing. Web site coordinator, **Stephanie Cameron**, is putting in many hours as we have made some major changes in the past few months.

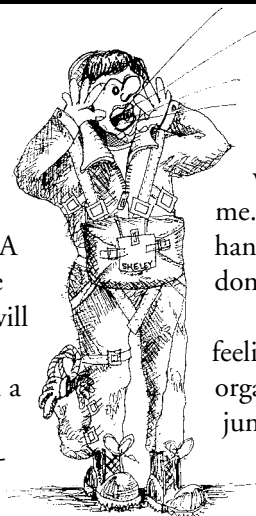
After the June meeting in Missoula, I was impressed with **Jon McBride**'s report on the Trails Project. It looks like there will be at least 42 volunteers working seven projects in the Bob Marshall and Beartooth Wilderness Areas. What a terrific way to renew some old friendships and make new ones while working in some beautiful country.

The historical display at the Evergreen Aviation Museum is a continuing project. That will

eventually be one of the “must-stops” on your vacation drive. **Dave Bennett** and **Ted Burgon** have the daunting task of going through boxes of NSA documents and starting the separation process, which will eventually lead to the recording of our records on a compact disk. With the professional skills of *Smoke-jumper* magazine printer **Larry Jackson**, I will soon have *all* the copies of the *Static Line* and the current magazine saved on a disk for safekeeping.

One of the areas of discussion at the last board meeting in Missoula was the aging of our membership. Take a look at associate member **Chris Sorenson**'s letter in the “Letters” section of the magazine. We are not different than other national organizations. The younger generation is just not joining.

Got a comment from a few jumpers at one base that they didn't want to support an organization that published a story by an author they didn't like. That attitude is pretty immature. I will



continue to publish just about 100 percent of the items which are submitted to me. There is an easy way to handle an article which you don't like—**turn the page!**

There seems to be a feeling that the NSA is an organization which smoke-jumpers join when they retire. Will the executive board need to field a team in the Wheel-

chair Olympics? Who knows? I say we just keep our nose in the dirt and keep on working. I've found out that in my coaching career there are track coaches who have more technical knowledge than I do, but few who want to put in the hours necessary to beat us.

Take the time to read over the minutes of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors' meeting, which are now posted on the NSA Web site. The Web site address is listed at the bottom of each page of this magazine. Above all, keep sending in those “jump stories.” 🦘

***Smokejumper* Magazine for Your Family & Friends?**

Butch Perry (Missoula '67) had a great suggestion for those jumpers out there who would like to give their family and friends a “taste” of what their job is about. Why not give parents, close friends or other relatives a gift subscription to *Smokejumper* magazine? So to follow through with that thought, we are **offering a year's subscription to the magazine for \$15.00**. This is for non-jumpers and would be a great Christmas gift for any parent and non-member to receive. Just write “gift subscription” on the merchandise order blank and make sure that you include the complete mailing address of the recipient.

While you are at it, why not order a copy of the NSA video and make it a complete package.

A Commitment to Art Jukkala

by Manny Haiges (Missoula '58)

In 1952 I was 18 years old, just out of high school and six months out of Marine Corps boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina. I was stationed in Miami with the Third Air Wing and I remember that we were playing the waiting game for deployment to Korea. One night a friend invited me to a movie on the base. Something about fighting forest fires in Montana starring Richard Widmark. Little did I know it was a film that would change my life forever.

After the show, I was in awe of smokejumping. Being from Pennsylvania, I wondered where exactly Montana was, and Missoula and the School of Forestry at Montana State University (the name changed to University of Montana later). I had two and a-half years left in the Marines before I would see my first fire jump.

Later, in 1958, I was on my third or fourth jump of that year and I was the third man out of Johnson's DC-3. The first two jumpers, who I didn't know at the time, were **Vance Warren** (Missoula '54) and "**Black Mac**."

I always liked being the third man out, you couldn't see the ground and you were running by the time that you cleared the door. "Geronimo" just came naturally! The jump went fine for me, however when I reached the other jumpers Black Mac was flat on his back. He was really busted up. Somehow he got over Vance's chute and didn't have enough height to re-open. After we signaled the plane, **Andy Andersen** (Missoula '52) and seven other jumpers emptied the DC-3. A Helispot was cleared and **Swede Nelson** and his chopper appeared moments later to transport Black Mac to the hospital. We never got to the fire. The pack out was my longest, approximately 23 miles to the Moose Creek Ranger Station. When we got back to the base, I stopped in to see Black Mac in the hospital. He looked like a mummy in traction.

Twenty years later in 1978 I was in Missoula and stopped in the Heidelberg for lunch. **Art Jukkala** (Missoula '56), whom I hadn't seen for a number of years, was there having lunch with another person. I stopped by to say hello and joined them. I often wondered about Black Mac and asked Art whatever happened to him? Art's reply was, "Why don't you ask him yourself?" It was Black Mac sitting at the table!

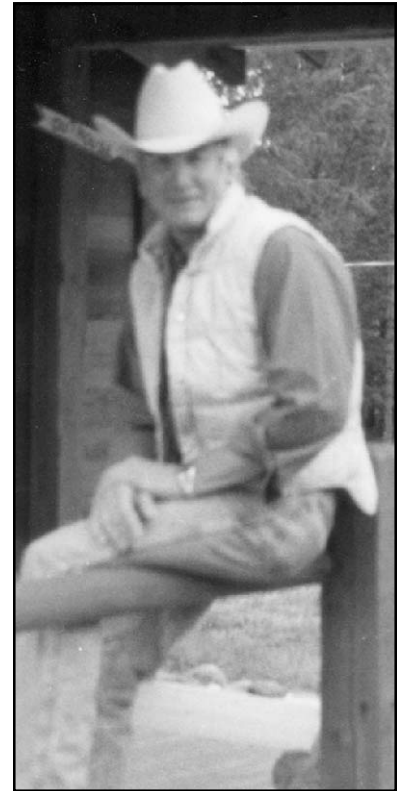
Twenty years after that in 1998 I was having coffee and a cinnamon roll on the deck of Brookies Cookies and Bakery in Big Fork on Flathead Lake. In walked **Art**

Jukkala and a friend. After a brief visit I mentioned to Art how crazy it was when we were at the Heidelberg twenty years ago when I asked him about Black Mac. Then, once again, I asked him for an update on the retired jumper? His reply was "Why don't you ask him yourself?" Black Mac was sitting at the table!

Recalling another fire jump out of the DC-3, I had slightly pushed with one hand on the way out.

When I finally got my head through, the lines were twisted and wrapped all the way up to the canopy. Thanks to excellent training and our squad leader, **Lyle Grenager** (Missoula '48), it was natural to recall what he had said, "Spin and unwind and hold the lines apart to prevent their re-twisting." By the time I got all this squared away, I looked down just as I hit a big bush next to a big rock. Just another day in the life of a smokejumper. I saw Lyle many times while I was attending forestry school in Missoula. He owned the Tastee Freeze on Highway 93 near the fairgrounds.

Also during the 1958 season I had carried **Ray Honey** (North Cascades '55) piggyback to the top of a ridge where once again, Swede Nelson flew in for the pick up. Ray had injured his ankle. I know I speak for many when I say that our smokejumping experiences are numerous and will never leave us. However, if I were to pick one, most poignant experience, it was the sight and sound of the rescue helicopter. The rumph-rumph-rumph of the chopper being flown by **Swede Nelson** or



Manny Haiges (Courtesy of Manny Haiges)

Fred Gerlach coming in to retrieve an injured jumper was an awesome event. To stand on a ridge and hear that sound, and then to have the chopper suddenly appear from down below, with Swede or Fred behind the bubble, is imbedded in my mind forever.

I often think back to the time in the Marine Corps that, simply by chance, that I saw *Red Skies of Montana*. Ever since then, my life has evolved around Montana and the great Northwest. I wouldn't change it for anything!

Oh yeah, Black Mac is **Robert McDonald** (Missoula '52) from Arizona and Big Fork. **Art Jukkala**, who passed away in 1999, previously suggested that I write this Black Mac story for our readers. Here it is, Art. 🐼

Manny Haiges graduated from the Montana State University School of Forestry. While there he caught Ron Stoleson on the Grizzly baseball team. He received his masters from Colorado State University and pursued Ph.D. studies at the University of British Columbia. Manny then became department chairman to head up the new surveying program at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell. He started his own surveying business, which he sold in 1983. Manny lives in West Kootenai, Montana, and is busy clearing land and building a log home. As an independent distributor with a worldwide health and wellness company, he is now free to do whatever he pleases. Manny's next goal is to break George Cross' record in the softball throw at the Montana Senior Olympics.

The following article is reprinted from the Morris County Daily Record (New Jersey) and profiles NSA member Bill Welch (Redmond '66).

“ARMY BRAT” COMMANDS ACTIVE LEGION POST

by Jeff Woosnam

Just before noon on Nov. 11, William F. Welch will recite the poem “In Flanders Fields.” It won't be easy. It never is. But it is what veterans do to honor their fallen comrades in arms.

The Veterans Day ceremony, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, commemorates the treaty that ended World War I, the war that was to have ended all wars. Of course that never happened, but it led to the founding of the American Legion in 1919. And the 57-year-old Welch, who unabashedly calls himself an “Army brat,” is in charge of Musconetcong American Legion Post 278, one of the largest in northwest New Jersey.

At the mid-point of his second one-year term as commander, however, Welch is decidedly unmilitaristic, pointing out that he joined the Legion only 10 years ago, long after his Army service ended.

His post has been a center of community life almost from the day it was organized 51 years ago. “We've sponsored the ambulance corps that serves Stanhope and Netcong since the early 1950s. We sponsor Boy Scout Troop 91. Our hall is used as a polling place on Election Day and as the main registration site for Little League baseball, youth football and soccer teams, and the proceeds from many of our raffles and other fundraising projects support a variety of good works in the community,” he said.

Welch, the son of an Army career man, is a survivor of the Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. “I was 20 months old at the time,” he said. “My mother and I were evacuated to the mainland in April. After the war we moved all over because of my father's transfers. We lived out of suitcases.”

Far from being psychologically damaging, Welch said, the experience taught him the value of being flexible. “I went to

school all over, and I especially remember the American School in Manila and the school at Clark Air Base, both in the Philippines,” he said.

Welch graduated from high school in Napa, Calif., and knocked around at a variety of jobs until he was drafted in 1961. It was the height of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

“We hadn't gotten officially involved in Vietnam and I was sent to an air base in West Germany to maintain Nike Hercules missiles,” he explained.

“I've never been so scared in my life,” he recalled, as he was the following autumn, during the Cuban missile crisis. “We were on full alert for several days, and that really took a toll,” he said. Fortunately, he never was required to fire one of his missiles, and left the Army in 1963.

He became a firefighter for the California Division of Forestry and later learned to be a “smokejumper,” a forest firefighter who parachutes into the hot spots. Later, he fashioned his smokejumper lapel pin into a ring and hopes to convince the appropriate military authorities that smokejumpers should be allowed to join the parachutists' veterans' group.

Welch, after learning the craft at an advertising agency in New York City, became a freelance copywriter for several direct mail marketing companies. “I'm one of the people responsible for ‘Lose seven pounds in seven days’ and similar phrases,” he said with a self-deprecating laugh.

Joining the American Legion happened almost on a whim soon after Welch and his wife, Cheryl, moved to Stanhope from Harrison, N.Y. “She got transferred to Parsippany by AT&T and we liked this area,” he said. “I was driving by the Legion Hall one day and just dropped in.”

Welch misses few opportunities to talk to veterans about the benefits of membership, and said he finds more responding to the variety of insurance plans the Legion offers.

“We also pay a lot of attention to members' health-care needs, especially those wounded in action or living with post-traumatic stress problems, or disorders caused by exposure to things like agent orange,” he said.

A national magazine advertising campaign has brought in new members, but Welch said the best recruiting tool is the motto, “each one bring one.” 🐼

An Interview with John Maclean, Author of *Fire on the Mountain*

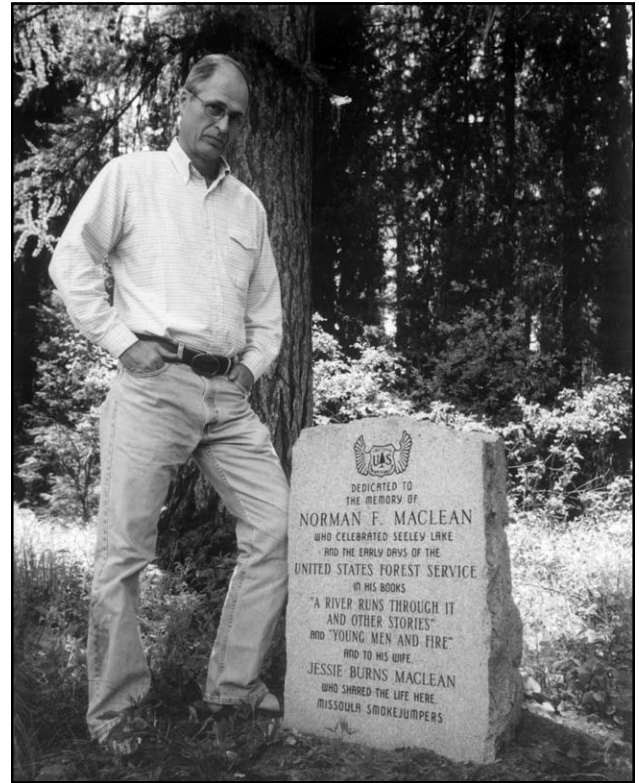
by Charlie Palmer (Missoula '95)

I am in awe of John Maclean because he is the son of greatness. By knowing him, I have secretly hoped, in some way, to gain an understanding of what his famous father might have been like. In my opinion, no other writer has ever put ink to paper in quite the way that Norman Maclean did. Although not prolific in terms of what he produced, those things that he did write have impacted me in ways too profound to understand, let alone explain. Without ever cracking silk, Norman did more for the profession of smokejumping than, perhaps, any other human. *Young Men and Fire*, and the definitive piece about the Mann Gulch fire will stand the test of time as two of the finest documents ever written about jumpers. I feel a powerful connection with Norman as his interests and mine are interwoven like jackstrawed lodgepole: wildfires, fly-fishing, Montana, fascination with religion, and brothers with raw and powerful talents.

The Meeting

John and I planned to rendezvous in Boise in late March of 2000. I was to drive down from Missoula to meet him while he was in town on business. His first book, *Fire on the Mountain*, had just been released and he was doing some promotion work for it. I was interested in getting an exclusive interview for *Smoke-jumper* magazine. However, my snowboard and I lost a brief, but painful, battle with a tree stump two days before our scheduled meeting. Four broken bones and a large cast on my clutch-engaging appendage effectively terminated those interview plans. My foot and I were both crushed. Time for Plan B. Only one problem, we had not devised a Plan B.

Eventually, we concocted an alternative arrangement. It consisted of meeting during the early part of the summer. John was going to be out at his cabin at Seeley Lake around the first week of July. I figured I would be around at that time as well, since the injured foot and I would not yet have clearance by the doctor to resume jumping. After some back and forth e-mailing, we decided to meet on the Big Blackfoot River, the river of his father and the one exquisitely detailed in *A River Runs Through It*. Of course, we



John Maclean and honorary headstone for his father located near their cabin on Seely Lake, Mont. (Courtesy of Charlie Palmer)

would fish first and interview later. Life is all about priorities, after all.

On the second day of July, I was driving east into the rising sun on Highway 200 on my way to meet John. Suddenly I was struck by the realization that today marked the anniversary of the South Canyon fire. Six years ago today (this interview was done July 2000), a lightning storm ignited a fire that ended the lives of fourteen brave comrades, and forever changed the lives of countless others. John Maclean's life would be one of those altered.

The Interview

CP: You resigned from the *Chicago Tribune*, a place you had worked for over thirty years, to write *Fire on the Mountain*. What was this transition like for you?

JM: Well, it was night and day. I went from being a wage slave, where I had to show up for work every-day, to being entirely on my own. I quit on April 1st and I kind of uttered a prayer that that wasn't an omen, and that it would not be a big April Fools joke. Within literally forty-eight hours I jumped in my Jeep and was on my way to Colorado.

Later, I met up with the Bob and Nadine Mackey on Storm King Mountain. They were putting in the crosses at that time. Bob was digging the holes. There was a major airlift to get the ten thousand pounds of cement up there. So it was a big deal. I went strictly for that. It sounds like it was all spur of the moment, but it was not. I planned the exit from the *Tribune* carefully.

It is also true that my agent held the auction for my book in New York that finished mid-morning and I then had about two or three hours to quit to take advantage of a buy out. So I really cut loose.

We immediately, we moved back to Washington which was chaotic. My wife was in charge of it and did a fantastic job. She also redid the house. It was into December before our homestead of 30 years was in a place where we could sleep in it. I lived in this cabin (at Seeley Lake) until late November of that year. It was a kind of life that, in some ways, was adolescent. It was a big adventure. I put everything out on the table. I put out my relationship with my father, with writing, with money, career, with my family. And it has been very hard on them, especially my wife, for me to have been gone two to six months a year for the last five years.

So, it was something you might dream about as a boy, but when you do it for real there are some fairly grim aspects to it. It's very lonely. The rewards are extraordinary, beyond imagining. The highs are very, very high. The lows are very, very low, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

CP: If you could pick one thing that you hope readers would take with them after reading *Fire on the Mountain*, what would it be?

JM: Fourteen faces. Those people should be remembered, and that is the way it is being taken. It has been out now for over nine months and it has given me great pleasure that it has been accepted as a fitting memorial to the fourteen people who died.

CP: In an interview with the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, on November 4, 1999, you stated, "There is a chapter left to be written. But I will not write it. I have no desire to write anything more about this fire." Do you still feel this way, and if so, what do you think should be

in this chapter if someone else were to write it?

JM: I think the chapter is writing itself. It is the legacy of Storm King. Some of it is good and some of it is still horrible. There was not the kind of accountability after that fire that there should have been, and that there is now largely due to what happened on Storm King. People like Pete Blume and Winslow Robertson would not have been allowed to escape, not merely unscathed, but with pay raises and a self-congratulatory memo.

That couldn't happen now. Well, it could, but it would not be what the norm. Now there is a much higher bar, much greater accountability. The person who brought accountability in and institutionalized it is Les Rosenkrance, the lead investigator on Storm King. He became chief of fire and aviation for the BLM in Boise. He is retired now, but that's his legacy.

As far as the personal feeling that I was not going to write it, I felt very strongly that way at that time. I'd had enough. In fact, I'm writing a story now about a fire that is an outgrowth of Storm King. It's the Saddler fire that burned near Elko, Nevada. Some of the same people were involved. The circumstances, in a way, were similar. Most of them were not, but there are some common strands. Tom Shepard, the Prineville superintendent on Storm King Mountain, was the division superintendent, where six people were trapped. Three of them wound up in the hospital with fairly minor injuries. They could have been killed very easily but were saved by a last minute wind shift. So I am writing about it, despite initially being very reluctant to do it. But time has passed, and I feel differently. I think the quotation that you read was a plea for my own sanity [laughs] at that point. I was numb, just emotionally numb after finishing *Fire on the Mountain*.

CP: In the acknowledgements section of *A River Runs Through It*, your father credits you and your sister Jean as being the ones who inspired him to begin writing his stories down. You also played a role in the posthumous publication of *Young Men and Fire*. What's it like knowing that without your influence, your father's beautiful stories might never have been published?

JM: To be honest with you, Charlie, I have not thought about it concerning *A River Runs Through It*. It has been years and years, so it is nice of you to mention it. I think that I would never have written this book if my father had not written *Young Men and Fire*. I was involved with the posthumous publication of *YMF* mainly by seeing that it got to the University of Chicago Press. The book was as

done as most books are when you take them to a publisher. There was no major rewrite. My father has given me a wonderful gift. If he owed my sister and me, and said so, God bless him. I owe him. I owe him a life, that as I say, you can only dream about. To quit a career in my early fifties and go off and do something that I dreamed about all my life—running off to write books. And now, I've done it, thanks to him. It takes an awful lot. It takes energy, and dedication, and a good story. It also takes a lot of money. You have to make this transition. The book has done extremely well. I would not be as comfortable as I am today if it weren't for the fact that I worked for thirty years for a newspaper. So, gee, I hadn't remembered that quote for a long, long time. I'm glad you brought it up. But I have thought, regularly, how much I owe my dad for changing my life for the better.

CP: Your father's stories are written in the first person, which is somewhat unique. What is your take on this?

JM: Well, he didn't think that he needed to stick to the hard, cold facts, but that he could still insert himself, and organize the story around himself as the

chief abiding persona. And he just did it. In *The Ranger, the Cook, and the Hole in the Sky*, he moves the saloon in Missoula, the Oxford, to Hamilton. He didn't want to go through the business of moving that whole crew from Hamilton to Missoula, because it would have violated some of the Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action. I think that's one of the reasons he did it, or at least that's how he justified it to himself.

My father was part of a school of criticism that was known as the neo-Aristotelians. They studied Aristotle and tried to apply his philosophies to more modern literature, from Shakespeare on. It doesn't work. You can't apply Aristotle to Shakespeare. He violated everything that Aristotle talked about. But, this business of having unity of time, place, and action comes out of Aristotle. It is a big part of art. You don't want to do something clumsy just to be accurate, at least he didn't. I don't feel that way about it at all. But you're not talking about me, you're talking about him. So he often would have composite characters. I think that Neal in *A River Runs Through It* does some things and is involved in some anecdotes that actually happened to other brothers. He is



(Courtesy Nick Holmes)

mainly one brother-in-law, but there are some other things that were added to him. My father didn't give a damn. People would tell him you can't have the Oxford Saloon in Hamilton. He said, "I did it. It's over." Life is life, and art is art.

I think he was much more interested in art than he was in journalistic accuracy. He just did it that way because there was more ease and art in it for him. I don't think he made anything up, whole cloth. It all had a basis in reality. There is an Oxford, he just moved it from Missoula to Hamilton. Certainly Paul (Norman's brother, and the central character in *A River Runs Through It*) was about as accurate as he made him. But Paul was semi-fictionalized, too. His nicer, more beautiful side was what was emphasized. That's what makes him a luminous character in that book. In real life he was a very rough piece of work. A lot of people didn't feel about him the way that my father did. But, so what? It is the job of a writer to bring compassion to subjects that other people don't normally do. That's the job.

I'm very journalistic. But that's what I did in *FOTM*. A lot of people don't like the fact that I did that. I treated the fourteen people who died on a different level from anybody else in there. And I treated the people who were on that mountain, who put their lives on the line, on a different level from the ones who were sitting on their butts in Grand Junction. I did that very purposefully. I would do it again in spades. They deserve every ounce of compassion and sense that I can bring to them, far more than a normal person would. That's the point of writing a book.

CP: What is your interpretation of the story "Black Ghost" in *Young Men and Fire*?

JM: Well, we found that story stuck in dad's papers after he died. I say we, but it was actually Alan Thomas, the editor who was going through the papers and found it. That clearly is a genesis story for *Young Men and Fire*. *YMF* went through a

Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?

Here's a chance to get it replaced. Order item # 132 on the merchandise order form. Each pin is \$10.00. Only sold to smokejumpers listed in the NSA master database.

metamorphosis over the period of fourteen years that my dad worked on it. It started out being a journalistic account of a fire. But it didn't work at that level. My father was not a journalist. The fire had happened a long time ago. The trail was cold. It was very confused. And it was a fairly short story.

My father became nearly despondent because the story wasn't working. He had people read it, and they'd tell him, "It's bad, just bad. It's deeply confused, you don't have a plot line." So then, it began to change. It became my father's story, and that's how it came out in the end. That is the basis of its success. He inserted himself into the story. He had had this horrific experience when he was fifteen, sixteen years old on a fire, where a guy punched him in the nose and made him realize that it was up to him to get out of there and not die.

He'd had the experience of going to Mann Gulch when it had happened, and seeing the aftermath of it. He had the lingering thought that a smokejumper's life could have been his life. He worked in the Forest Service and contemplated becoming a smokejumper. *YMF* became the life he might have lived, then it became even larger than that. It became a death he might have died.

NSA Member Offers You a Chance to See Reunion 2000—All of It!

You probably saw Bob Webber (Missoula '62) everywhere at Reunion 2000 with his camera. Well, maybe you didn't since there was a lot of mental firefighting and exercising going on for three days straight. Most of the firefighting was trying to invent the forgotten details and the exercising involved lifting 16 ounces.

Bob has put together a 5-hour plus video which covers all phases of the reunion:

1. Introduction-Friday
2. Registration
3. BBQ & group pictures
4. Base tours
5. Music on the Green
6. Banquet
7. Dance
8. Sun. Memorial Svc.

This video can be an important remembrance of a great reunion. The cost for the video including postage is \$15.00. Order from: Bob Webber, PO Box 15931, Boise ID 83715



I think that the ending of *YMF* isn't very good. I don't think that's the best part of the book, in fact, I think it's wrong. He brings my mother in at the end out of nowhere. I don't think it ends well. He changes some things, some factual matters there, in order to have the story fit. This is not a knock, but people don't die on a fire the way he says they do. I think the proper ending of that book is his own death. In fact, that's why he could never finish it. He was done with it as a work of art. As I said, when we took it to the publisher, it was as far along as a book is when it goes to the publisher. There were repetitions, there were facts that needed correcting, things like that. There always are. There was no major rewrite. There wasn't even a minor rewrite. The book is what it was.

So why didn't he let it go? Why didn't he do that? I told him to do that. Laird Robinson and I at one point had him convinced to do that. But then, somebody else talked to him and he had a different idea. I think he didn't let it go because he knew what the real ending was. The real ending was *his* ending. When you think of it that way, that aura is around the book. People know that the book is published posthumously. This was an old man's re-examination of a whole world and a life that he might have lived, which has a natural consequence, which is death. In fact, in my father's case, it happened. So even if it isn't written in there, it's there. That is the real ending.

CP: In the final paragraph of *FOTM*, you write, "The wind that once fanned blowups, and will again, now reaches across the years to join in comradeship those who fell. And they call out to those who follow, Let our sacrifice be enough." Do you think their sacrifice will be enough?

JM: I hope that at least another forty-five years pass before that happens again. The changes that I have seen from Storm King are enormous. They are more specific to Storm King than the changes that came after Mann Gulch. If you go back and trace what happened after Mann Gulch, it was tossed in with a lot of other so-called tragedy fires.

From those fires, at least a half dozen of them, came Ten Standard Orders. Those Ten Standard Orders are not directly traceable to Mann Gulch and only Mann Gulch. The 1957 task force that came up with the Ten Standard Orders considered about a dozen fires, and very seriously about a half dozen. Bud Moore, who lives about 35 miles from here, was on that task force and I talked with him about that a lot. Storm King has had a profound, far-reaching effect on the culture of fighting fire. Some things are

very specific. If you look at the bureaucratic changes that have been made, you are looking at an inch thick document.

There are two big lessons from Storm King. The first is accountability. I think Les Rosenkrance deserves an awful lot of credit for having brought greater accountability to the fire world. This is as a direct consequence of Storm King. The second one is, "just say no." The devolution of responsibility farther down the chain of command to reach the people who are most affected by disaster. In other words, firefighters are responsible for themselves. If a situation is dangerous, they must speak up. It still happens, people have come up and told me these things, that if you complain or say that we're not doing it right, or we're doing this prescribed burn under conditions that are unsafe and it might get away from us, you can still get thrown off the fireline.

But the culture now is applauding people who just say no. That's one of the things that happened on the Saddler fire. According to the report on that, two Hotshot crews refused an assignment. They are commended in the report for having done so. It turns out it wasn't quite that dramatic. But the point is a good one, nonetheless. In fact, there was a refusal on the Saddler fire, an out an out, "I will not do this!" Here you have, maybe for the first time, a situation where people are trapped and a Type I overhead team is disbanded as a consequence, and people who stood up and said we shouldn't be doing it this way are commended—officially.

The report is rough justice, it isn't as well done as it should be, but its heart is in the right place. That came out of Storm King. It's a good memorial to the fourteen who died. It does what I tried to do, which is not blame them for their own deaths, but recognize that they made mistakes. These mistakes were not the kind that you condemn people for. They were the kind that the culture made. The culture said, "don't speak up." The culture said, "go along with the smokejumpers because they know more than anybody does." The culture said, "if you're put on top of a mountain, you fight a fire from the top of a mountain." Now that's changed. Not in all instances. But it's only what, six years since Storm King.

It's a semi-military operation out there. There is a chain of command. Authority is very clear, and there isn't time for Kumbaya. So there is a need for real authority. We don't want rookie firefighters coming up to an IC on a 400-person fire and saying, "Sir, I just got here but I think you're doing this

wrong and I like to give you some suggestions.” Nobody needs that. You have to respect chain of command. But there is now a culture where people at that level, with a shovel or a Pulaski in their hand, can and should speak up when they feel extremely uncomfortable and as though they are in a dangerous situation, and perhaps they see something that nobody else sees.

There is a culture growing amongst supervisors to take account of that and not to squash it. I think that is enormous. From 1949 to the year 2000, you don't have a more influential fire than Storm King, and this is just in the last six years. I don't want Storm King to become a forgotten legacy ... I think it's going to be around and alive for quite awhile, and I think my book helps.

CP: Is there anything else you'd like to say in this interview?

JM: I wish that every good author could have the kind of experience that I've had. My book is close to a community project. An awful lot of people helped with it. The reaction from the professional firefighting community has been overwhelmingly positive. It's been accepted as an authentic book by someone who is not a firefighter. The judgment is that it's okay that he's not a firefighter, he got it. He figured it out.

The reaction to it has far exceeded what I might have hoped for. The amount of mail that I get, the kinds of things people say to me in public presentations. I just wish that every good author could taste what I have tasted. It's staggering, in some ways, to get that kind of reaction from a tough, intellectually alive, professional community, where their lives have all been on the line and mine has not.

I accept that on behalf of the people who helped me with this book, as well as my own efforts. People are named in the acknowledgements and it's publicly known who they are. I could not have done this without that group. I never could have gotten close to that kind of reaction without the reading and re-reading, the sticking with it, year after year, that these people did.

It became a social event in Boise when I would send a chapter out to them. There is a group of about eight of them, smokejumpers and their wives, and they were fabulous. They would get together and read the chapter out loud and they would all comment on it. They wound up taping these sessions and giving the tapes to me. The chapter would also come back with written annotations. Absolutely invaluable!

And it wasn't any one thing. It would be factual material sometimes, correcting mistakes. Sometimes it would be spirit. Sometimes it would be, "you're just going too far here, your judgments are way off, you don't know what the hell you're talking about" kind of stuff. And then I would send them that same chapter back, and back, and back.

One of the people who was involved in that was Eric Hipke, who is the only survivor from the West Flank fireline. ... Eric wound up standing next to me while I was running my computer with the account of what happened on the West Flank fireline. We must have gone over it two dozen times, at least. It was important to him to get that right. It was very difficult to get it right because he wasn't sure at the beginning what he was thinking at the time. When the crucial moment comes and he winds up on the ground, near the top of the ridge, had he jumped? Was he pushed by the fire? We went back and recreated that whole thing. And we have it down in the book so that Eric says, "Yeah. That's the way it happened." We bled for it, both of us.

So people put out to help with this book, and the book reflects that. The quality that people react to, from the fire community, is because that kind of investment was made by a lot of different people, over and over again.

Epilogue

As I have come to know John, and read and re-read *Fire on the Mountain*, I have begun to realize that literary greatness resides within him as well as his father. While his more journalistic style differs from the poetic prose of his dad, father and son share the same rare skill: the ability to balance meticulous research while simultaneously keeping two fingers on the emotional pulse of the reader. Tears stain many of the pages of my copy of *FOTM*, and any author who can do that earns my highest praise. 🍀

Charlie Palmer was a rookie in 1995 and is now in his seventh season of jumping. He has B.A., M.A. and Ed.S. degrees from the University of Montana and is currently working on a doctoral dissertation in educational guidance and counseling, with the goal of becoming a certified sports psychologist. His doctoral research is in the area of college student-athletes with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He worked for three years as a school psychologist for the Colstrip (MT) public schools, and two years as a graduate assistant in the Office of Athlete Academic Services at the University of Montana. You can reach Charlie via e-mail at msocharlie@earthlink.net. or write him at 91 Campus Drive #1911, Missoula, MT 59801.

The Night Pierce Burned

by Don Mathis (Missoula '52)

Smokejumping was a great opportunity to experience life. The almost combat urgency of operations, the adrenaline rush of the jump, the bone weary work of building line, short rations, little water, widow makers dropping from snags, camaraderie of partners—are just a few aspects of being a jumper.

There's another part of the job that needs mentioning, that of project work. You know, those forest assignments designed to keep a jumper in top-notch physical shape and hone woodsman skills to a fine edge. Sometime the projects worked at before fire season broke were actually productive. Sometimes they were just make-work jobs.

When the rookie crew at Missoula completed training in July 1955, a squad of 15 were sent to the Clearwater National Forest to build a telephone line east into the forest along a new road under construction. Transportation was provided in an open ton-and-a-half over dirt roads between Missoula and Pierce, Idaho. It was an all-day trip, and everyone was grimy from the dust by the time we arrived at the Pierce Ranger Station. A couple of tents were put up behind the truck shed to house the jumpers. They were home for five weeks, and some wondered whether another jump would ever take place that summer.

The work was simple enough: clear a right-of-way for the wire along side the road, then hang the single strand from tall trees. We did a lot of Pulaski and saw work, clearing the brush and trees where the telephone line was to be hung. The fun of spur work, climbing trees and hanging wire, followed. We worked alongside a road crew, and on at least one occasion about wiped out some of them when a large tree didn't go where we wanted it to. We could have had a fight out of that, but jumper attitude and numbers prevented the contest.

The ranger station was about a half mile from town. We walked that road most evenings to sample the excitement of Pierce. One night after dinner, just about the time it got dark, we received a frantic call came from town that a building was on fire. Everyone knew that a crew of smokejumpers (brave, courageous, firefighters of the west) was handy, and there was no fire department in town to put out the blaze. Okay, no problem. A couple of Pacific pumps and a mile of hose was loaded on a truck and away we went to rescue the town. There

was a small stream nearby, and in no time the pumps were set up and hose strung out. The fire was marching down the main drag jumping from building to building. One whole side of the street was in flames by the time the action began.

While the pumps were being set up, the more courageous jumpers rushed to the Pierce Hotel to rescue the "girls." What the girls were concerned with was the mink farm they had in their rooms and the mountain of logger boots accumulated over time from guys who couldn't pay the fare. In short order the rescue took place and hose action began.

It soon became apparent that the whole town was going up in flames, pushed by a brisk evening breeze. No amount of water would quench the hungry heat feeding on tinder dry wood buildings. What started out as a serious attempt to save the town soon became a party of sorts. The pumps were working well and two hoses were the making of a great water fight. Oh, the nozzles were always pointed at the wood, but you know how a high-pressure line can whip a guy around.

There was a liquor store on the corner just a few doors from where the fire was feeding. In a humanitarian gesture, the well insured owner (knowing that his shop was going to be consumed in short order) passed out drinks to all. This just added to the festive occasion. After a couple of hours, the wind shifted and the

fire died—before reaching the corner. Have you ever seen a liquor store owner cry? He sat on the wooden walk with head in hands as he realized that his empty shop wasn't going to burn.

An hour of mop up with the hoses and the town was saved. At least the jumpers knew the next day would be spent cleaning pumps, drying hose, and telling silk stories of a different kind about how they had saved Pierce on a warm summer evening. No fighting the brush and having sore legs from climbing trees that day. 🍷

Don Mathis financed his education by smokejumping. His jumper training was interrupted by service as an infantry officer during the Korean conflict. He returned to school and jumping after that service while continuing in the Army Reserve. He taught history, economics, and aviation after receiving degrees from the University of Utah. He earned a commercial pilot license and used that credential as pilot and voice for Kall Radio's traffic patrol while on sabbatical teaching at the University of Utah. Several summers



Just before their return to Missoula in the Tri-Motor, this picture was taken at the Orofino, Idaho airport. L-R top: Unidentified, Phil Schmid, Bob Krout, Doyle Musselman, Dwayne "Preacher" Roe, Brian Scheuch, Larry Gunn, Don Mathis. Kneeling: Milt Carter, Walt Pilkey, Pete Hoirup, John Mathis, Scott Corley, Jim Meier. Front: Dave Bevan (Courtesy of Don Mathis)

were spent as a volunteer historical consultant for the restoration of Mallard Peak Lookout (St. Joe Forest, ID) and Ute Mountain Lookout (Ashley Forest, UT). He lived in the Czech Republic,

Slovakia, and Bulgaria for three years after his retirement from teaching, administering an educational system for his church. Don can be reached at: drmathis@juno.com.

Idaho City Jumps the Fires of Hell

by Tom Decker (Idaho City '64)

Smokey grinned his grin in the bunkhouse door
Said, "Jumpers, get up; gotta jump one more
Boise's called and we gotta go.
No fire like this since Fifty-four."

The jumpers awoke; rubbed the sleep from their eyes.
Old Smokey in the bunkhouse was some surprise.
The ordinary stuff he left to Ty and Ken.
They're the ones who worked the men.

"I wanna sleep some more," Montoya said,
Grabbed his covers and rolled over in bed.
"I just got in," Lafferty was heard to say
"This ain't no way to earn my pay."

"Get outta bed," Smokey said once more,
Got a big fire like you ain't seen before.
What's more, Boise says we all gotta go
Overtime galore and plenty o' dough."

One by one the men looked for their boots
Last night was late with all their hoots.
Smokey worried they were a bunch of drunks,
but one by one they emptied their bunks.

Down to the airfield the pickups flew
The jumpers by now knew what to do.
"Take the Beech," Smokey said, "and the Cessna Too."
Load 'both up, the whole damned crew!"

"So where's the fire? Smoke, what's the rush?
Last time we went the rangers was burning brush."
"Boys, this one's different," Old Smokey said,
And he looked away, and shook his head.

"We gotta go and do our best,
Everything you know will be put to the test.
This fire is hotter than..hotter than, well,
We've been called to put out the fires of hell!"

Two planes flew out with 20 jumpers packed in.
20 jumpers thinking about their nights of sin.
20 jumpers thinking about their ultimate fates.
20 smokejumpers dreading the pearly gates.

Ty looked at Ken and Ken looked back.
Know what you're doin? Got a plan of attack?"
Ken said, "Don't worry! I did this in Sixty-two."
These Neds'll follow me, and do what I do!"

So they flew to a place, really no place at all,
on the Payette's South Fork, the Hole in the Wall.
Faster and faster the planes flew well,
carrying the jumpers to the fires of hell.

They breached the gap and flew through the smoke
the fumes and the stench made 'em all choke.
"Don't look too bad," said Ken to Ty,
"Just put a line around it and watch it die!"

Ken laid in the door to drop the streamers,
While Ty checked the jumpers' faces for dreamers.
Then they motioned the pilot to make the last pass,
then booted 'em out with a White flat to the ass.

They jumped that fire in two man sticks,
Smokey's LZ was red hot bricks.
Out they went and when they hit the ground
They laid a big double-L and looked around.

The sight was more than they'd ever surmise,
The fire so bright it'd, no kiddin', blind you eyes.
The snags pulsed red with glowing embers bright;
The woods were ablaze with the devil's delight.

Not a drop of water was in this damnable place,
Not sweat but fear etched on each man's face.
They were drier than dirt for the devil was mean,
So their thirst they quenched with Mouse's canteen.

They knocked the fire down, they pounded it out.
The jumpers kept goin' til the last spark was out.
They whooped and they hollered; each two man crew
doused the fires from hell and it was out before two.

Smokey sat back stunned, with tears in his eyes,
looked at his jumper, said, "Boys, am I surprised!
You did it quicker than I thought you could;
You put out the fire' you put it out for good!"

Montoya grinned his Southwestern best,
"Smokey, this here fire was just a test!
The jumpers said it would be a real pity
If we'd miss tonight's party in Idaho City!" 🍷

Is There Life After Smokejumping?

by Charlie Roos (Redmond '97)

It's the immortal question, that perpetual nagging query that's been drifting through our consciousness since our first steps on this earth, and I have the answer.

Is there life after jumping?

More distinctly, can the experience of being a smokejumper be matched anywhere in the "real world"? I will undoubtedly say "yes," although a mere year ago I had serious doubts. And as doubts always do, they would require the surrender of countless hours to ponder the issue. Long runs, deep thought, and finally a headlong plunge into the real world forced this simple universal reality on me: there is a lot of life after jumping.

But our lives out here will always be shadowed by our lives in the program—there is no doubt that former jumpers are a distinct and unique product of our past ex-



Apollo 14 module pilot Stuart Roosa (Cave Junction '53) congratulates Lonny Oswald (Cave Junction '65) during a practice jump in the early 1970s. (Courtesy of Lonny Oswald)

periences. And even being in the past, the experiences themselves are not lost in the annals of time nor our own shifting memories. They are undeniably intertwined into our thoughts, our friendships, and our professions. For the rest of our living days, the smokejumper program will be an inexorable piece of our consciousness.

Whether active or not, jumpers have something that sets them apart. Some chalk it up to a unique life experience, a rite of passage that we experienced in the program. I say it's more—much more. Jumpers have, and always will, occupy a higher aspect of humanity. We know we're not perfect, and we didn't always get along; but once we leave the program there is a void. It's an absence of individuality and esprit de corps that, quite simply, is rare in the real world. Where we once valued the core person, we move into a world that values simple aesthetic charm over true substance.

However, there are things out here that we cannot get in there, and one of them is a true appreciation for the brotherhood that we sometimes may have taken for granted. Any former jumper who runs into another in the real world understands this – and like the jump program itself, it has to be experienced to be understood.

In my first year away from the program I have run into countless jumpers, most of whom I had never met, yet all of who are willing to give full faith and credibility to a recent fledgling. Whether one needs aid on the corporate battlefields or guidance through a bureaucratic mire, a former jumper seems to appear as if beckoned by some mystical force. The bond is always instant, and the alliance is strong. And, in a day and place where bonds are made based on frivolous idealism and short-term personal gain, this is truly an amazing thing.

Petty grievances and base rivalries are cast to the wind, and the result is an experience that is just as meaningful as the actual time spent as a jumper. We can say it's due to the fact that we have finally found another human who actually wants to trade tales of heroic and humorous deeds, reality or fiction, for hours on end. Or we can say that it's simply the natural reaction of two people who shared a unique (if not outright strange) experience that few others have. But, those of us who have stepped out of the program and into the sometimes-twisted, dark passages of the real world know that we are bound by more.

We're bound by esprit de corps, a shared intelligence,

and a penchant for independence that few understand. We know each other instantly, and I've had the distinct pleasure of getting to know the previous generation of jumpers in arenas from business to the NSA. We never flew a canopy nor dug a single chain of line together, yet they've given their trust and friendship without question or condition. For that, I cannot say enough—if anything. It's an experience that words cannot describe.

Through this last year's events I can say two things with certainty. First, leaving the program is tough. The realities of the outside world can be vicious, although the opportunities can really be worth it. Daggers will flash and be sunken into your back in less than an instant, and

the real world will make you tough and weary in ways that you never knew. But, when the fight is heated and you're up against the wall, the jumpers will appear.

Just as they were always in the right place at the right time when a surly wildfire was taking the offensive, the smokejumpers will be there to lend a hand in the battle. And the second certainty? Having had the honor of seeing the old salts rally around a real-world rookie, I can make this final statement with total conviction: the experience always lives, and the bond is alive and strong far beyond the smoke and flames of summers past. We go on together. 🙏

Lois Stover ... Memories of a Smokejumper's Wife as told to Ted Burgon (Idaho City '52)

Smokey (McCall '46) and I were in Idaho City from 1948–1969 and my time with the jumpers was the best time of my life. Over the years we were with 50 of the greatest!

The fellows were mostly college students and spent a good many evenings, when going to Boise for entertainment was out of the question, playing with and teaching our three daughters. **Bob Caldwell** (McCall '46), **Taylor Cottle** (Idaho City '51), and **Clyde Howley** taught them a good vocabulary that surprised Pattie's first-grade teacher when she started school.

The girls and I were usually included in the fellows' off-duty time. We would go to the plunge then go back to camp for either waffles or a fish fry, depending if the boys had caught fish. We had birthday parties and un-birthday parties when things were not busy. We tried to keep boredom away. Stationed in a town with a population of 88 and four bars, there wasn't much for them to do. Often they would walk over to town to Lee's for a Smokejumper Special, lime pop and ice cream, a concoction of **Bob Caldwell** and **Jack Wilcock** (McCall '46). Gold panning was another activity.

By looking at the roster, I think it was in 1950 that **Willie Stevenson** (McCall '48) and **Dave Schas** (McCall '48) would flip a coin to see which one would carry the other home on his shoulders. Carrying Big Dave was quite a feat.

This closeness was especially true in the early years until the unit grew to where there were enough men to turn some loose to go elsewhere for entertainment. We were still a close unit and when I look back we feel lucky to have had the association. They were all great guys in a special period of time.

Clare Hartnell (pilot) was the "old man" in this special group of men, smokejumpers, and mountain pilots. To name but a few: **Jim Graham** (McCall '47), **Dave Schas** (McCall '48), **Willie Stevenson**, **Clare Teichert** (Idaho City '55), **Benny St Clair** (Idaho City '48), **Ellis Moncrief** (Idaho City '51), **Ed**

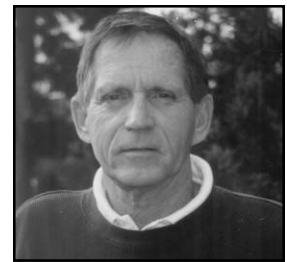
Heikkenen (Idaho City '53), **Pat Daly** (McCall '51), **Toby Scott** (McCall '57), **Jack Wilcock**, **Kenn Smith** (Idaho City '55), **Frank Tweedy** (Idaho City '52), **John Lewis** (McCall '53), **Dick Estes** (Idaho City '59), **Ben McBride** (Idaho City '63), **Herb Corn** (Idaho City '67) and **Bryant Cox** (Idaho City '68). Thanks for all you gave to our family.

Another group that gave great support to the jumpers were the wives, those young women who stayed in camp and waited for the guys to return safely. To name but a few: **Rosie Cherry**, (**Bill Cherry** Missoula '47), **Vee Cottle** (**Taylor Cottle** Idaho City '51) and **Phyllis Teichert** (**Clare Teichert**).

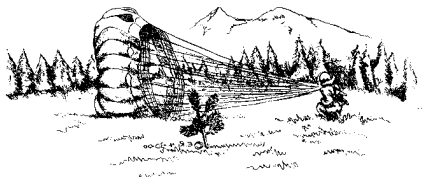
We still keep in touch with many more and depend on **Bobby Montoya** (Idaho City '62) for all the news of longtime jumper friends. If help is needed we still call Bobby, a true friend to all.

No need to think life ended in 1969 when the unit moved to Boise. It was just the end of a close association I had with them. We still keep in touch personally or through others with a large group of people who added to our lives. 🙏

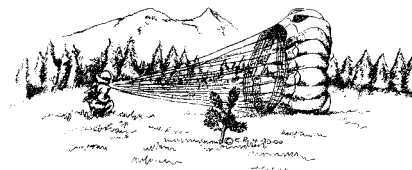
I met Lois when I jumped at Idaho City in 1952. That year she and Vee made a big difference in the lives of all the new young jumpers, especially to Frank (Tweedy) and me. Frank died in a parachuting accident a few years later near Boise, his home. My wife and I continue to visit with Lois and Smokey in Waldport, Ore. The Stovers and their contemporaries were the backbone of the early smokejumper units. Their stories are important to the history of the smokejumpers—Ted.



Ted Burgon. (Courtesy of Ted Burgon)



Checking the Canopy



Tom Decker
COL-U.S. Army
(Idaho City '64)

Ranger Rejects Food Cache: A Lesson on Intentions

OKAY, JUMPERS, Jim Lafferty and I were fortunate enough to jump a fire high in the Idaho Primitive Area—Marble Creek, if I recall correctly—and Jim was always full of good intentions.

Jim had packed a special “care package” that he intended to drop on his uncle’s lookout tower on Norton Ridge. Since we jumped the Marble Creek fire before we got to Jim’s intended “drop zone” on Norton Ridge, the spotter dropped the “care package” for Jim. Later in the day we talked to the uncle on the radio and he said that he’d gotten the drop, but couldn’t think who would be so thoughtful! When he learned that it was Jim, he was especially grateful! Thoughtful Jim was a bundle of good will just looking for a cause!

With the Marble Creek fire out, while we waited for the helicopter, Jim had another good idea. He suggested that we leave our unused food items—canned goods and such—in a little cache down along the creek. He explained that hungry hunters might find it and bless the day that smokejumpers thoughtfully considered others in need. Good idea!

We boxed it and wrote a little note that read something like: “*This food is courtesy of Idaho City Smokejumpers. Eat it in good health, and we hope you don’t starve! Signed: Jim Lafferty and Tom Decker.*” Then we buried it.

We must have “marked the spot” for when we signed in for the next fire season, the district ranger called us in and told us in no uncertain terms that he did not appreciate what we had done. Yes, he’d been elk hunting in the area, and yes, he’d found our gratuitous food cache, but no, he didn’t understand why two of his jumpers would leave food where there was supposed to be none! It was, after all, *THE PRIMITIVE AREA!*

Gulp! We hadn’t counted on being misunderstood!

The learning point here is that life has issues bigger than even the best of best intentions. No one has the insight, wisdom, or knowledge *to act so that*



good comes from every good intention! People of faith counsel that God not only forgives the impulsiveness associated with good intentions gone awry but he even sometimes uses impulsiveness to fuel further good. The story of Joseph is a case in point. Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, but recalled that although what his brothers had done was intended for

evil, God had used it for great good! (Genesis 45)

I doubt that the ranger subscribed to such teleological good for Laff’s “food share” idea, but good intentions are absolutely essential if fools are to do God’s work! 🙏

Tom Decker jumped Smokey’s Rock Pile in Idaho City in ‘64 and ‘65. He is chief of the Department of Ministry and Pastoral Care at Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis, Wash. He can be reached at: deckertr@earthlink.net

Everyone Is Invited to Commemorate 20 Years of Women in Smokejumping!

Friday, December 7, 2001—Sun Valley, Idaho

In Honor of Deanne Shulman

- Afternoon Conference Sessions
- Banquet & Honors Presentations
 - Slide Show (if you have good pictures, especially from the “early days” of women in jumping, please contact Patty Johnson through the West Yellowstone base)
 - Followed by General Merrymaking

(Details subject to change—contact the jump base nearest you for more information as the 2001 fire season draws to a close.)

Remembering My Last Season

by Ron Thoreson (Cave Junction '60)

It was nearly 40 years ago. It is brought back to me with immediacy as I convalesce with a surgically repaired heel, an apparent legacy of New Mexico's high altitude landings. Viewed through the long corridor of time, it is clear that it was the most significant season I would ever know. Not because we faced down walls of flame with a shovel or set new altitude records in our jumps. Certainly we did those things. What made it significant were the people and events, comical and other, that stayed with me a lifetime.

It started at Chico State, rooming with your editor, **Chuck Sheley**. We were the original "odd couple." He was measured, ever prepared and had already met the love of his life. By day, I crammed for exams, usually at pool-side. My nights were occupied, bartending at a pizza parlor and cultivating flowers. When our reporting date arrived, I successfully challenged all finals (six weeks early) and confidently zipped off to CJ for a routine physical. I was resplendent with my California tan, the only other brown hue in Oregon at that date being rust. The doctor got a perplexed look as he began to check me out, then asked what I had been doing lately. I gave him the abbreviated version. He said that although I looked healthy, I couldn't see or hear and had no reflexes. He ordered me back to the barracks for two days of complete bed rest, after which I recovered some of my senses, and we (Sheley and myself) proceeded to Missoula for refresher training.

The training itself was forgettable, but one of the Montana State guys introduced me to the Spider Club, run by a punch-drunk old boxer of the same name. There I found two sources of endlessly fascinating entertainment. First, a guitar player with about a 50-inch belly that he squeezed into way smaller Levis. The highlight of his life had been going to Hawaii as a young GI. If he was sufficiently primed, he would get maudlin and do a hula. The second form of entertainment came from Spider himself. His hearing, along with some other unnecessary senses, had been severely impaired by his ring encounters. I'd tell unwary patrons I thought he was ignoring them and encourage them to shout at him or bang their beer bottles to get his attention. Spider reacted to every loud noise like the opening bell and promptly dispatched the troublemakers. A friend later told me I was the best



Ron Thoreson and Jim Allen at Reunion 2000. (Courtesy of Ron Thoreson)

thing that ever happened to Spider because, as a result of my efforts, he got into such good shape he came out of retirement and resumed boxing in smokers. We would all like to think we have made some difference in the lives of others. For me, Spider remains my *raison d'être*.

Soon we were off to Silver City. Very shortly after the season started, I cracked an ankle colliding with a tree at Turkey Feather Pass during a landing. **Joey Baldwin**, the big boss, teased me that I had reported with a broken ankle. I was fitted with a walking cast with a rubber ball at the heel. Shortly after, the city resurfaced the street in front of the barracks and you could track me all over town by the mark of my tarred heel. As a result of my ankle injury, I had more hangar time and other idle time than I wanted.

Beer was considered one of the basic food groups to many of us. New Mexico had a blue law which prohibited alcohol sales on Sunday, but you could buy it quite openly at Millie's house of ill repute, which became our Sunday hangout. Millie boasted 75 years in the same location—and we suspected that some of the same staff had been employed there all that time. One of those employees was a lady named Boots, who regaled us with her firefighting experience. She said that when she was residing in a house out of Deadwood, a fire had crossed their access road and she had encouraged her sisters to help her extinguish it since it was a serious impediment to commerce. They were all put to work in the field kitchen by a Smokey who failed to note their primary occupation. Boots said it

was altogether satisfactory and she was even getting flirted with some before she was recognized. After that, they had difficulty getting sleep and were either asked or volunteered to quit the fire camp.

Two of my key companions at Millie's and the hangar were the borate bomber crew of **Mitch Marr** and John (last name lost to history). They were both Korean War vets. Mitch had been a non-commissioned officer flying a little recon craft while John, a USC grad, had flown a Starfighter jet as an officer and a gentleman. The irony was that Mitch had credit for a MIG kill and John did not. It resulted from two MIGs taking after Mitch just as he crossed our lines (and thereby had plenty of witnesses). By alternately pretending to run for it and then shutting down to stall speed, he had succeeded in getting one of the MIGs to dive into the side of a mountain while trying to get lined up for a shot at him. Every jumper knows that pilots are weird and Mitch was no exception. When I asked him about it, his only regret was that the second MIG ignored his efforts to lure him down, thereby denying him a double! Mitch's special delight, whenever John presumed to question or criticize him, was to reply, "Tell us about the war, Ace." It effectively ended discussions.

During my restless hanger time I bugged Mitch and John to take me on a drop. They declined until they had just the one they wanted and then graciously invited me on a run. I strapped into the plastic-glass nose cone formerly occupied by a machine gunner. The machine gun and anything else for me to hang onto had been long since removed. They knew they were going to do a "pitch out" wherein they flew at the side of the mountain, pulled the nose up and hit the electronic door release. If it worked, 500 gallons of borate at about 20 pounds a gallon were released and the plane cleared the tree tops. There was a manual door release which served as a backup to the electronic trigger, but on a pitch out this was more or less of a theoretical safety mechanism. All I could see behind me were their feet operating the pedals and all I could hear, over the roar of the engines, was their maniacal laughter. It ended my hounding them for a ride, which was presumably their intent all along.

Tired of my complaining, one of the barracks' doctors told me he could tape my ankle so it would stand up to anything except a landing if I could get the doctor to remove the tar covered cast. Jails have in-house lawyers, jumper barracks are full of amateur doctors. I set out on my objective of getting back on the jump list. "**Paperlegs**" **Peterson** was in the crew that year, and, as you may imagine, knew his doctors. This one, he warned me, was particularly mean, and I

should be guarded in my dealing with him. The doctor had a particularly gruff appearance and was altogether indistinguishable from a range cowboy. At my next checkup I told him it felt swell and I'd like him to cut the cast off. He had heard such talk before, much of it from Pete, no doubt. He said he'd cut it off, if I would then get up on a chair in his office and jump off. Figuring it for a bluff, I agreed. I managed to maintain my composure while he was in the room, but when he left, I had a pretty good cry before I sucked it up and gimped off to the barracks. The barracks' doctor was true to his word and I was soon back on the jump list, where I perfected a flamingo landing style that saw me through the rest of the New Mexico season.

After one jump, my Winthrop partner and I found ourselves on Mogollon Strip, waiting for someone to pick us up and relay us home. The strip was (and still may be) dirt surfaced, about 60 percent uphill and 40 down, with a windsock at the summit. The windsock was not to tell you in which direction to take off, only when, since you were never to take off uphill. Unknown to us, our radio wouldn't receive. While we impatiently called for somebody to get us, we couldn't hear Joey Baldwin telling all of the pilots to ignore our pleas. Soon a pilot and plane unknown to us landed. I asked the pilot whether he would take us or our gear first and he said both.

Delighted that we had finally found a pilot without petty concerns for things like altitude and weight, we loaded up. I sat in back with a pack and an ax inches from my head. Our fearless flyer headed out on his uphill taxi. As we crested the summit, I realized that we were going awfully slow. "Fearless" suddenly had a stern look and an iron grip on the wheel. We were soon approaching the end of the runway where tall trees, growing on the mountainside below, were well above our horizon. Past the point of no return, our guy did a magnificent job of salvaging our lives. He simultaneously timed a bounce to take us nearly over the trees, collapsed the wheels into the landing well, and banked slightly. Pieces of pine trees thumped and gave way and we found ourselves hurtling down the side of the mountain, not yet with an air cushion but also not crashed.

This was a turning point in my life. As we were whistling over the rocks I thought, "I'm not going to get killed, but I can't avoid some major injuries. I don't know the pilot, and if he's not hurt as badly as I, he could get patched up and released before I'm well enough to kill him." I immediately chastised myself for such a mundane thought and vowed thereafter to be a better person. It was a relative, rather than absolute, objective, and I claim success. We made it,

obviously. When we got in they found an 18-inch green stain on the prop and a dent in the left wing about 10 inches in. The left landing light was dangling and we had pine tree debris in the wheel well. The pilot was fired immediately, which probably was not a major concern to him at that point, and I never saw him again. When I read Churchill's statement that nothing is more exhilarating than being shot at without effect, I knew what he meant.

There followed a memorable rodeo. For reasons unknown to us, none of the Silver City male population cared much for us and nobody cared less for us than the cowboys. To endear ourselves to them further, we drew straws for the honor of riding a bareback bronc. **Bruce Yergenson**, a McCall jumper, "won" and immediately made it clear that that had not been his wish or expectation. He consulted Pete re his course of action. Pete told him the only thing he had going for him was to ask the stockman at the gate about the horse he was going to ride and his expected behavior. Yergie thanked Pete and went off to meet his fate.

When they announced Yergie's ride, we started cheering while the rest of the crowd booed, and out he came. The horse hopped twice, spun to his left and left Yergie lying in the dust. He brushed himself off and came up to join us in the stands, where Pete began to interrogate him. Yergie confirmed that he had asked the stockman for information, to which he had replied, "He's gonna hop twice, hook a hard left, and throw you flat on your @." We'd failed to recognize that the stockman wasn't unbiased.

Soon the New Mexico season came to an end. Before we left, Mitch and John and I were invited to dinner at the home of Tony (Life Member Tony Beltran) who had done odd jobs with the borate crew. Tony's mother prepared wonderful chiles rellenos and we heaped praise upon her. A few years later, I met someone who knew her and they reported that she had begun a business selling chiles rellenos to local markets. A number of years later, I ran into another Silver City resident who reported that she had expanded that business and had trucks running all over the area with her food. You had the feeling that it all started that evening with Mitch and John and me at her gracious dinner.

On returning to CJ, I found that there had been an incident with my car, which I had left in **Jim Allen's** care. It was a French-made Simca, given to weird behavior such as refusing to stop when I turned off the ignition, etc. We had covered the passenger compartment with a tarp and tied it down when I left. Jim said that his wife, Emily, was walking in front of the car on a very dark night on her way to visit a friend when the

car's headlights came on. She set a personal best time back to the house to breathlessly report to Jim that someone was in the car. Jim said that when he investigated, no one was there and the tarp was still in place. I pretended to chastise him, saying the car had a personality and he'd obviously never even visited with it in my absence. With typical Allen aplomb he said, "That's what I thought. After that I let Burt (his old Springer spaniel) sleep in it." Jim and I enjoyed the incident but I'm not sure Emily ever fully appreciated the humor in it.

CJ was having a slow season. Lacking sufficient opportunities to injure myself on the job, I bought a super hot Maico scrambler motorcycle and advised the local biking champ that I intended to best him in a week. In preparing for that meeting, I had several mishaps in a very short period of time. I lost control once on the airstrip and lost most of the skin on my hands. Later I crashed into the base dump, puncturing holes in my knees and apparently cracking a rib or two. Again, a barracks' doctor came to the rescue with an old rib wrap and I went on.

That Friday, Jim Allen decided we were getting rusty and called for a practice jump. My choices were to fess up to my ankle injury or try to fool him into letting me stay on the jump list. There is no IQ test for jumpers, for obvious reasons. I decided that if I scooted the harness way under me, I could pretend to land on two feet and come away with nothing more than a bad review for my technique. I got the harness too far under me, never had a chance to turn and roll, and instead landed on my bottom with a compression fracture. My career ended in a soft, low altitude field. It was humiliating.

When I got to the hospital and the nurse began to encounter my various injuries, she said I was lucky to be there. She said that in another week there wouldn't have been enough operating parts to make me salvageable. I was there only a few days before I was joined by **Gary "Tex" Welch**, who had incurred almost the same injury in a fire jump. We were both given the same treatment, to lie flat on our backs or stomachs in an effort to promote healing without arthritis plaguing us later in life. For those of you who may not know him, Gary is one of the most competitive persons ever to walk the earth, and he quickly developed some contests. In our conditions, we didn't have a lot of options. We soon tired of high and low blood pressure, but we took to urination volume contests with a passion. In a few days, our doctor came in and gravely advised us that the nursing staff was not amused and if we didn't mend our ways, he was going to take our kidneys out. We begged him for one more day's

contest and got his grudging approval.

That night, Gary was uncharacteristically cordial and even bade me goodnight. I knew he was up to something but he outlasted me and I finally drifted off to sleep. I woke to the sound of his nurse's bell. He had stayed up and drunk his pitcher of water and was off to a commanding lead. It was a desperate struggle, which eventually even drew in the nursing staff. By late afternoon, I closed the gap and at the designated closing time I had narrowly passed (no pun) him. My reward was a huge silver pitcher hung on my bedpost. Unless I miss my guess, Gary will read this and demand a rematch.

The back injury plagued me episodically as a young adult and led me to a desk job I could do even if my condition worsened. That was certainly one legacy of the season, but there were others. I learned from Spider that we can overcome conventional wisdom regarding the limitations of age or injuries and have fun doing it. I learned from the near fatal Mogollon Strip experience to be a little more tolerant

of my fellow man and to really savor every day. I learned from the success of Tony's mom that great things can come from the humblest germ of an idea. And I learned to never, never try to fool Jim Allen. 🦉

Ron grew up in Westwood, California, in the waning days of big timber, first growth logging. He had short stints in construction and logging before joining the Marine Corps. After a season of ground pounding on the Lassen N.F., he sent a very originally phrased application to Cave Junction. Al Boucher later said that he and Jim Allen read through a stack of applications, most of which read like Superman, and when they came upon Ron's said, "What the hell, we can afford one."

Ron retired from the state of California in 1999 and relocated to his wife's hometown of Camdenton, Missouri. They are located on a Tom Weiskoph golf course and Ron invites any jumper to play as his guest if they're in his neck of the woods. He can be reached at 306 Fox Ridge Ct., Camdenton, MO 65020 when he's not on the golf course.

Historical Evidence Concerning Wag Dodge's Escape Fire

Many have said that **Wag Dodge** (Missoula '41) invented the "escape fire" in the midst of the blowup at Mann Gulch in 1949 as he and his men were moving ahead of the blaze. **Starr Jenkins** (Cave Junction '48) forwarded a letter dated 1996 from **Earl Schmidt** (Missoula '43) which seems to indicate that Dodge had considered this method of survival as early as 1943.

"You asked me to write you about what Wagner Dodge had said to us about using a small fire in which to stand in the face of a threatening blaze, and the ability to jump inside it. Inside the burned area a person would put his face to the ground where they would have scraped away the embers or ashes and thereby increased the possibility of survival. I will try to do this.

"Wag Dodge and **Bill Wood** (Missoula '43) were my squad leaders during training in the spring of 1943. They were also the overhead at Big Prairie in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area that summer. During

that summer we had many conversations regarding firefighting and many other subjects.

"Wag discussed facing a threatening crown fire and protecting the face as well as possible with one's jacket. He also talked about carefully choosing the line of lightest fuel, running through it, holding one's breath, dropping behind the wall of fire, and clearing embers to bare ground to find a small amount of clear air.

"A second approach he discussed was to choose a place of light fuel, light it and run into it after it had burned an area. This is interesting, since six years later he would use this idea at the Mann Gulch fire. I believe Wag would calmly pick the right time and spot and follow his plan without flinching. This is the kind of man I felt he was. Perhaps a weakness in the theory was expecting young men to follow these procedures (without special training) in the face of such a terrifying situation (as that fire).



Earl Schmidt 1943 at Seeley Lake.

"I feel I knew Wag rather well, as I lived in the same tent with him for about five months and he was my foreman about 18 months. He also spotted me on my first fire jump." 🦉

The Uranium Jump

by Jim Allen (NCSB '46)

It was March 1955 in Cave Junction, when the phone rang. It was Bob Nolan, and he asked whether I would be interested in going uranium mining. He said he had already contacted Orv Looper, and Orv said to count him in. I told Bob that after a long winter in the southern Oregon rain and fog, writing reports, anything would be a welcome change. Count me in, too.

Bob was an ex-paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II. He was also a jumper and squad leader at the CJ base from 1947 through 1950. In 1950 he went into logging full-time with an occasional time-out for mining. He was an adventurer and was, and still is, always looking for new ventures and ways to “make another million!”

Orv began his jumping career at the CJ base in 1949. In 1955 he was smokejumper foreman at the base. He transferred to the new Redding, Calif., base in 1956 and from there to the Bureau of Land Management base in Fairbanks, Alaska. He next transferred to Winnemucca, Nev., and worked as a BLM fire control officer until retiring. He still resides there.

I was the “old man” of the threesome and had jumped with the 101st Airborne Division in World War II. I began my U.S. Forest Service career at the North Cascade base in 1946 and was there until 1953 when I was transferred to CJ. I was project air officer at the base in 1955 when Bob called.

As Orv and I knew nothing about uranium mining, Bob filled us in with what he knew. There was a big push on to find uranium in the 1950s. The Atomic Energy Commission offered a \$10,000 reward to anyone who found a uranium deposit. In addition to the \$10,000, the finders were entitled to keep the mine or sell to a mining company. Ten thousand dollars was a lot of money in those days and mining companies were clamoring to purchase mines so there was a lot of quick money to be made.

Bob had gained his uranium mining experience in 1954 when he prospected in the Black Rock Desert and Virgin Valley areas in northwest Nevada. It was there that he found out that the Atomic Energy Commission used aircraft to locate potential uranium deposits. They would “grid iron” government-owned land with highly sensitive detection equipment. They started doing this in Utah and Colorado and in 1955 moved into southern California. They would then post maps in a city in the area showing the “hot spots.” This would be done at a specified date and time so everyone would have an equal opportunity to get to the “spots” first. Bob had called the AEC, and they told him that the next posting would be in Bakersfield, Calif., at 9 A.M. on Friday, April 15. Bob then conceived the idea to have a plane in readiness and parachute to the spots. A good plan.

Bob contacted his friend, John Nylund, owner of a lumber company on the Caves Highway in CJ, and John agreed to finance the venture. John said he wanted half share, but af-



Jim Allen and Orv Looper prepare for quick get-away. (Courtesy of Jim Allen)

ter some dickering, it was decided that the four of us would all own a quarter share. There was no written contract. Just a handshake! John gave us a check for \$500 and we started making plans.

Parachutes were the first consideration. As both Bob and Orv had free-fall outfits, we were okay there. We decided that Bob and Orv would make the jump with their own outfits, and I would be Jeep driver, financial manager, etc. A jump plane was our next consideration. We wanted an experienced jumper pilot who was familiar with the Bakersfield area. We all agreed that R-5 pilot Steve Ayres would best fit our criteria. We called Steve and told him of our plan, and he said he was available and knew of a plane that would fit our needs. Great! See you in Bakersfield!

Transportation. We needed a four-wheel drive to go cross-country. Bob had a 1954 Jeep that he volunteered. As there was not enough room in the Jeep for the three of us and all our gear, we decided to use a two-wheel trailer that I used for hunting trips.

Now that we had all the transportation worked out, all we had to do was wait for the big trip and dream of ways to spend our impending “fortunes!”

Finally the day arrived. We left CJ on Tuesday, April 12, at 4:15 a.m. and arrived in Bakersfield that evening. We found a nice motel room with three beds for \$10 per night and got

settled in. We spent the next day buying groceries for our camp at the "claim." We also purchased maps and studied up on staking mining claims in California. As we had no idea which direction the claim would be from Bakersfield, we purchased maps covering all national forests and "lands open for homesteading" within a 100-mile radius of Bakersfield.

Staking a claim in California required the following information: Post notice at the point of discovery with: (1) name of claim, (2) name of locator(s), (3) size of claim, with the general course of the vein shown, (4) date of location, and (5) location. (Claim could not exceed 1,500 feet long or 300 feet on either side of the vein.) Within 60 days the entire claim had to be marked at the corners and at the centers of each end, with posts not less than four inches or stone monuments at least 18 inches high. Within 90 days, the claim had to be recorded in the office of the county recorder and a discovery shaft of at least 10 feet deep or open cut or tunnel at least 10 feet completed.

Steve Ayres arrived on April 14. He had found vacant land about four blocks from the federal building where the maps were to be posted. He made a landing there and checked it out and then went on to the Bakersfield airport where we picked him up. We had rented a room for him at the same motel where we were staying. After getting him settled, we went to dinner and discussed plans for the following day.

April 15! The big day had finally arrived! We got up early, had breakfast and had the restaurant make up four lunches. We then took Steve out to the airport and headed for the federal building. Although the maps were not to be posted until 9 A.M. we got there at 6:30 A.M. We had heard that they were estimating a thousand people to be at the posting, and we wanted to "reserve" a place as close to the posting board as possible. For the next two and a half hours Bob, Orv and I took turns in our "reserved" spot.

At exactly 9 A.M., a representative from the Atomic Energy Commission posted the map. There were three spots on the map. Two were fairly close to Bakersfield on the Los Padres National Forest and one was in the Sequoia forest, approxi-

mately 75 miles to the northeast. We decided to go for the Sequoia Forest spot. We marked the spot on our map and headed for the plane. When we got there Steve had the plane warmed up and ready to go. While Bob and Orv were getting their chutes on, Steve and I transferred the spot to a topographical map. We took off immediately and headed for the area. I was in the co-pilot's seat and Bob and Orv were in the back seat. In a very short time, we were over the spot and there was no one there. It was decided to drop them both in the same place and they could spread out and look for the spot in case we hadn't located it correctly. Bob jumped first and Orv jumped on the next pass. It was a real relief to get their signals that they were okay. The country was rough and rocky, and they were just in street clothes with jump boots. They each jumped with a "ditty bag," Bob with the scintillator and Orv with the Geiger counter. They also had their lunch and other personal gear.

When we were satisfied that all was okay, Steve and I headed back to Bakersfield. When we landed, I gave Steve money for the plane rental, with a few dollars for him to help pay for his time and assistance. (Bob, Orv and I had already decided to give him a nice bonus when the "strike" was made.) Steve then took off to return the plane, and I went to the motel to check out and get the Jeep and trailer loaded.

It was well after noon when I left Bakersfield. It was more than 100 miles by road so I had a long way to drive. I stopped at the last available gas station and filled up the Jeep and two Jeep cans before heading up into the mountains. As we had previously purchased our food, we were set for a few days stay at the claim site.

The sun was almost down when I arrived at the area below the site. I found an open area that was not visible from the road and proceeded to unhook the trailer and transfer food, tools and sleeping bags to the Jeep. I then put the Jeep in four-wheel drive and started out. I got part way up the mountain when Bob and Orv called and said not to come any further. They were coming down!

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When they arrived at the Jeep carrying their chutes and gear, they gave me the bad news. The claim had already been staked! We couldn't believe it as the Atomic Energy Commission had assured us that no spots would be posted that were already staked! We loaded their gear in the Jeep and drove back to the area where I had parked the Jeep. As we were all tired from a long day we decided to stay there for the night and made camp.

After getting settled we went over the day's activities. Bob said they had practically landed on the uranium outcropping. He said after they had secured their chutes he turned on the scintillator and the needle "jumped against the peg." Orv turned on the Geiger counter and proceeded further up the ridge. He said he hadn't gone far when the Geiger counter "started going crazy." They said they were really excited but the excitement was short-lived when they walked further up the ridge and discovered claim papers posted on a tree. The claim had been staked a week before.

They said it was a good hour later before anyone else showed up. They had a good vantage point and could see dust from the vehicles headed their way. The first group that arrived couldn't figure out how Orv and Bob beat them there. They said they had groups stationed in numerous outlying locations who were in radio contact with people in Bakersfield who relayed the locations to them as soon as they were posted. A good plan but not as good as ours!

As we reminisced that evening, we went through three phases. First, there was disappointment. Our fortunes were not to be made this day! Second, there was anger at the Atomic Energy Commission for posting locations that were already

staked. Lastly, there was satisfaction that our plan had worked to perfection and we were able to beat everyone there, which was one of our primary goals!

The following day, Saturday, April 16, we broke camp, loaded up, and headed for home. We went up the coast on the way home and spent the night in Willets where we got a nice motel room for \$5.

We arrived home on Sunday and gave the bad news to our spouses and prepared to go back to work the next day.

As a matter of information, we arrived home with a few dollars left out of the \$500 that John Nylund staked us with. We got a lot accomplished with a minimum amount of money, especially compared to today's standards. I have mentioned the cost of the motels, and I think it is interesting to note that the average cost of meals for the three of us was \$2.91 or 97 cents per meal, and we ate good! (\$500 a month was a very good salary in 1955!)

In retrospect, the adventure was something that Bob, Orv and I will never forget. When the three of us get together, we immediately reminisce over the trip and "what might have been." Thanks for the memories! (And thanks for the phone call, Bob!) 🍷

Jim started jumping at NCSB in 1946 upon returning from WWII where he jumped in operation Market Garden (Holland) and was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge. He took over the base in Cave Junction in 1953 as project air officer and stayed there until 1966 when he transferred to Redmond as air center manager. He retired in 1976 and is living in Redmond with wife Emily.



1968 edition of *Alaska Smokejumpers*. (Courtesy of Karl Maerzluf [inset above])



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks '96)

Greetings from Alaska. Our head count was 60 in 2001 as Dalan Romero (Fairbanks '83) began his fourth year as base manager. The crew was fire-ready April 16 following two sessions of refresher training amid ice and snow.

The Alaska Rookie Class of 2001 joined the crew under the lead of John Lyons (Fairbanks '90) and his surly band of five trainers. The six of nine rookies barely squeaking through were Randy Foland (24, Chena Hot Shots), Tony Marchini (24, Tazlina Hot Shots), Brandon Petersen (24, Chena Hot Shots), Sean Phillips (33, Midnight Sun Hot Shots), Tom St. Clair (23, BLM upper Snake River District) and Jared Weber (27, Vale Hot Shots). Although they were a physically fit bunch, the entire class nearly washed out after they served up a raw pig at the annual Pig Party.

Alaska also welcomed six transfers. The "New Man Ram-Air" Class of '2001 included Ron Booker (Redding '98), Dan Hernandez (Redding '85), Jason Jordet (Redmond '00), Jeff McPhetridge (McCall '93), Derek Patton (Redmond '00) and Pete Stephensen (Redding '98). The group made a smooth transition to the square canopy, with Booker keeping the mood light while sporting perhaps the largest afro in the history of smokejumping.

Alaska jumpers not returning this year were Lance Clouser (Fairbanks '85), now working as a Coast Guard firefighter on Kodiak Island. Bruce Nelson (Fairbanks '81) took the year off to hike the Appalachian Trail equipped with a laptop to keep us updated on his progress. Todd Stark (Fairbanks '98) is now working as a structural firefighter in Everett, Wash.

Promotions this year included Rob Allen (Fairbanks '93) to an Ops 8. John Lyons earned a Training 8. Matt Allen (Fairbanks '95) and Robert Yeager (Redding '92) earned loft 7s. New in "the box" were Charlie Brown (Fairbanks '88) and Paul Lenmark (Fairbanks '96), earning Ops 7's and taking the heat nicely from the bros.

Three rookie spotters this year were Rob Allen, John Lyons and Togie "Big Country" Wiehl (Fairbanks '91). Mark Musitano (Redding '98) traded his wings for legs



mid-season to work as a fuels specialist in the military zone. Mike Lambright (Fairbanks '99) took a dispatch detail in the Western Great Basin this season. Scott DeWitz (Fairbanks '82) returned to fire this year as an air tactical group supervisor. Working toward the same goals were jumpers Rick Thompson (Fairbanks '89) and Jim Veitch (Missoula '67). Veitch impressed all and made a statement this spring when he easily passed the "pack test" hauling 202 pounds on his back.

Earning their senior riggers' licenses this year were Scott Hocklander (Fairbanks '99) Mike Lambright, La-Ona Lydic (Fairbanks '99) and Doug Mackey (Fairbanks '99). Tom Roach

(Fairbanks '98) took his new para-cargo position by the horns with untiring enthusiasm, and an uncanny ability to fit into small spaces.

A one-year memorial was held April 29 in memory of David Liston (Fairbanks '98). An octagonal monument eight feet across was built around a young Amur Chokecherry tree planted in the lawn at the base. The intricate copper painted design was beautifully crafted and welded by Dan Hernandez, holding eight slabs of emerald-tinted concrete and a plaque honoring Dave.

Kristin Liston took this year to travel and decide what comes next. Our thoughts and prayers are with her. The Alaska jumpers wish to thank Carolyn Neufeld for her generosity on behalf of her late husband, Elmer Neufeld (Cave Jct. '44), regarding her donation to the David Liston Memorial Fund. The fund is dedicated to helping the families of fallen smokejumpers.

The first fire jump of 2001 sent one load southwest to Lake Iliamna June 5. Upon jumping at sunset and defending an exclusive fly-in fishing lodge, Robert Yeager promptly turned the incident over to Scott Hocklander. As the fire smoldered at five acres, Yeager had some scouting yet to do.

By daybreak he had talked a local float plane pilot into taking him fishing. A young female guide needed less time to talk them into taking her along too. Within the hour, Yeager was reeling in trophy sized rainbows from lakes with no names. "Glorious" is how Gus summed up his escapade, while the rest of his squad lan-

gushed on a white sand beach beside waterfalls and the lodge rooms of their choice.

The Alaska fire season was fueled little by lightning in 2001, but man-caused fires kept the bros jumping cabin and logging protection assignments through July. Two 100,000-acre gobblers in limited protection areas billowed within sight of town, and threats of dry weather prompted fire managers to hastily order 40 Forest Service boosters from the lower 48. Unfortunately no round canopies flew to Alaska fires as of late July, though many jumpers sweetened their visits with salmon-fishing trips.

The Big Flip was held early this year on Independence Day just as the boosters were being released. Scott Hocklander never flipped a heads and won the pot in unflappable form. Upon edging out Dennis Geving (McCall '89)), Hock took the bros to the Pumphouse before donating the remainder of the purse to his favorite charity.

Bruce Ford (Missoula '75) welcomed two Russian smokejumpers to Alaska, and Andrey Eritsov jumped a fire near McGrath during his brief stay. Last winter Ford traveled to Russia as a consultant regarding the future of Russia's 1,800 smokejumpers. Experts there are planning to replace their round reserve with a "piggy back" system, utilizing two square canopies. Ford reports a lack of resources is stalling their efforts at present.

Jumping his 100th fire this year was Chris Silks (Fairbanks '91). Marty Meierott (Fairbanks '94) and Oded Shalom (Fairbanks '95) jumped their 50th fires after all these years. Shalom, our welfare fund czar and morale unit leader, entertained the bros with a mid-season raffle. Mel Tenneson (Fairbanks '86) won the grand prize fishing trip for two to Soldotna, while John Lyons sported the gag prize proudly: a hideous fluorescent lime baseball cap that couldn't otherwise be given away.

Five bros helped their wives make babies this year. Daughter Abby was born to Kathleen and Matt Allen, daughter Riley to Laura and Gary Baumgartner (Fairbanks '88), daughter Cara to Sharon and Bill Cramer (Fairbanks '90), and daughter Michelle to Stacey and Steve Theisen (Fairbanks '86). Sandy (Ahlstrom) Romero (Fairbanks '90) and Dalan Romero broke tradition by having a son, Skyler.

Murry Taylor (Redding '65) bid farewell to his Alaska bros in late June when his retirement finally came through. A gathering at Pikes was attended by all bros not out on fires. Murry grew a bit misty as the evening drew to a close and he had a plane to catch. He plans to attend writer's conferences and bask in the praise of his celebrated book *Jumping Fire* now available in paperback with a new afterword.

He is in the initial stages of writing his next book.

With 27 jump seasons to draw from, Murry has just begun putting the smokejumper experience to print. His casual style, heartfelt stories and rambling banter have left a void yet to be filled at our Friday crew meetings. At jump bases in Alaska and beyond, the Old Leathersack will be missed.

Grangeville

by Randy A. Nelson (Grangeville '87)

The Nez Perce Smokejumpers assisted in several resource management efforts this spring, including burn-ing projects on the Nez Perce, Clearwater, and Idaho Panhandle National Forests in Idaho, as well as on various federal lands in Mississippi and South Carolina. They also performed tree-climbing in Chicago; and thinning, marking, and other timber-related assignments in various locations throughout Region 1.

Nez Perce jumpers filled early-season boost requests at Miles City, Mont.; West Yellowstone, Wyo.; Alaska; Silver City, N.M. and Cedar City, Utah, and began initial attacking fires on the Nez Perce, Clearwater, and adjacent forests in July.

Other developments at the Grangeville Air Center this season have included the substantial expansion of the smokejumper loft, as well as the acquisition of a very popular large-windowed Twin Otter jumpship. Individual developments among GAC personnel include the hiring of former GAC jumper Tim Tevebaugh as a fuels technician on the Superior National Forest, and the detailing of jumpers Chris Young (AFMO on the Idaho Panhandle NF), Ed Lynn (engine foreman on the Clearwater NF), and Ted McClanahan (smokejumper at West Yellowstone).

NSA Members—Add This Special Video to Your Collection!

At the conclusion of the banquet at Reunion 2000, a 15-minute video produced by **Derrek Hartman** (Redding '98) was shown to the large audience. This production had no dialogue, just some fantastic shots combined with background music that left the attendees spellbound. I was asked many times how this production could be obtained as it is a must for any smokejumper collection.

Here is the answer:

Off-season—

Derrek Hartman, PO Box 464, Seal Beach, CA 90740
(562) 594-9553 hartmanfilms@earthlink.net

Fire Season—

Derrek Hartman, West Yellowstone Smokejumpers, PO Box 59771, West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Make checks payable to: West Yellowstone
Smokejumper Welfare Fund \$15.00

Base Manager Jerry Zumalt participated in regional conferences this spring concerning the implementation of wilderness fire-use policy, and is currently exploring the use of Nez Perce jumpers in such activities on local forests. Ops Foreman Randy Nelson spent a week observing rookie training at McCall on behalf of the Region 1 rookie-training program in Missoula. Loft Foreman Robin Embry coordinated the equipping and utilization of the new GAC facilities.

The Nez Perce jumpers also made a strong showing in the annual Grangeville Fourth of July festivities. After being abandoned by a couple of less-committed rookie brothers, first-year jumper Mike Ward teamed up with veterans Dan Helterline and Rocky Ashapanek to take first place in the wild-horse race. Meanwhile, second-year jumper Chuck Sheaffer dominated the 30–39 age group and took fourth place overall (in a field of 148) in the prestigious Firecracker Fun Run.

McCall

by Rick Hudson (Boise '73)

Around McCall, the Salmon, Payette and Boise river basins held only 50 percent of normal snow pack at the start of the 2001 fire season. A dry, warm spring indicated the potential for high wildfire danger throughout the forests of the northern half of R-4.

Striving for a total of 70 jumpers at the McCall base, personnel attrition (due to late-spring acceptance to job offers for the National Fire Plan hiring) has whittled smokejumper numbers to 62 actively trained for this year.

Smokejumper aircraft in McCall are the Tubine DC-3, J-42 and two Twin Otters, J-41 and J-43, with an upgrade in engine compression/power for this year.

Five McCall jumpers received refresher training in Missoula in April, and left May 15 to fill out the annual New Mexico Region 3 detail. Following this winter's abundant level of moisture, R-3 deserts were an amazing verdant green. Fire activity was minimal, but jumpers remained busy with prescribed fire activity and projects on the Gila.

Eleven NEDS (rookies) started smokejumper train-

ing May 29, with nine successfully completing the last of 15 training jumps June 29. By mid-July, all NEDS had several fire jumps and multiple variations of jump stories to relate.

The first fire jump from McCall June 10 sent an Otter load to southern Utah to reinforce Great Basin jumpers from Cedar City.

McCall began sending smokejumper boosters May 18 to Redding, May 23 to Ely, May 29 to Alaska, and setting up a spike base in Vernal July 2. Other McCall boosts have gone to Grand Junction, Cedar City and North Cascades so far this season. Local action has been sporadic, with recent thunderstorms and rain showers on the Payette, Boise and Wallowa-Whitman Forests.

After 34 consecutive seasons of smokejumping, Jerry Ogawa has had to sit out this season due to reconstructive ankle surgery from an injury he received during the winter. Jerry intends to return next year if he can convince the doctor that parachute landings aren't hard on ankles.

Leo Cromwell has moved from the McCall Smokejumpers to the air tanker base next door to revamp the accountability of retardant use by computers. He has done such a good job compiling the history of McCall's smokejumper records, his computer skills and attention to detail are now in demand at the Alaska jump base.

Missoula

by Charlie Palmer (Missoula '95)

As of July 20, 2001, the fears born from the abnormally dry winter have so far been washed away by the rains of June and July. It will be interesting to see if these wet storms continue into August, or if we get back to a more-typical pattern of dryness. So far, only five fires have been jumped out of Missoula, for a total of 33 fire jumps.

At this time last year during the epic 2000 fire season, we had approximately one million fire jumps out of Missoula, or so it seemed. Twenty-two resource orders have been filled, with a partial breakdown as follows: Colorado (3), Region 3—Silver City (1), Miles City, Mont. (3), Alaska (1), Great Basin (3), West Yellowstone, Mont. (1).

Twenty-nine intrepid souls began rookie training in Missoula May 28. By June 29, when they completed their fifteenth and final training jump, only 21 were left to earn a set of jumper wings. Thirteen of these will be assigned to Missoula, six to Grangeville, and two to West Yellowstone. Rookies have an average of 4.2 seasons of fire experience, with the majority (14) having a history of work on Hotshot crews.

The first fire jump out of Missoula this year occurred in the Rock Creek area. Unfortunately, one of the rook-

Attention Missoula Jumpers— Can you Help?

Missoula Base manager **Ed Ward** is attempting to get a complete inventory of the rookie class pictures from the start of the base to the current date. This might be a difficult task especially going back into the 1940s. Copies of original pictures can be made reasonably and your local copy store. If you can help with this project, please call Ed at 406-329-4893.

ies on the load broke his wrist quite severely, and he will be out for the season. Looking on the bright side, at least he will have a good jump story about the ordeal.

In general news, Keith “Skid” Wolferman and wife Korey welcomed their fourth child into the world. The baby girl is named Piper, a moniker which will surely launch a future career in smokejumper aviation. Rick Lang finally proposed to Deana Sprandle, who is a big-wig in the Miles City BLM fire scene. Can you say “booster to Miles City”?

Missoula jumpers Bill Miller, Godot Appuzo, and Shawn Borgen are running the newly created Great Northern Type II training crew based at the AFD. Scott Belknap and Fred Thompson are detailed to the new Lewis & Clark Hotshot crew in Great Falls, Mont. Seven jumpers under the direction of Foreman Jeff Kinderman jumped into the Indian Creek Guard Station on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River July 10, 2001. These individuals used cross-cut saws to fell some very large hazard trees created from last year’s wildfires. Rumor has it that some fishing was also done.

Missoula Rookies 2000

Godot Appuzo, Michelle Barger, Dawn Greenlee, Shawn Borgen, Barry Burris, Seth Carbonari, Ran Crone, Derrick Davis, Tom Fink, Chip Gerdin, James Gray, Seth Hansen, Gabe Holguin, Tory Kendrick, Andrew Lane, Pat Lowe, Jack Marvin, Lori Messinger, Eric Messinger, John Muir, John Murray, Earl Old Chief, Knute Olson, Michael Pennachio, Chuck Schaefer, Hans Smith, Scott Stutzman, Fred Thompson, Rogers Warren, Leslie Williams and Tony Ybarra.

Missoula Rookies 2001

Sarah Altemus, Jennifer Anderson, David Bihr, Matthew Clark, Daniel Cottrell, Luke Dunning, Jeremy Harker, Jason Horstman, Scott Jones, Mara Kendrick, Victor Mad Plume, Audrey Mendoza, Garrett Olsen, Melanie Pfister, Bill Phillips, Charles Savoia, Matt Smith, Dan Vanderpool, Michael Ward, Winston Willis and Jake Wipple.

North Cascades

by **Larry Lufkin** (Cave Junction ’64)

New base manager Steve Dickinson took over North Cascades June 1 from Doug Houston, who retired. Steve reported that he finally settled in, having found a place to live and completed his smokejumper requalification requirements. NCSB will have a CASA 212 jump ship on contract from Big Horn for the summer, providing transportation to a crew of 22. The entire crew will be a veteran crew this year. The plan was to hire one rookie, but the person selected did not show up for work.

NCSB jumpers were kept busy during the winter.

Jumpers were assigned to work in Chicago climbing trees on a bug project. Others worked on prescribed fire projects on the Methow and Tonasket Districts of the Okanogan National Forest and on forests in South Carolina.

As of this writing, four Forest Service firefighters had been recently killed fighting a fire north of Winthrop in the 30-mile area. NCSB jumpers did not jump the fire, but selected jumpers were driven to the fire after the incident to assist with rescue work.

Redding

by **Josh Mathiesen** (Redding ’94)

As the Redding jumpers begin the month of July, we stand 43 strong, including 16 brand-new rookies (all but six of the rookies have jumped fires as of June 30).

California saw a swift beginning to its fire season with the first fire jump May 11. Moderate activity continued for the rest of May and June, with dry conditions persisting and the potential for a devastating fire year in California remaining ever-present.

Redding is experiencing somewhat of a renaissance this year. Realignment within our organizational structure, and a bunch of new faces, have contributed to this rebirth. This has brought us a few challenges (e.g., short on smokejumping experience), but the overall attitude is better than it has been in years. We have two aircraft again this year (a Forest Service-owned C-23A Sherpa, and a contract DC-3T from Rhodes Aviation). This enables us to provide 30 jumpers on a given incident.

Twelve Redding jumpers transferred this year to BLM’s Alaska or Boise bases. This necessitated our large rookie class, and special thanks must go to Tim Lum (NCSB) and Tony Loughton (RAC) for their contributions to rookie training this year.

Notably, Arlen Cravens (Redding base manager) is detailed to the Klamath National Forest as deputy forest FMO. In Arlen’s absence, Don Sand (operations battalion) has taken over the base manager’s duties. Scott Brockman (smokejumper captain) is detailed to the Redding Air Tanker Base as base manager. The secretary of agriculture, Ann Veneman, passed through and toured the smokejumper loft this spring. Finally, in our continuing efforts toward recruitment, we are making preparations for the class of 2025 as Adam Lauber’s wife gave birth to a girl June 23. Dorsey Lightner’s wife is also expecting another Dorsey, Jr. sometime in mid-July.

Redmond

By **Tiffan Thoele** (Redmond ’95)

Greetings from RAC, where we sit on the cusp of the Pacific Northwest’s 2001 fire season. During the past two days we have put nearly all our jumpers—even the still wet-behind-the-ears rookies—on fires, which sets the

stage nicely for the coming months.

The 12 new rookie faces bring our numbers to 40. Three of the rookies are detailers from the Deschutes National Forest and, as of this date, all but two of the 12 have completed their first fire jumps.

The remaining two rookies and “old hand” Jim Reeve are currently on a BIA detail in Durango, Colo., where they have been pounding fires non-stop. Two other RAC guys remain down in Silver City, N.M. Injured squad leader Mark Gibbons is currently doing a stint as aircraft dispatcher at the Southern Area Coordination Center in Atlanta, Ga.

We have added two temporary squad leader positions for the duration of the summer, which have been filled by Dirk Stevens and Bill Selby. Our most-recent crop of PSE GS-6 appointments have been filled by Gary Atteberry, Julia Johnson, Kevin Pellman, and West Yellowstone transfer Cindy Champion. Congratulations to all!

Pre-season work details took a number of RAC jumpers to New York to climb trees, and to South Carolina to assist the fine folks of the Francis Marian in their prescribed burning and fire seasons. In addition, Gary Atteberry found himself directing aircraft on the Punta Gorda, Fla., ramp in May.

Just before taking possession of the new hangar, southeast of the loft, the hangar sustained some serious damage from a nearby airport-leveling project. A rock-blasting operation went awry and the resultant flying debris rendered the new hangar roof unusable. There was no damage to aircraft, and the roof has been replaced.

Safe and profitable jumping to all from the RAC contingent.

Silver City

by Wayne Williams (Missoula '77)

Unlike the past two winters, the southwest (Region 3) experienced average to above-average precipitation. The Gila National Forest was no exception, with snow still in the high country when the 21 detailers arrived May 19.

As in past years, the crew was made up of jumpers from Regions 1, 4, 5 and 6, with Missoula being the host for operations. The crew had a below-average season with 54 fire jumps, 10 jump fires, two walk-in fires, and one overhead assignment. Silver City had no booster crews this season, but did send 10 jumpers north to Vernal, Utah, to help McCall's sub-base. Project work was varied from sewing to prescribed fire for a total of more than 2,000 hours.

The monsoon season came late as it skirted New Mexico and went west into Arizona. Some of the moisture made it as far north as Montana, with heavy rains causing rare flooding in Southern California. The monsoons finally arrived July 9, sending the remaining 11 jumpers north to the emerging fire season.

West Yellowstone

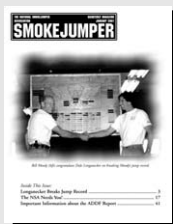
by Ashley Sites (West Yellowstone '98)

West Yellowstone has started out the year with boosters to Miles City, Alaska and Vernal, Utah. It looks to be an interesting season with plenty of fire activity and many changes.

For starters, we should be at almost-full strength for the first time in a while—that is, until some key retirements. Bill Craig, ('66), and Bill Werhane, ('66), will be retiring at or before the end of the season. New folks will be two of the four rookies who started training, Mark

SMOKEJUMPER

BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE



There is a limited number of copies available of the July 2000, October 2000, January 2001, April 2001 and July 2001 editions of *Smokejumper* magazine. Each copy is \$3.50 S/H included. Use the merchandise order form or write it out.

Belitz, detailing from Yellowstone Park, and Dusty Mendoza. Transfers are Kirsten Wardman and Patty Johnson from GAC and Andreas Luderer from McCall. Ted McClanahan is detailing over from GAC.

Another addition is the new contract aircraft from Bighorn Aviation. It is a Dornier, piloted by Randy Leypoldt. We are really enjoying this plane since it can cover a lot of ground and it's comfortable to jump out of it. Since fire activity is picking up in the Great Basin, and hopefully moving north, I will end it here. 🍄

Who Packed Your Parachute?

Charles Plumb was a U.S. Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience.

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.

"I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!"

Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat, a bib in the back, and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."

Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the panels of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?" Everyone has someone who provides what he/she needs to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory. He needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say "hello," "please," or "thank you," congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to him/her, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason.

As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachute. I am sending you this as my way of thanking you for your part in packing my parachute! And I hope you will send it on to those who have helped pack yours!

This was e-mailed to *Smokejumper* magazine by several members. The author is unknown. 🍄

SMOKEJUMPER MILESTONES

"Milestones" was created to serve as both a "Hall of Records" for smokejumping and as a way to encourage you to write in with related stories. If you know of an event that relates to any of the listed categories or want to nominate someone, please send it in. You will be helping to preserve our history.

Milestones Submitted Since Last Issue

Fire jumps in one season: (7 additional submissions)

28-Bruce Yergenson	(McCall '54)	1961
27-Lynn Sprague	(McCall '59)	1961
27-Chas Bull	(Missoula '57)	1961
27-Ted Mason	(NIFC '88)	1999
26-Fred Rensmeyer	(McCall '58)	1961
26-Ted Mason	(NIFC '88)	1994
26-Chuck Sheley	(Cave Jct. '59)	1961
26-Shannon Orr	(Redding '92)	1999
26-Steve Price	(Missoula '95)	1999

Easternmost fire jump (longitude):

Longitude 79 W, George Washington N.F., Virginia, 1974. **Ron McMinimy** (Redding '65), **David Oswalt** (Cave Jct. '65), **Tom Emonds** (Cave Jct. '66), **Gary Thornhill** (Cave Jct. '68), **Walt Congleton** (Cave Jct. '68), **Pat McNally** (Cave Jct. '67) and **Mike Marcuson** (NCSB '64).

Highest elevation landing: (1 additional submission over 10,000 ft)

12,187 feet, White River N.F., Colorado, 2000. **Mike Tupper** (Fairbanks '85), **Denis Terry** (Redding '90), **Todd Jenkins** (NIFC '98), **Mel Tenneson** (Fairbanks '86)

11,193 feet, Humbolt N.F., Nevada, 1966.

Bill Yensen (McCall '53), **Nick Kennedy** (Idaho City '64), **Bruce Yergenson** (McCall '54)

10,700 feet, Shoshone N.F., Wyoming, 1965.

Tony Peiffer (Missoula '61), **Jim Thompson** (Missoula '63), **Vern Bush** (Missoula '63), **Jerry Lebsack** (Missoula '62), **Gary Romness** (Missoula '65)

10,100 feet, Shoshone N.F., Wyoming, 1974.

Steve Clairmont (Missoula '62), **Ted Kamrud** (Missoula '66)

Most consecutive seasons with a fire jump:

34-Jerry Ogawa (McCall '67) 1967 through 2000.

Please send your information and marks to: Milestones@smokejumpers.com or mail to: Mark Corbet, 1740 SE Ochoco Way, Redmond, OR 97756. 🍄



Items From the Fire Pack



Not Even a Match!

On the first series of jumps ever on the Sequoia National Forest, **Orville Looper** (Cave Junction '49), **Lowell "Lucky" Scalf** (Cave Junction '49), and I made up the stick. When we arrived at the scene, there were two fires separated by about a half mile. Looper decided that he would take the smaller fire on the top of the ridge for a "one-manner." Lucky and I jumped the other. No problem with either fire as both were mopped up by sundown.

After mop-up Looper sat down to have a cigarette. No matches! By this time it was dark and starting to get cold at the 7,000-foot elevation. We had no sleeping bags then and by midnight we were freezing. Looper spent an hour or so crawling around through the burn looking for a spark. No luck! Orv said that is was one of the most miserable nights that he had ever spent. He was still covered with ashes a day or so later.

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

Deep Canyon

In 1950, I had a jump in the Snake River canyon and left the aircraft opposite Hat Point Lookout, where the measurement was taken to establish the deepest canyon in the United States. After floating over the canyon and seeing the river coming between me and my jump boots, I was able to turn my chute enough to make it to the canyon wall, where the fire was located.

—**Hal Werner** (North Cascades '48)

A Rock and a Hard Place

I found out the hard way what happens when a jumper can't roll upon landing. Once I landed next to a boulder and the weight of the emergency chute on my chest forced my lungs into my shoulders. I could hardly breathe!

Luckily for me, I was given the assignment of preparing dinner for the

crew. When the others returned from the fire that evening, they were greeted by warmed-over food. They liked the meal anyway. Still, breathing was a problem for me for the next days.

—**Maynard Shetler** (Missoula '45)

Passing the Vision Test/ First Woman Jumper?

I thought that they would not accept anyone with glasses in the smokejumpers so I memorized the chart and passed easily without my glasses. During my second year, our training took place at Nine Mile. It was that spring that **Florence Wenger** went through the ground training but never made a jump.

—**Bryn Hammarstrom** (Missoula '43)

Ways Around the Physical Exam Too

The social structure, even among the Mennonites, was different in Pennsylvania from the small back-woods community where I grew up in Michigan. Some of the homes in my association had sons in the service who were being killed and wounded. I felt a lot of pressure and volunteered for the smokejumpers. After being rejected on physical grounds the first time, I sneaked by a doctor who didn't ask many questions the second time. I reported to Nine Mile Camp for training.

—**Willard Handrich** (Missoula '45)

Early Years

I was working at the mental hospital in Brattleboro, Vt., when I was accepted into the smokejumper unit. I trained at Nine Mile under **Wag Dodge** and **Bill Wood** and served two years. We had six weeks of intensive training. I made four fire jumps the first season. My first fire jump was with **John Ainsworth** on the Washington side of the Columbia River.

—**H. Lee Hebel** (Missoula '44)

Difficult Choice

World War II confronted me with a very difficult dilemma. On one hand I had the feelings of patriotism—the feeling that each citizen must be willing to sacrifice himself for society. On the other hand, my home and church has passed on to me the conviction that one should not do violence to a fellow human being no matter what the provocation might be.

—**Ivan Holdeman** (Missoula '45)

High Morale at Camp 103

There was a strong conviction within me that compelled me to put my body in the most dangerous situation that was possible within the framework of my CO status. I needed to demonstrate to myself that I had not taken my alternative service position to escape danger. The most impressionable part of the smokejumper experience was the high morale of the men at Camp 103. The government would not want too many CO camps with this type of respectable project (smokejumping), for that would not further their objective of forcing the COs out due to low morale.

—**Ivan Holdeman** (Missoula '45)

Early Days at CJ

The Redwood Ranger Station (Cave Junction) served a large area running from the Cascades to the Pacific Ocean. Under the guidance of **Ray Hudson** we dismantled an old CCC building near the Oregon Caves and rebuilt it into a parachute loft behind the ranger station. On one occasion a Marine Corps plane picked up five of us for two fires. We dropped two men down near Mt. Shasta and headed north to Crater Lake. The plane commander said they were running low on fuel and wanted the remaining three of us to jump on a single pass. Our descent was the shortest of my career as we were very low. We con-

tained the fire that night and walked down to Steamboat Springs, where we learned that there had been a report of Japanese paratroopers landing in the Cascades the night before.

This is how rumors start.

—William Laughlin (Missoula '43)

Confident About Decision

I got the call from the smokejumpers in January of 1944. I recognized immediately that these were some really special people. The Menonite camps were just an extension of the community where I grew up but the smokejumper unit brought in a

whole new perspective.

Many of these guys had actually made their decision to be pacifists in the face of opposition from their friends, family and community. I was impressed! I certainly felt more confident about my stand than ever before, and that feeling has stayed with me ever since.

—Leland Miller (Missoula '44)

First Jump of '44 Season

Wag Dodge took Paul Schrock and me to the Travelair and we took off just after 6:50 P.M. The smoke was hugging the ground so we didn't spot it immediately. Shrock jumped first

and I jumped second. As I neared the treetops, by chute turned wonderfully as I dodged several snags. I slammed into a fir about 25 feet up and landed backward. It was an easy landing. The cargo was dropped 50 feet from my chute, and by 8:20 Paul and I had the cargo gathered and our chutes retrieved. The fire was confined to a snag which we dropped with the crosscut saw. By 11:30 we had the fire out and the log trenched. The next morning we walked to a road and came back to Seeley Lake in time for lunch.

—Allen "Hoot" Moyer (Missoula '43)



MEMBER PROFILE JAMES T. HAIN

by "Pic" Littell

Jim Hain trained at Ninemile/Missoula in 1944 in the Civilian Public Service Smokejumper Unit, and jumped for two years out of Ninemile, Big Prairie and Missoula. He made a total of 21 training, fire and rescue jumps.

He says the most fun he had on a jump was "running out the door" of a DC-3 on a rescue jump with two paradoctors. Jim was jumping a Derry-slotted Irwin and hit the jump spot. The two doctors landed far away in the brush as they were jumping standard, unslotted chutes.

Another highlight was a flight in a Ford Tri-Motor from Orofino, Idaho, to Missoula with Slim Philips, a legendary tri-motor pilot, in which Slim let Jim take over the controls for most of the flight.

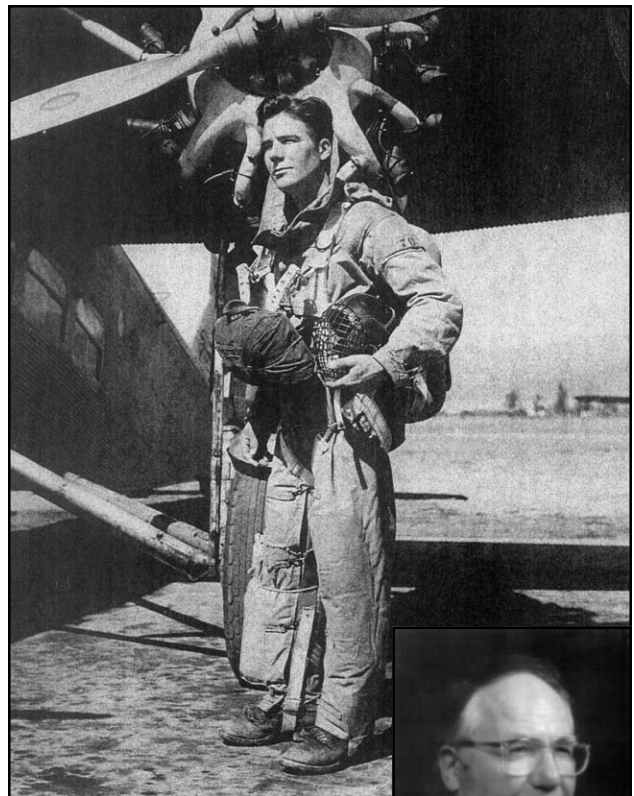
Somehow, the jumping and flying got into Jim's blood as he made two tandem parachute jumps in recent years from 12,000 and 13,000 ft., pulling the ripcord at 4,000 ft. He has also made two hot air balloon flights, a glider flight and one session of aerobatics with a retired Air Force pilot.

After two years of college, Jim pursued what he calls a "Jack of all trades" career, involving shipping horses to Europe, drilling tunnels in Colorado, logging and construction work, selling building materials and working in a power plant in Washington.

His interests and activities extend to hiking and mountaineering. He has climbed in the Swiss Alps, Mexico and the U.S., including Mt. Rainier seven times. He is a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (a peace organization), a Quaker support group

and several environmental and public service organizations including Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the American Civil Liberties Union.

He has a son and daughter by his first marriage. He is currently married to Frances Hain. His address is: P.O. Box 9313, Seattle, WA 98109 🌲



Jim Hain (Courtesy of Jim Hain)

Ten Standard Firefighting Orders

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77), Forester, Shoshone National Forest

For several years I have presented what I call the “Original Intent Ten Orders.” Fellow firefighters have asked me to put the talk in writing. I hope that these orders will become your firefighting foundation.

First. Throw away the listing of the **Ten Orders** as written in today’s literature. The **Orders** as written will compromise your safety. The present listing was developed as a catchy way for you to memorize the **Orders**. It will not help you in real-world terms to effectively implement them. For the **Orders** to make sense, you must understand the original intent of the engagement-and-disengagement process. The **Orders** are in fact your rules of engagement.

The **Ten Standard Firefighting Orders** were developed by a task force commissioned by Forest Service Chief Richard E. McArdle in 1957. The task force reviewed the records of 16 tragedy fires that occurred from 1937 to 1956. Yes, both the Blackwater fire of 1937 on the **Shoshone National Forest** and the Mann Gulch fire at the Gates of the Mountains in 1949 contributed to the wisdom contained in the **Ten Orders**. The **Firefighting Orders** were based in part on the successful “**General Orders**” used by America’s armed forces.

Through my 29 fire seasons as a fireguard, hot shot, smoke-jumper and FMO, I have restructured only two of the orders to better-fit the concept of engage-and-disengage as I was taught early in my career. I feel that my change in the order structure further complements the original intent of the authors. Remember, the orders are designed to move up and down in sequence in an engagement-and-disengagement process. Understanding this concept should make sense to you through your personal on-the-ground experience.

1. **Know what your FIRE is doing at all times.** This is the basic order that all orders fall back on. This order frames your fire in three dimensions. The reason why we all like to initial attack is because of the unknown. What is my fire doing? What is it burning in? Soon, the unknown becomes the known as we complete our size up.
2. **Base all actions on current and expected BEHAVIOR of the FIRE.** Your fire moves through the fourth dimension of time and space. Once you have fixed your fire through the size-up process, you must then begin to anticipate its movements through time. Current and expected fire behavior will help you do this. Your fire is not static. It will constantly move and grow until it is controlled.
3. **Keep informed on FIRE WEATHER conditions and forecasts.** This is the second leg of your prediction matrix. In the Rocky Mountains, weather will most often dictate where and how your fire will move.
4. **Post a LOOKOUT when there is possible danger.** You are close to engaging the fire with firefighters. But first you have to assure that your first three orders are not compromised. A lookout will be able to tell you **What Your Fire Is Doing**. The lookout can also take weather readings to help you predict where the fire is going to go.
5. **Have ESCAPE ROUTES for everyone and make sure they are known (safety zones).** This is your final order before firefighters can become engaged. If the fire situation deteriorates, you can always disengage to this order until the situation becomes clear to you.

6. **Be ALERT, keep CALM, THINK clearly and ACT decisively.** The final five orders deal with people. You must first be clear and calm in your own mind before you can lead others. If you are confused, then disengage to order 5 until the situation is clear again. Remember that all of us, no matter what our experience level, will be confused and unsure of ourselves at times on the line. There are often just too many variables changing too fast for our minds to process. If you are confused, then disengage to your safety zone to watch and learn.



*Karl Brauneis and his dogs in the Popo Agie Wilderness, Washakie Ranger District, Wyoming.
(Courtesy of Karl Brauneis)*

7. **Maintain CONTROL of your men at all times.** Now you are moving out of your own presence and out to others. This order goes directly back to Wagner Dodge and his smokejumpers at Mann Gulch. If the crew would have only listened to their foreman and his revelation about an escape fire, we might not have those 13 stations of the cross. All of us have doubts and uncertainties. The leadership on the fire must understand the situation and make sure that it is communicated in a calm and orderly manner.
8. **Give clear INSTRUCTIONS and be sure they are understood.** If your crew is unsure, then take the time to re-evaluate and bring everyone up to speed. When in doubt, ask your firefighters to repeat the instructions until you are all on the same page.
9. **Maintain prompt COMMUNICATION with your men, your boss, and adjoining forces.** Good communications are a sign of maturity. I have reviewed dispatch check-in and destination procedures with my high school daughter. I have had limited success. As professional firefighters we must demand nothing less than the best-possible communication. If your communication lines are broken, then start the disengagement process until the lines are open again.
10. **Fight fire aggressively but provide for SAFETY first.** I want to fight fire aggressively. I want to see the dirt fly. I want to move my crew around the fire’s head and cut the fire off. But, I know through experience that before I can fully engage, I must first satisfy the **Ten Orders**. If a safety problem arises at this point of engagement, then I must start the disengagement process. Safety is written all over and through the **Ten Orders**. I believe that the tenth order was written to emphasize the disengagement and not the engagement process. Even when things are going great (your crew is engaged and the dirt is flying), be ready to disengage back through the orders.

It is my hope the **Ten Standard Orders** will be used as they were intended and not become just a list of items to be memorized by our field firefighters. I am not a saint. In my early years, I would tend to rush through the orders so I could aggressively engage. However, age and experience does change us all. I now submit that the **Ten Standard Fire Fighting Orders** are the basic building block of our fire culture. All other fire suppression policy is based on these **Orders**.

I hope each firefighter will commit them to his/her heart, mind and soul. Be safe out there. This looks like a repeat of the "Fire Season from Hell." 🙏

Karl R. Brauneis was born in 1954 in Aurora, Colorado, and wanted to be a "Forest Service man" since childhood. In 1972 Karl was able to Helitack to his first forest fire in Rocky Mountain National Park as a freshman forestry student at Colorado State University. While at CSU Karl ran cross-country and track for Del Hessel (McCall '60) and worked his way through school on a "Hot Shot" scholarship (Wyoming Hot Shots).

Karl trained as a Missoula smokejumper (1977–1979) and counts those years as some of the best! He then converted to a forester position on the Kaniksu National Forest and worked his way up to the timber management assistant position on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. While at Bonners Ferry, both Karl and his wife Marilyn coached track and cross country at Bonners Ferry High School. In 1988 they transferred to the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming. He now serves as a zone fire management officer.

Karl and Marilyn were married in 1979 and have three children. Kristin, Keith and Mitchell Joe. Kristin is the Wyoming State 3A / 800 champion and holds two state records in middle distance relays. Keith and Mitchell are both outstanding athletes in basketball, football and track. Marilyn substitute teaches for the Lander Valley School District. Their family attends the United Methodist Church in Lander where both Karl and Marilyn serve as youth leaders. Karl has also served as Cub Master for Pack 17 in Lander and as president of the local Kiwanis Club. You can reach Karl at: kbrauneis@f.fed.us

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER H. W. "SKIP" STRATTON

by Roger Archibald

Skip Stratton spent 26 years in the Forest Service before retiring as assistant chief of the Division of Fire Control in 1973. He was best known to the smoke-jumping community as one of the four Missoula squad leaders who participated in the demonstration jump on the Ellipse in front of the White House in Washington, D.C., in 1949.

Before he rookied at Missoula in 1947, Skip had served almost four years as an aviator in the Army Air Corps, where he had flown both fighter and cargo aircraft all over the country. He was on the verge of deploying to the Pacific Theater when World War II ended.

Back in Missoula to attend U of M Forestry School after his discharge, Skip spent four seasons as an active jumper while completing his education. In 1949, he headed a crew dispatched to Mann Gulch to recover the victims of that disaster, one of whom he'd made the Washington, D.C., jump with only weeks earlier. Later in the fall, he returned there with another crew to place wooden crosses on the spots where bodies had been recovered.

Skip made his last jump on a fire in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1950 before accepting an appointment as a forester on the Coeur D'Alene National Forest. He rose through the fire management ranks in Region I of the Forest Service, and by his retirement, he'd achieved a red-card rating of Fire General. His most memorable fire season was 1967 and the 50,000 acre Sundance fire in northern Idaho.

Since his retirement, Skip has served 16 years on the Board of Directors of the Government Employees Credit

Union, holding the titles of president, secretary/treasurer and chairman of many committees. Among other honors, he was named the Credit Union Person of the Year for the state of Montana. He resides in Missoula. 🙏

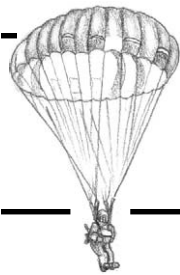
FEATURED LIFE MEMBER ROBERT A. "BOB" WALKER

by Roger Archibald

Not many jumpers can claim Anchorage, Alaska as their home base—the BLM maintained a sub-base there for just ten years between 1962 and 1972—but Bob Walker's one of them. He jumped with the BLM out of Anchorage for just two seasons, accumulating 47 jumps before the base was closed, but "I probably would have gone on another ten years if they hadn't shut her down," he says. "Anchorage is where we wanted to be, but when we lost our jump base, we just sort of packed up our bags and looked for other jobs."

The next job Bob found was working in security for the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline, which was just being built around the time he left jumping. After ten years of doing that, he joined the Alaska Department of Transportation in Anvik, a remote community (population 102) on the Yukon River more than 300 miles northwest of Anchorage, where he's been responsible for airport maintenance since 1985.

Bob has also found time for a successful political career as well, having served as Mayor of Anvik for the last seventeen years. He's "helped Anchorage get on the jump list" at NSA by locating a number of former Anchorage jumpers. Noting that he grew up in the community of Holy Cross just downstream on the Yukon from his present home, he points out that he's migrated just 40 miles in his 51 years. 🙏



Odds and Ends

by Chuck Sheley

A press release from the 2000 Smokejumper

Reunion gives some interesting comparisons. Sixty Years Evolution in Training and Equipment: the basic job of smokejumpers remains the same as in 1940. Fire line digging and mop-up are still done with Pulaski and shovel, but cross-cuts saws have been replaced with lightweight 13,000-rpm chain saws. Tree-climbing techniques are unchanged and packouts with 100 pounds or more still occur although less frequently and over shorter distances than in the early years.

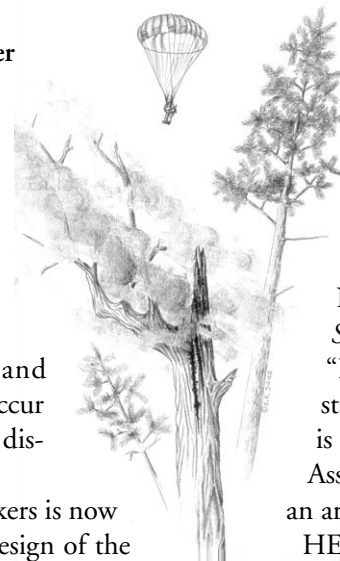
Air support by helicopters and air tankers is now widespread and rapidly delivered. The design of the protective two-piece jumpsuit and helmet has changed little but materials and safety have markedly improved from the cotton-duck fabric and leather football helmets. Space age polymers are now used for the jumpsuits. Versus the 1940s, current smokejumpers are provided fire-resistant work clothing, gloves and fire shelters. The rookie training is extended by weeks with twice the number of training jumps. An improved parachute has significantly reduced the injury rate from parachute lands.

Bill Yensen (McCall '53) had some of his film clips used by the History Channel in its "Suicide Missions" feature about smokejumpers, which played last March. In an other venue, Bill and his wife realized a lifelong dream by playing golf at the St. Andrews course in Scotland in July. Bill's wife, Arlene, won the USGA National Junior Golf Championship in 1951.

Ron Thoreson (Cave Junction '60) has expanded his retirement from the golf courses of Missouri to the stage. He's working in his second stage production and cast, of course, as the villain. In his first melodrama, his opposite love interest was a young lady of eighteen years. Tough work, but someone has to do it! He will be heading west in August to attend another class reunion. Hasn't missed one in 45 years. Some of his classmates point out the irony, as he never attended school that regularly.

Los Alamos County had a parade last April to honor the volunteers who helped during the fires of 2000.

Chuck Mansfield (Cave Junction '59) and his wife, Arlene, drove their '72 Dodge Dart with a message on



the vehicle that commemorated supporting organizations, including the NSA. "The biggest comment that Arlene and I heard was 'Smokejumpers—wow.' Since six of the Boise jumpers and I were working the fire effort in one means or another it was true."

Video Librarian magazine has reviewed the NSA video *Smokejumpers: Firefighters from the Sky* in their May-June issue and given us a "Highly Recommended" and three-and-a-half stars out of a possible four stars. The magazine is a video guide for libraries.

Associate **Chris Sorenson** brings our attention to an article from the Associated Press:

HELENA (AP) - Smokejumpers floated down to Mann Gulch Thursday to replace an obscure monument with one bearing the Star of David to more properly honor a comrade who died 52 years ago in one of the nation's worst forest fire disasters.

David Navon was 28 years old in 1949, and in his second season as a smokejumper. He was one of 16 jumpers to respond to a fire north of Helena that August, near the Gates of the Mountains. Navon and 12 others died when they were overrun by flames.

The next year, smokejumpers from Missoula honored their fallen comrades with a series of whitewashed concrete crosses marking the spots where the bodies were found.

But it wasn't until 1992, with the publication of Norman Maclean's *Young Men and Fire*, that it was noted Navon was Jewish. In that case, a Star of David would be a more fitting monument than a cross.

"I brought it up once to the people in Missoula—not that David was very religious—but I thought it was sort of incongruous," said Anita Navon, his sister. "They said they would replace it with a stone (obelisk), and I said that would be fine."

The obelisk was installed in 1997, but she said a friend visited the site, and couldn't tell where Navon fell. While the white crosses stood out starkly against the background, the gray obelisk blended into the hillside.

Friends, family and smokejumpers raised nearly \$1,000 to pay for a 210-pound Star of David for the

fallen firefighter. The plan was to put it in place last year, but wildfires delayed the project until now.

On Thursday, a helicopter delivered the monument to Mann Gulch. Six smokejumpers leaped in pairs from a DC-3—a plane nearly identical to the one that brought Navon to the fire in 1949—and installed the memorial on the ground.

Jump foreman Wayne Williams said many more wanted to participate. “As far as smokejumpers are concerned, this place has a certain historical value,” he said. “It’s a neat experience, but a humbling experience.”

As a track coach of many years, I was very interested in hearing from **Karl Brauneis** (Missoula ’77) about the success of his daughter in the Wyoming State 3A Track & Field Championships last spring. Kristin won the state title in the 800 meters and anchored a record setting effort in the 4 x 400 meter relay for Lander High School. She also is the #2 runner on the state championship cross-country team from Lander and has her senior year in front of her.

Scott Belknap (McCall ’83) and **Fred Thompson** (Missoula ’00) have been hired as assistant superintendents for the newly created Lewis and Clark Inter-agency Hotshots, based in Great Falls, Mont.

Tom and Denny Lynch have sold Lynch Flying Service to Billings attorney Cliff Edwards. The name is being changed to Edwards Jet Service. Lynch operated a subsidiary, Lynch Air Tankers from 1967–1988 using Douglas A-26 Invaders. Denny Lynch flew one of the A-26 Invaders in the 1989 Steven Spielberg Movie *Always* which was filmed in Libby, Mont., and Moses Lake, Wash. Lynch Flying Service was established in 1946 and was one of the first Cessna dealers in the United States. So closes another chapter in Montana aviation history. For you trivia buffs, the Douglas A-26 is the only aircraft to see action in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Thanks to associate **Chris Sorenson** for the last two items.

Dan “Oggie” Ogden (Redding ’92) ordered a Rookie Jump Pin and updated me on his current status. After breaking his femur on a jump in Alaska in 1998, he has spent a season with the Lassen Hotshots (R-5) and the National Park Service. Oggie has taken an appointment as a squad leader with the Klamath Hotshots (R-5) this season and says he’s with a great crew. With the quick start of the current fire season in California, I’m sure Dan will have a ton of overtime by the time this October issue comes out.

Adam Lauber (Redding ’99) mentions that **Andy Yamamoto** (Redding ’98) feels retired now that he has completed his life circle after being hired by the Redondo Beach City Fire Department. Andy reports missing hangin’ with the bros at Market Fest and jumping. Is it true that the Redondo CFD is only two blocks away from the beach on the Pacific Ocean?

The mailing of this issue of *Smokejumper* may be delayed while its editor **Chuck Sheley** and his wife **K.G.** leave the office for a week celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary.

Stan Cohen from the Museum of Mountain Flying in Missoula reports back on their project to purchase the Mann Gulch DC-3. So far he has collected about \$14,000 and is still trying to get some money from local banks and foundations. The museum is getting ready to build a 19,000-foot hangar in July for the airplane which won’t be in Missoula until next summer. This exhibit will be a memorial to the deceased jumpers. The NSA executive committee is working on a contribution to the project and wants to keep a tight working relationship with the Museum of Mountain Flying.

Bill Gropp (Missoula ’46) relates that after he and his brother **Howard Gropp** (Missoula ’42) had gotten out of the service in 1946 they headed for Missoula where Howard was going to jump another season. Bill was just going to drive Howard north to the job but ended up getting hired also and jumped that season. It always pays to be in the right place. 🍄

NSA Merchandise Bargain Close-outs

The merchandise store needs to clear the shelves and move these items. Great buys at below cost:

1. Reunion 2000 Run T-shirts. White with NSA logo and “National Smokejumper Reunion 10K”. Medium, large, XL and 2XL \$5.00 (reg. \$12)
2. Top of the line knit shirt navy with embroidered “National Smokejumper Reunion 2000” and NSA logo. **Only have one XL** \$20.00 (reg. \$34)
3. Top of the line knit shirt green with NSA logo and embroidered National Smokejumper Association. **Only one XL** \$20.00 (reg. \$34)

Use the order blank on the merchandise form or call (530) 893-0436.

Mouse Remembered

by Steve Smith (NSA Historian)

A smokejumper named Allen Owen was killed during a sport jump at North Pole, Alaska, in September 1981. I didn't know him. I wish I did. What I've learned about him came from other jumpers who loved him. "Love" is not too strong a word here.

Jumpers knew him as "Mouse."

Mouse was a former Cave Junction and Alaska smokejumper. He was a three-tour veteran of Vietnam. Mouse was a graduate of the School of Forestry at the University of Missouri. It's hard to know what he would have accomplished had he lived longer. His energy and personality would have taken him a long way. He was 38 when he died.

Mouse was the smallest Marine ever to serve in Vietnam, and was the tiniest smokejumper as well. He was four feet, ten-and-a-half inches tall and maybe 110 pounds. It was not that the Marine Corps wanted him—they rejected him. But, then, so did the U.S. Forest Service.

"Trooper" Tom Emmons wrote a touching story in the April issue of *Smokejumper* about Mouse. With his permission, I'm drawing from his story.

"When he walked into the nearest Marine Corps recruiting office, they thanked him for his interest, but with a laugh said he was below the minimum standards for absorbing bullets. Not enough mass. Undeterred, he went home and began the first of many official procedures to elbow his way into hell. With a waiver from both the Senate and the House, he secured the right paperwork, making it possible to get in.

"He stayed three years in Vietnam. He was always in the most-dangerous places, always in the most-absurd situations, always bringing his humanity to the battlefield and humor to those around him. At first he coordinated supporting arms in a little bird-dog plane over the frays. But his real contributions came as a recon Marine whispering situation reports to our guys in the rear, as he sat there dressed in leaves, a few feet inside enemy base camps along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

"He got the same song and dance from the jumpers as the Marines recruiter. Once again, knowing the pen was mightier than the sword, he began his deranged vet routine of 'Look, okay, I'm under the magic 5-foot-4 and 120 pounds, but I carried a 70-pound pack up and down mountains in 120-degree jungles, fighting for freedom. All I want is a chance to do the job.'

"I remember specifically weighing his pack when we got back to the warehouse. His pack was wet and weighed in at 167 pounds. He carried that thing on two-foot-long legs for more than four miles in a rainstorm. Two of those miles were off-trail.

"He was the best instructor any of us had ever met



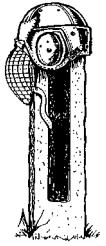
Allen Owen (Courtesy of Doug Beck)

anywhere. His presentations were always so graphic and alive. When Mouse heard of a young woman who wanted to be a smokejumper, but got sent down the road for no reason other than being a female trying to get into the boys club, he wasted no time getting hold of her, and told her by the numbers how to fight 'em and win. Deanne Shulman went on to become the first woman smokejumper. Mouse was wise beyond his years and his compact size.

"He would bounce into a room and take it over. We knew then we were lucky to have him, for what is it in life, above all else, that measures quality and degree of how well you're enjoying life? Well, it has to be how often and how hard you laugh. Mouse, wherever he went, made people have fun and laugh. For that alone, he is the greatest person I've ever met.

"We used to talk about how pissed-off at Mouse we were for his checking out so early. He pretty well screwed us out of a lot of fun and laughter that could have been, and we've always been pissed about it. Damned inconsiderate, if you ask me!"

These are only short bits of a 12-page tribute to Mouse that Trooper Tom wrote. Mouse has been gone two decades, but is lucky enough to live in the hearts of his friends and fellow jumpers until their time comes to join him. 🕯



Off The List

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.

Cresencio Rodriguez (Associate)

Chris Rodriguez passed away April 30, 2001, in D'Hannis, Texas. He was the brother-in-law of NSA Life Member **Ben Musquez** (Missoula '56) and one of the original supporters of *Smokejumper* magazine. Chris suffered a stroke last December, which led to his passing. He is survived by his wife Gloria.

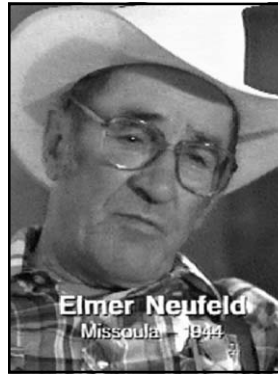
Ben remembers Chris as "a small man with a big heart." We appreciate Chris' support in helping with the changing of the NSA magazine.

Harry A. "Bub" Mishler (Missoula '43)

Harry Mishler died May 3, 2001, at the age of 84. He grew up in Sheridan, Ore., and volunteered for CPS-103 during World War II, and jumped from 1943 through the 1945 seasons. After the war, Harry was a logger in Sweet Home before moving to Portland in 1949, where he was a glazier until his retirement.

Elmer W. Neufeld (Cave Junction '44)

Elmer Neufeld died Monday, June 18 in Boise at



age 80. He grew up in Inman, Kan., and was drafted into the Civilian Public Service as a conscientious objector during WWII. While at a CPS camp in 1943, he heard of the CPS-103 smokejumper unit that was being formed. Elmer was accepted in 1944 and joined the jumpers at Cave

Junction, Ore. In 1945 he transferred to the North Cascades smokejumper base, where he worked until 1970.

In the spring of 1970, Elmer became a technical representative for a fire retardant company and worked that position for the next 16 years. From 1986 until 1996 he ran the retardant base for a contract company which provided retardant for the USFS and BLM in Boise.

He is survived by his wife, Carolyn, of Boise. 🕯

Reunion Information— Mark These Dates!

Cave Junction

June 21–23, 2002, in Cave Junction. Contact Gary Buck (541) 592-2055 or Wes Brown (541) 592-2250, alpha@cdsnet.net

CPS-103

July 16–19, 2002, at the Glacier Mountain Lodge in Hungry Horse, Montana. T. Richard Flaharty, 11615 Ostrom Avenue, Granada Hills, CA 91344-2519. (818) 360-6690 Tedford & Margie Lewis, 415 W. Kirkham Ave., Webster Groves, MO 63119. (314) 961-4200

McCall NSA

June 2003
2004 in Missoula

Fallen Friend

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks '96)

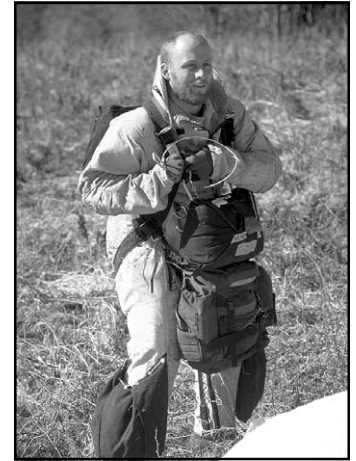
Dave Liston smiled upon the gathering of people in the woods. He braced his hands beneath the small round window and stood in the crowded twin-prop airplane. He wiped the sweat from his eyes and snapped the chinstrap on his helmet into place. His heart pounded as he tightened his leg straps. He had never felt this nervous before a practice jump. "Two jumpers!" boomed the spotter at the open door. Three thousand feet below the circling ship, Dave's girlfriend waited in a meadow known as the "Big Spot."

Kristin shaded the summer sun from her face and squinted at the plane buzzing far overhead. Standing among a crew of smoke-jumper trainers she quietly wondered why her boss told her to take the morning off just to watch Dave jump. Kristin's three friends from work seemed filled with giddy anticipation on the winding drive through the hills above Fairbanks, Alaska.

"Get ready!" The spotter's hand came down on Dave's shoulder and he threw himself into the wind stream. Seconds later he pulled the green handle from his harness, sending his parachute to the sky

with a loud crack. He drew in several deep breaths and fixed his eyes on the jump spot. Minutes later he turned upon final approach, sinking below the treetops. The wind faded near the target. Dave knew his landing would be rough. His boots hit first as he tucked into a tight roll. His helmet hit next, the impact filling his metal facemask with dirt.

Dave's parachute draped around him as he struggled to his feet. He hurried to free himself from his heavy jumpsuit. His hands



(Courtesy of Mike McMillan)



(Courtesy of Mike McMillan)

worked at buckles and zippers as Kristin slowly walked toward him. Her eyes met his with a curious and beautiful smile. Without a word he took her by the hand, the two of them wading through a sea of wild Alaska roses. The last of the jumpers landed as the gallery of on-lookers turned their attention toward the young couple.

Dave steadied himself on one knee and pulled a small white box from his fire shirt pocket. Kristin rested her hand on his shoulder and knelt closer as he proposed to the love of his life. Kristin had carried her answer in her heart for years, feeling that Dave was unlike anyone she had ever known. His gentle spirit filled her life with happiness. They embraced and kissed sweetly, oblivious to the heartfelt applause rising from their family of friends.

Dave's journey to smokejumping began in the Sisters Wilderness of Oregon on an engine crew in 1993 and 1994. In 1995 he joined the Midnight Sun Hotshots and became an important part of an Alaska crew known for its fireline grit and toughness. In 1997 he was a squad boss with the North Star fire-crew, serving as an experienced firefighter and squad boss. That fall he was chosen as a rookie candidate by the Alaska Smokejumpers.

He trained alone as he did for years as a state champion wrestler from his hometown of Gladstone, Oregon. Now running in the sub-zero temperatures of Girdwood, Alaska, he put hundreds of miles behind him with his distinctive toe-heavy trot. He did thousands of pull-ups on a homemade bar inside the small cabin he and Kristin shared. She worked toward her nursing degree in Anchorage.

During rookie training Dave impressed his instructors with an unshakable resolve to give them his all. Late in the three-week program the group went for an "Indian-run"; a single file formation in which rookies are alternately quizzed by their trainers. Looking for a break from his standard list of questions about parachuting procedure, geography and jumper folklore, lead trainer John Lyons was sure that he had his rookies stumped.

Lyons thought of his rare pedigree hunting dog, now just a clumsy longhaired puppy. He called the first rookie to the front of the line. "O'Brien, what kind of dog do I have?" "Uh, some kind of spaniel?" Mike answered, puzzled and out of breath. "No. Give me twenty." O'Brien dropped out of line and hit the dirt. Humphrey sprinted to fill his place. "Humphrey, what kind of dog do I have?"

In his Texan drawl Ty slowly confessed that he had no idea.

"Give me twenty," snapped Lyons. Ty fell out and began his push-ups. Dave sprinted to fill the gap. "Liston! What kind of dog do I have?"

A wry grin crept across Dave's face as he looked in the eyes of his lead trainer. "A mutt?" Lyons contained his laughter long enough to calmly reply, "Get back in line, Liston."

Dave had earned his push-up reprieve.

Dave spent his rookie fire season first jumping fires in Alaska and then in the rugged wilderness surrounding Winthrop, Washington.

On a salmon fishing trip that summer, Dave and two jumpers took leave to float down the Gulkana River of Alaska's interior. As thunderstorms moved closer, only Robert Yeager was catching any fish. Veteran jumper Rod Dow thought for sure he'd at least catch a cold. A wind driven rain pelted their faces, lulling the trio into miserable silence. Dave suddenly looked at his two friends and yelled from the front of the boat, "Man, is this great or what!" They pondered their situation and the source of Dave's cheer as they sought shelter beneath a large white spruce.

In the spring of 1999 Dave returned as an Alaska Smokejumper, traveling south to jump fires out of West Yellowstone, Montana, near the end of the season.

In the fall, Dave and Kristin lived in Rainbow Valley outside of Anchorage. A wind powered generator and solar panels illuminated their small cabin. They fed their wood-burning stove for cooking and heat. During the winter freeze they punched through the ice to fill water

jugs from a fast-moving stream that ran through their yard. Dave built a shelter down slope where he often sat for hours in his poncho, whitening sticks, soaking up life in a land that felt like home.

That winter they welcomed a visit from Dave's father. John Liston flew lead planes for the Forest Service, guiding retardant bombers to their targets for seven seasons until 1996. During a long walk through the snow-covered valley, Dave told his father he couldn't imagine being happier. He lived in a beautiful place. He loved his wife with his heart and soul. He looked forward to fire season and being a smokejumper again. Dave said he was living his dream. John was moved by the emotion in his son's words and the bond Dave and Kristin shared.

Under sunny skies on April 8, 2000, Dave and Kristin were married in Welches, Oregon. They returned to their Rainbow Valley cabin before driving to Fairbanks to prepare for the fire season. Dave and Kristin Liston bought two acres of land near the Chena River and planned to build a cabin of their own when the time was right.

On April 29 Dave sang happy birthday to his wife, kissed her and left for work. He was excited about the practice jumps scheduled for the day. Dave and seven fellow smokejumpers made the first of two jumps into a soggy meadow. Icy brown water soaked through their heavy boots as they bagged their canopies and headed back to the base. They secured fresh parachutes to their harnesses, ready to make another jump.

The jump ship flew 3000 feet over the "River Road" spot and began dropping sticks of two jumpers. As the eighth man on the load Dave was the last to leave the plane. He exited and pulled his green handle, but his main parachute stayed locked in its container. Falling toward earth he pulled the bright red handle on his reserve, releasing the spring-loaded parachute to the sky. What happened next can never be known with certainty. Dave's reserve canopy became tangled in a rare and fatal malfunction. Cries from the trainers at the jump spot filled the air. "Open!" "Open!" "No!" "No!" Disbelief gave way to numbing despair. Dave Liston was gone.

Operations were suspended as experts from the Alaska and Boise Smokejumpers and the parachuting industry searched tirelessly for answers. One conclusion drawn was that part of the deployment system on Dave's harness was wet from his first jump of the day. A key piece of equipment may have frozen in the 28-degree temperature recorded inside the orbiting plane at jump altitude. Several simple but significant modifications were completed before the BLM would return to jump status more than two months later.

Jumping fires was hard to imagine in the wake of losing Dave.

A memorial at the Big Spot drew hundreds of people celebrating his life. A jump ship raced overhead across a clear blue sky, leaving a single yellow streamer fluttering to the ground in the stirring breeze.

Kristin began the hardest year of her life. She returned to school in Anchorage for the winter, living with close friends of hers and Dave's. Kristin's faith in God inspired those near her. It was a faith she and Dave shared throughout their friendship, love and marriage.

In the spring of 2001 the Alaska Smokejumpers sledged a granite boulder into the forest where Dave fell. They built a foundation to hold the large stone in place. They mounted a metal plate on its face, bearing an engraved eulogy to their fallen friend.

On April 29th Kristin returned to Fairbanks to spend her birthday with the Alaska Smokejumpers. They gathered at the memorial and stood together quietly among the black spruce. Kristin made a cross from tree branches and set it at the base of the stone. Smokejumper Oded Shalom passed paper cups and water canteens in both directions. He spoke of renewal and healing in a shaken voice, his dark eyes swollen with tears. He described spring as the first chance for trees to draw life from the thawing ground. The water they held came from birch trees tapped just days before. They toasted to their brother with a hint of sweetness in their cups. And Dave smiled upon the small group of people in the woods. 🌲

A Star for David

by David L. Turner (USFS)

As I sat on the rocky ridge that separates Mann Gulch from Rescue Gulch in early May of this year, overlooking the site of the infamous Mann Gulch fire of 1949, I couldn't help but think that despite the fact that smokejumper David Navon's life tragically ended here, he would have enjoyed this spring day. With his love of the outdoors and the mountains, David would have taken pleasure in the panoramic view from the ridgetop where he could see all the way to the still snow-capped front range of the Rocky Mountains, some 50 miles distant. I think the sight and song of the recently arrived bluebirds as they flitted from sparse tree to sparse tree along the ridgeline would have pleased him.

From this perch on the rimrocks of Mann Gulch on the morning of May 10, overlooking the hillside where 12 of his fellow smokejumpers also met their untimely deaths, David might have cocked his head slightly and smiled again as he detected the familiar drone of the DC-3 as it came in from the west after its 40-minute flight from the Missoula Smokejumper Base. He would probably have followed the plane's flight path as it banked over the head of the Gulch and watched attentively as the first of the colored streamers were tossed out and lazily drifted into the saddle at the head of Mann Gulch, mere yards from where he and his stick of jumpers landed on that fateful afternoon of August 5, 1949.

Remembering the feel of the spotter's slap on his leg and the anticipation of the jump, David's face might have broken into a wide grin as he saw the first two-man stick of six jumpers exit the plane. His smile would have widened as their blue and white parachutes opened against the gray, overcast skies and they drifted gently into the saddle at the head of the Gulch. Within minutes after the last of the jumpers had landed safely, David might have marveled at the advances in helicopters



Pictured left to right after erecting the new monument are smokejumpers Wayne Williams, Mark Duffey, Mike Waldron, Keith Wolferman, Jeff Kinderman, Dan Helterline and Shawn Borgen. (Courtesy of David Turner)

since the 1940s as the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's Bell UH-1H Iroquois came beating up the gulch carrying its load: a white Georgia marble monument, several sacks of pre-mix cement, water and tools, all suspended from the long-line. And he probably would have watched in admiration as the helicopter and pilot, on loan for the day for this project, delivered its load with pinpoint accuracy.

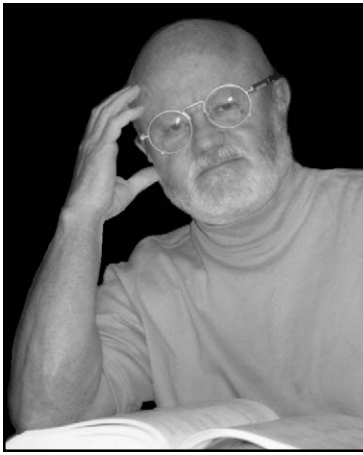
And it would have been at this point in the day that David might have understood this group was intent in correcting a mistake made 50 years ago whereby a cross, instead of a monument engraved with a Star of David, was installed to mark the spot in Mann Gulch where his body was discovered after the deadly fire. Perhaps he would have been humbled to learn the new monument was inspired and paid for by his friend and fellow smokejumper Jack Rose, his sister Anita Navon, and a number of National Smokejumpers Association members who contributed to a fund set up by the Helena National Forest to purchase and install the new stone.

Certainly David Navon would have felt right at home amidst the jumpers as they scrambled across the steep slope and attacked the task of setting his engraved monument next to the granite obelisk engraved with his name. Given the opportunity, he might have joined these smokejumpers in the ribbing they gave the rookie jumper in their group while they dug the hole, mixed the cement and then later hefted the heavy monument into its final resting point. And David certainly would have felt that familiar comradery of the group at the end of the long day as they hiked out the bottom of the gulch and down to the Missouri River where the Forest Service boat would take them upriver to their van for the drive back to Missoula.

I think David would have enjoyed this day immensely.



Dave Turner is currently a recreation forester with the Helena Ranger District of the Helena National Forest. He has worked for the Helena N.F. since 1975 starting with this forest as the fireguard at Meriwether Picnic Area (the same job that Jim Harrison, who also died in Mann Gulch, held in 1949). It was during this early part of his career that he first became interested in the Mann Gulch fire. Since then Dave has researched, written and lectured about this infamous fire. In 1999 he was the event coordinator for the Mann Gulch Fire 50th Anniversary Commemoration and received the Forest Service Region 1 Interpreter of the Year award for that work. Dave has lead countless hikes into the gulch for family members of the men we lost there, for fire specialists, for writers and filmmakers and for the general public. He can be contacted at (406) 449-5490 or dtturner@fs.fed.us



Jump List



by **Bill Eastman** (North Cascades '54)

The "Jump List" is a compilation of information the National Smokejumper Association receives from members, associates and friends. It is intended to inform our readers what members are doing and where they reside. You can mail your information to Bill Eastman: PO Box 306, East Greenbush, NY 12061 or e-mail at eastman@earthlink.net

Cave Junction

Peter R. Landis, '62, retired after 34 years with the U.S. Bank in Nevada. From 1992 to 1998, Pete was the president and chief operating officer. He lives in Reno.

Michael H. McCracken, '60, jumped for many seasons between 1960 and 1985. He taught American history for 37 years in the public schools of New York. Mike is now retired and lives in Wallingford, Vt.

Floyd G. Rogers, '56, has been a circuit judge in Van Buren, Ariz., since 1986. Before that Pete was a prosecuting attorney and a municipal judge.

Bobby G. Johnston, '51, worked 29 years as an FAA air traffic controller and then nine years as a weatherman for the National Weather Service. Living in Heavener, Okla., Bob is retired but is raising Limousin cattle.

Clarence W. Rowley, '51, retired from the Air Force after 20 years of service. Capp has been farming near Baird, Texas, since 1975.

Ward Speaker, '48, after earning a degree in aeronautical engineering, went to work for McDonnell Douglas. Ward started Ward Speaker Consultants in 1982 and retired in 1997. Living in Kenwood, California, he is golfing, hiking, and wine tasting.

Idaho City

Rodger F. Mello, '69, jumped for 12 seasons. After graduating from Sacramento State University, he became an elementary school teacher. In July, Rodger was married to Wanda Bennett; the couple lives in Tehachapi, California.

Michael M. Middaugh, '68, was commissioned in the



Navy after graduating from Humboldt State University in 1969. Mike now works in pest management for the vegetable farmers in the Salinas Valley of Calif.

McCall

Michael R. Tyrrell, '86, jumped for nine seasons. Mike is now working as a fire engine operator on the Cleveland National Forest. He lives in El Cajon, Calif.

Gary M. Watts, '64, was a Navy fighter pilot for 20 years, and flew 153 missions over Vietnam. He received 12 Air Medals and a Presidential Citation. Since 1987, Gary has been flying for US Airways. He is the author of *The Custody of Sha-ash' Gaz*, a novel published by

1stbooks Library (ISBN 0-75960-415-0).

James F. Gabiola, '54, has been a general dentist in Boise since 1961.

Ronald E. Marker, '52, earned a CPA and has worked as a business executive. Ron is now the chief financial officer for a company in Watsonville, Calif.

Missoula

James A. Barber, '60, after serving in the army for three years, worked for the CIA from 1965 to 1978. Jim retired from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1995. He now lives in Tucson, Ariz.

Jack Sisco, '60, jumped for three seasons while attending the University of Montana and, after graduating, served four years as a naval officer. Recently retired after working as a project manager for the Simpson Timber Company, he lives in Olympia, Wash. Jack is interested in bicycle touring and wants to hear from old jumpers who would like to join him. His last trip was a 650-mile tour from Olympia to Eureka, Calif., pulling a trailer

with 50 pounds of gear. If you would like to join him on his next trip, phone (360) 866-0240.

Robert H. Dunn, '58, retired from the Social Security Administration after 34 years. Living in Everett, Wash., Bob now volunteers at a resource center for the handicapped.

Manny Haiges, '58, after graduating from the University of Montana in forestry, went to work as a forest engineer for Northern Pacific Land Development. After receiving his masters degree, he taught at the University of Montana School of Forestry and was licensed as a land surveyor. After pursuing a Ph.D. for two years, he became the chairman of a new surveying program at Flathead Valley Community College. After three years, he started his own surveying and land planning company. Then in 1983, he sold the business and is now an independent distributor with a worldwide health and wellness company. He is clearing land and building a log home in West Kootenai, Mont. Manny is a member of Xi Sigma Phi, the national forest honorary, and his next goal is to break George Cross's record in the softball throw at the Montana Senior Olympics.

Dennis Gother, '57, is an independent insurance agent and an art gallery director living in Maryville, Mo.

Frank J. Orosz, '52, before retiring, worked as a petroleum engineer for Texaco and for Exxon. Frank now lives in Howard, Ohio.

Rudy J. Stoll, '51, jumped for four seasons, then earned a B.S. degree in pharmacy. He owned pharmacies in Montana before retiring in 1955. Living in Whitehall, Mont., Skip now does volunteer work for the local food bank and trail maintenance with the NSA.

George B. Harpole, '49, after jumping, began his career as a general woods worker and then became a lumber salesman, an assistant sales manager, and a new business and marketing analyst. At the age of 41, he earned a masters degree in forestry economics from the University of California at Berkeley and then worked as a forest product utilization economist for 20 years. Since retirement, George has been consulting part-time and now, at the age of 72, is proving that it is never too late to have a good childhood—proving it by rafting, hiking, biking, hunting, visiting places and friends, and competing in master's swimming meets at the state and national levels. He lives in Clifton, Colo.

Lewis E. Berg, '44, trained at Seeley Lake. After jumping, he earned a masters degree from Syracuse and began his career as a mathematics teacher, retiring in 1986 from Maple Woods Community College in Kansas City, Mo. Lew lives in Parkville, Mo.

Loren L. Zimmerman, '43, trained at Seeley Lake and jumped for three seasons from Nine Mile. Loren was a self-employed electrical contractor until his retirement

in 1998. He lives in Gridley, Ill.

North Cascades

Jerry Alban, '78, earned B.S. degrees in both forestry and accounting. Jerry is now the controller for Sinclair Well Products in Irvine, Calif.

Robert C. Kinyon, '73, jumped for eight seasons. He retired from the Forest Service after 23 years in fire management on the Siskiyou, Okanogan, and Wallowa-Whitman Forests. Since retirement in 1945, he has worked as a coordinator for the Coquille Watershed Association and for the Umpqua Basin Watershed Council. As a grant writer, Bob has \$4,000,000 in watershed restoration funds to his credit. He lives in Suther, Ore.

Michael R. Tabler, '67, is a self-employed lawyer living in Ephrata, Wash.

John M. Lester, '60, was a jumper and then a contract pilot at Winthrop through 1970. He was then successively a hardware store owner, the maintenance manager for the Sun Mountain Lodge, a truck driver, an arbitration manager, and a museum owner. Living in Airway Heights, Wash., John is now the arbitration manager for the Dealers Auto Auction in Seattle.

Tom Monroe, '58, retired in 1994 from the Seattle Seahawks as their data processing director. Living in Roslyn, Wash., on his sailboat, Tom is preparing for next summer's cruise.

Redmond

Gretchen P. Gulick, '91, after jumping was a California Parks and Recreation ocean lifeguard; a special day class teacher in Sacramento; and a resource teacher in Kona, Hawaii. Gretchen now has two children and is teaching in Whangarei, New Zealand, which she says is a drop-dead-beautiful, wonderful place.

Brent A. Smith, '78, jumped for seven seasons. After earning his M.D. degree, he joined the Army, retiring in 1996. Living in Benton, La., Brent is now working with an ex-military physician emergency medicine group in the Shreveport area.

Byron J. Bonney, '71, retired from the Forest Service in January after 30 years in fire management. Living in Grangeville, Idaho, Byron is now promoting his wife's antler basket business ([www. antb.com](http://www.antb.com)) and raising golden retrievers as well as hiking, hunting, and fishing.

Redding

Thomas W. Dwyer, '79, jumped for 16 seasons. Tom is teaching Title 1 reading and mathematics at the South Fork Elementary School in Kernville, Calif.

Arley T. Kisling, '69, retired from Forest Service fire management in 2000. Arley is now a full-time mechanic helper for the Moony Aircraft Service Center in

Lakeport, Calif.

James M. Frakes, '65, retired after serving 34 years in the Forest Service in fire management. Jim now lives in Clarkston, Wash., and drives a tractor-tank trailer combination hauling liquid chemicals in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana.

Willard E. Barber, '62, after earning a Ph.D. from Michigan State University, went to Australia for five years where he worked at the Commonwealth Scientific Research Organization, Division of Fisheries; and in the Department of Fisheries. He then moved to the University of Alaska where he was a professor in the School of Fisheries for 27 years. Will retired in 1999 and now lives in Anchorage.

Pilot

Henry O. Jori was a jumper pilot at Redding from 1955 to 1965. He then flew a helicopter air taxi out of Ukiah, Calif. Now retired, Hank is living in Occidental, Calif.

Associates

Dora Flint was the finance technician at Missoula from 1955 to 1969. Dora is now retired living in Rhinelander, Wis.

Martha P. Gonzalez has a masters degree and worked as an agronomist until she became a wife and mother. Martha is the daughter of Richard "Paperlegs" Peterson, who jumped at McCall for many years. 🐼

The One-Manner

by **Bob Schumaker** (Missoula '59)

As we all know, it is the practice to always drop at least two jumpers on a fire no matter how small the fire. I know of at least one incident where only one jumper was dropped on a fire. Does anyone else know of a similar incident?

This incident happened August 14, 1960, when a Twin Beech took off from Missoula with four jumpers on board. The request was for two jumpers on each of two small fires on the Beaverhead Forest northwest of Wisdom, Mont. The first was the Hope Lake fire on the Continental Divide. Since only one jumper usually exits the Twin Beech on each pass, spotter **John Muraro** (Missoula '57) dropped **Don Dobberfuhr** (Missoula '58) on the first pass.

As the plane was coming around for the second pass, **Nick Nicholson** (Missoula '60) was maneuvering to get into position in the door. His reserve chute handle got caught on something and was pulled out, causing the reserve chute to spill out. No extra reserve chute was carried in the plane, so Nick could not jump and Don was left on the fire by himself. The plane went on to drop **Dan Colgan** (Missoula '58) and **Bob Schumaker** on the other fire at Tye Creek 14 miles to the southwest. As I recall, it snowed on Don that night at that 8,000-foot elevation. 🐼



NSA Guest Book



Our Web site www.smokejumpers.com gets about 700 hits per day. One of the many features of our Web site is the "Guest Book" where individuals log on with their comments. Here is a recent sampling over the past months:

The story about my Uncle Jim Pearce by John Culbertson was a wonderful surprise. His story was a true "character sketch". I will differ on one point though. Uncle Jim was not an orphan. His mother died when he was 2 years old. His father recently passed away. He was a much loved and admired uncle and brother. There was nothing better than climbing on Uncle Jim's lap as a young girl to listen to his stories, watching his home movies from Alaska and being mesmerized as he would catch live rattle snakes with his bare hands along the creek in our backyard. He is missed deeply. Thanks for the wonderful walk down memory lane.

—Kathy (Rodgers) Keach (kathykeach@hotmail.com)

I really enjoyed the website and reading the story about my uncle Jim Pearce along with pictures. I am very interested in talking with anyone who knew him and might have more stories and or photos to share.

—John Rodgers (johnrodgers@kc.rr.com)

I just got done with basic training and combat medic school for the Army and am look for a career that will allow me to use my skills and give me the rush saving something.

Smokejumping looks to be one of the most high-speed jobs that anyone can have. Hopefully when I am done with college you'll still need dedicated people to fill your slots for smokejumpers.

—Jason Reisig (reisigJason1@hotmail.com)

Hi guys. I'm searching the text and notes for the Smokey bear song. So I would be very happy if anyone can help. I'm a German volunteer "fire-fighter" and need

this to educate young members (10–16 years)of our fire department. Where can I get more information about Smokey?

—Steffen Patzelt (spatzelt@mail.Uni-Mainz.de)

Congrats to Dirty and Joey it was an honor and a privilege to have jumped with you guys.

—Bluto (allpetllc@netzero.)

My grandfather is Ben Musquez I've listen to all his smokejumper stories. I'm very proud of him!

—Irene Oliphant Glenn Hights, TX USA

Very impressive web site.

—Jonathon Caldwell (baldwell_69@yahoo.com.)

Howdy All-I'm back for a quick update. Ran into one of the '60s era Missoula/Fairbanks Jumpers yesterday-Tom Moe-at Alyeska Ski Area here in Alaska. His son-Tommy Moe, the Olympic Downhill Gold Medallist-was forerunning a race my daughter was competing in and Tom and I met (for the first time) at the finish line and got to talking. Tom was a bit before my time, but many of the people he jumped with were 'seasoned jumpers' and part of BLM's Fairbanks Fire Control organization when I rookied in 1970. So, to Roy Percival, Bob Webber, Al Dunton, Greg West, Dick Hughes, Don Wahl, Ron Lund, Bill Robertson-Tom Moe says Hi! For you 70s era Alaska Jumpers, Jerry Dixon was also at our finish line meeting as he has two sons that compete in the same ski club as my daughter and we see each other every weekend during the winter ski season. All take care.

—David Liebersbach

(dave_liebersbach@akprepared.com)

I'm an extremely attractive single woman who is looking for a masculine man. I'm having a difficult time finding that kind of guy. I figure a smokejumper would definitely be strong and full of courage. I would love to hear from any of you smokejumping men who are willing to take a risk with a relationship.

—Renee (powlusb39@aol.com)

What a great site! We'd heard stories of our grandfather, Walt Anderson, and his part in the smokejumpers history, but it is great to actually see it in print and to be able to show my children about their great-grandfather!

—Carol Anderson Hughes (karolandcubs@aol.com)

As a former SEAL CRT in the United States, I would like to say that smokejumpers are great as real firefighters and this web site will help anyone that has honest questions.

—Ret. Masterchief Goodspeed.kevin goodspeed (goodspeedk@aol.com)

I just found this website and, like Murry's book, this site brings back old memories. I jumped in 1966/67 and have been working in Silicon Valley ever since. I remember telling myself while standing on the ramp in 100 degree weather that summer not to remember these days too fondly because it was the hardest work I had ever done (fighting wildfires). But...I do remember those days as great. The guys were fun, the jumping was incredible, we got to live in the wilderness and they paid us. I would probably have done most of it for free. Great website.

—Mark Larsen (l1amark@aol.com)

I was very pleased to see that the history of smoke-jumping included some information regarding Francis Marion Derry (Frank Derry) my grandfather. My Mother, Francis Marion Derry, is still alive and has told me many stories about my Grandfather and his exploits as a jumper and instructor.

—Wayne Lisonbee son of Francis Marion Derry

Wayne Lisonbee (wlison@aol.com)

Just would like to say that I appreciated the chance to become a West Yellowstone Smokejumper. What a great bunch of guys to work with. Dreams do come true! Rookie of 2000.

—chip gerdin (chip_gerdin@hotmail.com)

Now that the season is over and things have settled down I would like to thank all the Alaskan Jumpers for a very memorable and oat worthy trip. We had the opportunity to get bothered by bears, land softly, make good money, and on a mandatory day off caught Alaskan King salmon.

—Ed Lynn (GAC)

I grew up with Robert (Bob) Reid and I can remember when he went West for Smokejumpers. A long time ago now as that was in the '50s. We have gone our separate ways, but will always cherish our childhood. I did hear that Bob had gone back out West for another tour as a smokejumper. Would like to get back in touch with him.

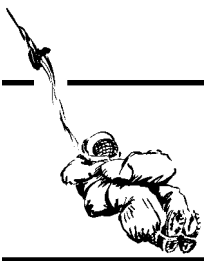
—Arthur Doyle Eidson (flapin2@yahoo.com)

I'm the son of 1942 jumper Milton Millard jumping out of Missoula. Wonderful to find your site and be able to verify the year that he jumped.

—andrew millard (muse@teleport.com)

Sorry I missed Perky's retirement. Would have liked to have stood a round out CR Gibbs. I went out and had a Guinness for you on Vets Day, Perk. OK, two Guinness....

—Jumbo mailto:btm132@psu.edu. 🍀



Blast from the Past



McCall 1952

This week 27 sturdy young men, who began smokejumper training June 10, will leap daily from a plane 1,500 feet up. Directions, encouragement, and sometimes abuse, shouted to them by Seymour Peterson, helps the boys safely to earth.

First jump day always brings a thrill to the jumpers and the spectators who rubberneck from a safe distance. "It went all right once I got out the door," said one of the jumpers. "Wonder who kicked me out?"

The greater share of the trainees are forestry majors from universities and colleges, east and west. Most of them come from the Universities of Idaho and Utah but many other states are also represented. Four local men are high school graduates: **Carl Shaver Jr. and Ronald Marker**, both of New Meadows; **Bill Payne and Spencer Miller**, both from McCall. All the boys are strong, fearless, compact and sturdy in build.

Three weeks of preliminary training put the trainees into perfect physical condition by a stiff daily dose of calisthenics and tough obstacle course work. "This year we're trying a new system of quick education for the jumper," **Lloyd Johnson** said. "We've gone more to visual aids such as cartoons and humorous movies, a system worked out in advance by the trainers. We use very little lecture work."

Last week the 20 experienced smokejumpers went through a refresher course and are now ready to go on fires. Six jumpers already have been loaned to the McCall unit to help on a fire on the Colorado-Wyoming border.

—*Boise Statesman*, June 1952

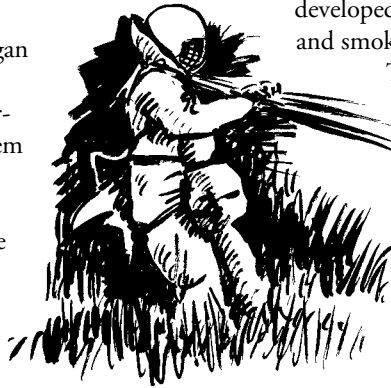
Okanogan N.F. 1942

Parachute dropping of supplies was worked out and put into general use. This was followed by parachuting of men. Both were developed the Twisp-Winthrop field during this period. In 1941 we used jumpers on several fires and Region One used them more extensively.

Parachute jumping experiments of last year (1939) continued using regular firemen to jump on going fires. Directed by **W.E. Anderson** with **Albert Davies** in direct charge, it was completely successful. Equipment and personnel sent to Region One made much more use of it on a bad outbreak of fires.

Smokejumper **Richard E. Tuttle** fractured his skull in a fall from a tree at Winthrop where he was *putting up a radio aerial*. He is gradually improving but is having trouble with his eyes six months after the accident. This accident occurred on June 27, 1940.

Some practice jumping was done and better techniques



developed. The project was transferred to Region One and smokejumpers requested from there as needed.

They were needed and they jumped to fires in some of the most difficult territory of the Forest. During the experiment, while training and on actual fires, there were no accidents, except for Tuttle who was attaching a radio aerial. After finishing the aerial, he attempted to descend from the tree smokejumper style instead of using the climbers. The rope broke and he fell to a rocky ledge forty feet below. His skull was fractured, his eye injured, wrist broken and several vertebrae displaced. He is now

(1942) instructing parachute packing at a school in Spokane and jumped a parachute that one of his trainees had packed.

—Excerpts from *Okanogan National Forest Historical Record*

Missoula 1946

I survived the rigors of the war in the Pacific and returned to college after three years. I had two long-time friends who had become ensconced in Region 1 smokejumper operations—**Al Cramer** and **Bill Wood**. They insisted that the only future for me was to take up smoke-jumping. In June of 1946 I reported to Camp Menard along with about 100 other prospective jumpers. Most of the group were combat veterans not long out of the service. Contrary to what the overhead had anticipated, the recruits were serious and training went smoothly. The overhead were amazingly efficient and provided top leadership. **Earl Cooley** was the camp superintendent. Foremen and spotters were **Art Cochran, Wag Dodge, Fred Brauer, Bill Wood, Jack Nash, Al Cramer** and **Andy Anderson**.

Many of us had roamed the hills together and were looking forward to working with each other on two- or four-man fires. Such was not the case. When we were paired off for jumping fires, there was always an experienced person from the West paired with someone from the East who was not so "woods-wise."

Things did not work all that smoothly. The first day of the "bust" produced a lot of confusion. My partner and I were dropped on a fire mislocated by 15 miles. The instructions said to pack out down the hill to the trail and go three miles to the Fish Lake Airstrip. I went down the hill to get water and the canyon was full of windfall and there was no sign of a trail. My partner was quite concerned and really rebelled against not following directions to pack out down the "trail." I finally convinced him to pack our gear up the hill and stay on the ridge tops until we knew

where we were going.

It was a long, hard climb to the ridge but a lot better than fighting the windfall in the canyon bottom. From the ridge top we could see a lookout which proved to be the McConnell Mountain Lookout on the Bitterroot N.F.

Our next task was convincing Powell District Ranger **Hank Vick** that we were legitimate and had jumped and put out a fire on his district. We got that settled and hiked 14

miles out to Beall Park where we were picked up by Hank who chewed us out for being 30 minutes late. I later hiked out to Beall Park after fire jumps and became very well acquainted with Hank Vick.

—**Bob Morgan's** (Missoula '46) notes courtesy of Dave Colclough and the *NRMRA Newsletter*. Bob retired as Bitterroot N.F. supervisor in about 1987. 🦋

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to Troop's (Tom Emonds') article in the April 2001 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine, entitled "The Tiniest Marine, The Smallest Smokejumper," about Mouse, otherwise known as Allen D. Owens. For the record, I would like to supplement some of Troop's information and add a few observations of my own.

I only jumped for two seasons. I rookied at Redding in 1978 and then Cave Junction in 1980. Even though my rookie season left some things to be desired (only two fire jumps and the rookies laid off by the end of August), it was still a thrill of a lifetime and it set the stage for the future.

As a jumper at Cave Junction in 1980 was special. Not only was it the last year of the base's existence, it was also my time with Troop and Mouse and the rest of the CJ jumpers.

At one point in his article, Troop makes the statement that Mouse was "one of the best instructors we have ever known." I was trained as a rigger by Mouse. Besides formal education, I have attended Navy tech schools, four years of college, two years as a jumper, and in pursuit of my own innate curiosity, I have sat in a lot of classrooms and have had a lot of instructors. I can say, flat-out, hands-down, Mouse was the best. He could present a two-hour orientation on the nomenclature of a Pulaski and never once lose his audience. It was a joy to be in his training sessions. Mouse made learning fun.

Mouse was the only rigging instructor I ever had, so I don't have much to compare to, but for something that vital, I can't imagine a better teacher. He trained two of us that season and besides the technical training and the inspecting of our practice chutes, he gave us theory, history, scientific application, practical application, and the exploded view.

When the time came, Mouse made all the arrangements, drove us himself up to Medford, took us in and introduced us to the FAA test instructor and then waited outside while we took the test. We both passed with high marks, but when the tests came back, Mouse took us into the loft and went over our discrepancies and made certain we understood everything we had missed on the test. Mouse was passing the safety of future jumpers to us and he took that responsibility very seriously.

Mouse was incredible, but he was just one half of this Superman duo. Trooper Tom Emonds is that natural leader among leaders. Even among jumpers, where great leaders are common, Troop stands tall among the best.

One time, about mid-season, we got dispatched to a fire, though I can't recall exactly where. Mouse was the spotter, Troop was the designated squad leader, and I was the eighth man in an eight-man load. We got to the fire and it was sized up to be a three-manner. As soon as the jumpers left the plane things went badly. One of the jumpers, Mike Apicello, ended up precariously hung in a lone pine tree with a broken leg. Troop had also smashed in hard and had a badly bruised shoulder. Even though he was in a lot of pain, he immediately began heading up the rescue operation.

We dropped four more jumpers, climbers, saws, and anything

else they could use. As we circled above, the rescue operation proceeded in an orderly fashion, an evacuation helicopter was dispatched and it became obvious that there was nothing more we could do. Just before returning to base, Mouse turned to me, the only jumper left in the plane, and said: "They just might need an extra set of hands for something," so he dropped me.

I made it into the spot with no problem. Once on the ground, I got out of my jump gear, put out my "L," got out my gear bag, gathered up my chute, stowed my jump gear, got out my fire shirt and hard hat and then suddenly realized I was wasting time. I should get my ass up where it belonged.

As I got to the rescue site the evacuation chopper was already there, Mike was aboard in a stretcher, and they were in the process of strapping Troop into one of the passenger seats. We had momentary eye contact, and then they lifted off and were gone. District people were already on the fire, so there was nothing left for us to do but pack up of gear and head for the base.

Several days later, back at the base we had a meeting to critique events. Even though I listened attentively to everything that was said, I had nothing to say—I had done nothing. Later, when the meeting was breaking up and people were leaving the room, Troop came up to me and said, "Hey, Tom, there was about five minutes there between the time you left the plane and when you showed up at the chopper that is unaccounted for. What was going on?" I stammered something about stowing my gear. "No big deal," he said as he slapped me on the back. "I was just curious."

It was no big deal to him; Troop just wanted to know where every one of his men were every minute. It was no big deal to him, but it is to me. That question, with its leadership implications, has echoed in my mind for more than 20 years.

If the "big dogs" in the U.S. Forest Service upper management came to see Troop and Mouse as management headaches, it's because they didn't understand. Yes, we carried signs and passed out petitions in downtown Cave Junction and Grants Pass trying to elicit public support in opposition to the closing of the base. I still believe the closing of the smokejumper base at Cave Junction was wrong. The dribble they have saved in the form of cost-cutting is nothing in relationship to the heart they lost. Cave Junction is a jewel in smoke-jumping and Forest Service history.

If the Forest Service came to see Troop and Mouse as management headaches, it is because they didn't understand that when the spit hit the fan, when there was fire everywhere, when some of us weaker ones were on the verge of panic, one look from either of those guys and we were back to full production. That, the safety of their men, was their job and they did it well.

It was an honor and a privilege to have served with Mouse and Troop and I am damned proud to have been a part of the last Gobi crew.

Tom Hunnicutt (Redding '78)

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Dear Editor:

The article on membership, "Who We Are and Where We Came From" in the July issue, was interesting in the fact that NSA demographics seem to mirror the experiences of other organizations.

Service clubs and fraternal organizations have been confronting a membership that is both aging and declining. Interest in belonging to service clubs and fraternal groups has been in decline since the social upheaval of the 1960s. The men who served in Vietnam, in general, have not joined social and fraternal organizations, and the two generations since have followed suit.

Men and women) under 50 do not seem to see any "value" in belonging to groups like the NSA, Kiwanis, Rotary, Masons, Knights of Columbus, VFW and others. I can guarantee you that membership committees in all of these organizations meet monthly and agonize over their declining membership. There does seem to be some interest in fraternal and service organizations by people in their twenties who cannot relate to their parents and the 1960s, but seem to be interested in how their grandparents and great-grandparents lived from the 1920s to the 1950s.

There was an article a few years ago on the Loyal Order of the Moose in the *Wall Street Journal*. They were facing an aging and rapidly declining membership. Some studies were conducted, and it was determined that the young people of today have limited time for social and fraternal activities. The Moose made a conscious decision to emphasize the family and engage in more family-oriented activities. It has been a tremendous success and according to the article their membership is growing.

The NSA must market itself to potential members that there is "value" in belonging to the NSA. The business card ads, trail maintenance projects, and the social functions sponsored at the bases are all a very good start. The NSA can and should be a way to network with others.

A good book on the subject of declining membership in organizations is "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community" by Robert D. Putnam.

Chris Sorensen (Associate) 🍄



Who is this NSA life member pictured at Ft. Benning in 1966? Check the photo on page 4 of this issue.



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