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National Smokejumper Association

Pic Littell

Reid Jackson

Ted Burgon

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by Larry Lufkin  
(Cave Junction ’63)  

PRESIDENT

MY TERM AS PRESIDENT of the NSA ends June 30th and Ron Stoleson (Missoula ’56) will take over as your president July 1st. However, my term as a director will end June 2003 and I plan to attend Executive Committee and Board meetings.

Several other jumpers were elected to NSA positions. Tom Uphill (Missoula ’56) was appointed to the board and elected as 2nd vice president. Our intent is for Tom to step in as president in two years when Ron’s term ends. Also elected to the board were Tara Rothwell (Redmond ’92) and Doug Houston (Redmond ’73). Tara and Doug take over for Chuck Sheley and Bill Eastman.

Sheley, who chose not to run for another term, will remain on the Executive Committee and Board as Smokejumper magazine editor and merchandise chair. Eastman, who authored the “Jump List” column in Smokejumper magazine the past two years, resigned from the board because of other personal obligations. I thank Bill for his assistance during his time as a director.

You will also see other changes in NSA operations and in future planning. The biggest change some will see is the termination of our e-mail system. Problems developed in our Smokejumper.com e-mail system during the past year and the board concluded that it cost too much to continue the system. Those of you who used Smokejumpers.com noticed that we were having trouble keeping the system operational. Our equipment could not keep up with our Web site and e-mail demands and we decided to concentrate on maintaining a good Web site.

Your board also decided that we need to start planning for our future and appointed Tom Uphill as long range planning chair. Tom’s job will be to assemble a committee that will examine the alternatives that will be available to us as an organization 10 or 20 years from now. We do not want to wait until then and have decisions forced upon us.

Tom’s committee will examine our membership base, organization, and other factors. For example, we are a graying organization. This means that jumpers are dying off faster than new ones are being hired and retired by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Eventually, the NSA will need to decide if we can survive with only jumpers and pilots as members. If not, we may need to admit other wildland fire fighting groups into our membership in order to survive as a viable organization.

I’ve enjoyed my time over the past two years and I can say without a doubt that I never took a parachute ride that was as wild and woolly as this term in office. I encourage other jumpers and pilots to step forward and run for office. You will be glad you did.
Let’s Hear It for the Packers!
by Dick Flaharty (Missoula ’44)

A
s I was reading the current issue of Smokejumper that had just arrived in the mail, it occurred to me that I have seen very little written about the packers who had the job of riding in to haul out our equipment after a fire jump. I recalled one fire jump where I had more than the usual contact with a packer, though I can’t recall his name, and thought I’d share it with you.

It was early in September 1944 when Ad Carlson (Missoula ’43) and I were called out to jump on a small smoke on Wahoo Peak in the Bitterroots somewhere west of Hamilton, Mont. The fire was just down the peak from a lookout tower, but the high school youth who had been on duty there had been taken home the week before to return to school.

I left the Travelair first and headed for a patch of fern on the mountainside. Fortunately, I landed on a grassy slope just below the fern patch, which was hiding a mess of sharp rocks. I quickly tried to signal the spotter to change the spot but Ad was already in the air. As luck would have it, Ad also missed the fern patch and also landed on the grassy area. We had the burn under control in short order, and went up to the tower to locate a water source so we could fill our Indian pumps to wet down the ashes.

A trail led from the tower down to a spring and, while making our descent, Ad suddenly motioned for me to stop and be quiet. There were two fool hens sitting on a branch that hung right over the trail. Ad whispered, “We’re gonna have fresh meat for dinner,” and began throwing rocks at the birds. About the third rock hit one of the birds in the head and it dropped to the ground. We retrieved the bird, got our water at the spring, and returned to the tower to drop off the bird. We then went to the burned area and completed our mop-up.

Ad proved to be quite skilled at dressing down the bird — preparing it for cooking up in a stew — and we sat down to a delicious meal, augmenting our usual fare of K rations. Later, when we reported in to the Forest Service on the radio phone, we were instructed to remain at the tower until the packer arrived. The packer had orders to close it up for the winter and he might need our help. We then had the luxury of settling down for the night on two cots in the tower rather than having to sleep out on the ground.

Since I had an old, dura...
my fire pack, I spent the next morning exploring the area and taking a few photos of the spectacular scenery. From the tower I could see a lake down the mountain a few miles away. I noticed a small black speck moving about in the water and guessed that it must be a moose. About midday the packer arrived with a string of six mules, and I noticed that he came up a trail from the direction of the lake.

After the usual greetings I asked if he had come up past the lake. He said, “Yup!” I asked, “Was there a moose in that lake?” He said: “Was there!! We came along the shore and as we rounded a bend, there was that bull moose with his head under water, eatin’ some o’ the weeds. He heard us, raised his head and snorted, and I spent the next hour, roundin’ up my mules!”

When the packer entered the tower, he saw the pan with the remains of the fool hen sitting on the stove and asked if we had been hunting. Ad replied, “I was rollin’ rocks down the mountain and the fool hen just got in the way. And we didn’t want that meat to go to waste!”

We spent the rest of the day helping the packer close up the lookout tower and, after another night on the peak, prepared to head out the next morning. The packer obliged me by posing for a few photos before he headed down the trail. He told me his one white mule was called Lena. He said her name was really Helena, but she was so stubborn he had to “knock the Hel out of her.”

Ad and I started our long hike out in the direction of Hamilton, and as we headed down the trail we could hear the elk bugling all around us. As I was an “easterner,” this was a new experience for me, and I started trying to imitate the sound. I was doing pretty well and even thought I was getting some answers. Ad, a man of few words, stopped in the middle of the trail, looked me dead in the eye and asked, “Have you ever met a bull elk in mating season?” I got the message!

We had one more packer experience on the hike out. As we hiked along we heard voices approaching us on the trail. We guessed there must be at least three or four persons coming our way. Rounding a bend in the trail we met an old packer who proved to be the father of Art Cochran (Missoula ’42), talking to each one of his mules as he rode up the trail. Art was one of our Forest Service trainers at Nine Mile.

If anyone recognizes the packer in the picture, I would like to learn his name. 🙁

T. Richard “Dick” Flaharty was born in Chicago in April 1920, and was raised there. Because of Christian training as a Methodist, Dick served the United States as a conscientious objector for four years in Civilian Public Service during World War II, which included one season (1944) as a CPS-103 Smokejumper. He received a B.A. from Roosevelt University and his M.S.W. from the University of Pittsburgh. Dick contributed 35 years in child welfare work. Now retired and living in Southern California, Dick has hobbies including folk singing and rockhounding.

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.
The summer of 1945 was a busy fire season. I was on a crew from Missoula that was dropped from a Ford Tri-Motor onto a fire south of the Salmon River. The area is now known as the “River of No Return Primitive Area.”

The fire was burning on the slope of a smaller canyon leading down to the Salmon River to the north. It was a hot day and burning conditions were ideal. Our pilot was Slim Phillips, perhaps the most famous Tri-Motor pilot. By early afternoon, we had 10 jumpers on the fire and anticipated having it under control by the next day.

By mid-afternoon, we had scouted it out and sized it up to be around 6–8 acres. We made good progress on building trail and hot spotting. Unfortunately, an increasingly strong up-canyon wind had developed and the fire crowned and jumped our fire line. We retreated down the mountain on the up-wind side and radioed Missoula for support. Another 10 jumpers were dropped to assist us.

By then, the fire was really out of control and rapidly spreading up the slope. To the rescue came 47 black paratroopers from the 555th Triple Nickles. They came from Pendleton, Oregon and dropped from C-47s. Francis Lufkin was their spotter. The next day 25 more of the Triple Nickles jumped bringing their total to 72 on this fire.

The Triple Nickles were initially stationed in the Pacific Northwest to combat the anticipated threat of Japanese balloon incendiary bombs, launched into the jet stream from Japan to start forest fires. When the threat proved less than anticipated, they were used as smokejumpers on larger fires.

The next day, we Missoula jumpers were withdrawn via McCall to fight the many smaller, more typical smokejumper fires started by lightning storms along the Continental Divide. The Triple Nickles eventually brought the No Return fire (which I think came to be known as the Peavy Creek fire) under control at around 3,600 acres.

My strongest memory of this jump, other than that the fire blew up spectacularly and grew out of control, was that it was the best food I ever had on a fire. The Triple Nickles had their own cooks, who parachuted in and prepared food, which bore no resemblance to smokejumper K rations!

Wallace “Pic” Littell explaining microfiche to Marshall Josip Broz Tito at annual Belgrade Fair in 1974. Tito was the uncontested ruler of Yugoslavia from the end of WWII, when his Communist Partisans came to power after aiding in the defeat of the German-Italian occupation and eliminating Draza Mihailovic, his Chetnik rival. Beginning as a Stalinist-style dictator, Tito broke with Moscow in 1948. By the time of his death in 1980, Yugoslavia was a non-aligned, comparatively-open republic with major industries operating on a basis of cost accountability and national/ethnic rivalries held under firm control. Milosevic changed all that! (Courtesy of Pic Littell)

After training at Nine Mile in 1944, Wallace W. “Pic” Littell jumped in the CPS Smokejumper Unit for two years at Missoula. During the 1947–48 seasons, he jumped for Francis Lufkin at Winthrop. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Cornell College of Iowa in 1947 and moved to Columbia University for his graduate work. At Colombia he received his M.A. and Certificate of the Russian Institute. In 1949 he proceeded overseas into the Foreign Service where he served until 1985. He was a Soviet and East European specialist. Pic can be reached at wl21022pic@earthlink.net

CPS Jumpers and Triple Nickles Team on Peavy Creek Fire
by Wallace “Pic” Littell (Missoula ’44)
“The Humbling — (Early 1950s)”
by Reid Jackson (McCall ’49)

As we all know — one of the more enjoyable sports pursued by second-year and older jumpers is badgering new jumper candidates (NEDS). Scare stories of all types are passed around. Most of these stories center around various types of parachute malfunctions all the way from line-overs (Mae West’s) to full-blown streamers, etc.

Back in the early 1950s, one of the more experienced and experts of such badgering was a squad leader named Gene Ellis (McCall ’51). Gene had a dry sense of humor and a quick wit. However, he didn’t limit his efforts to the new men only. He also worked over his peer group and occasionally even his boss.

In the early 1950s, while I was serving as project leader of the McCall unit, I got a taste of Gene’s quick wit. On that occasion, Gene was one of the jumpers near the top of the jump list so he was assigned to project work at headquarters. On this particular day he was raking the lawn near the flagpole area adjacent to the old original parachute loft when we received a fire call for eight jump-

The Eagle chute had the knockout opening shock. (Courtesy Wally Henderson)
ers. The top eight men stopped what they were doing and headed for the fire cache to get ready for the fire jump. However, the fire call turned out to be a dry run before the jumpers were airborne so they returned to the fire cache to put away their gear.

I called Gene into the office for what I felt was some needed discipline. As I recall, I said “Damn it, Gene, come in here.”

He said, “What do you want?”

I said, “Damn it, when you get a fire call, you should take time to put away your project work tools before suit up for a jump. When you were raking the lawn a while ago, you just dropped the rake and headed for the fire cache. The handle was partly in the road and Smith ran over it and broke it.”

Gene looked me right in the eye and said, very matter-of-factly, “Did you chew his ass?”

Needless to say, discipline went out the window since I had to laugh.

On another occasion, Gene embarrassed me. We were observing training jumps at the Big Meadows jump spot using the megaphone to give instructions to new jumpers regarding “chute handling” as they descended. A lot of wives and other folks were watching the training jumps. I had too much coffee at breakfast and was looking for some tall sagebrush as cover for relieving my bladder. Gene used the megaphone to call attention to my problem and tracked me everywhere I went to hide. I almost wet my pants before I managed to get out of sight.

However, as the old saying goes, “What goes around, comes around.” Loft foreman Wayne Webb used to keep three old Eagle chutes packed up in case someone felt brave enough to see what jumping was like in “the old days.” Unlike the FS-2s and later model chutes, which open from the top down as they catch the air, and thus have relatively easy opening shocks, the Eagle chute has an extra skirt that catches the slipstream instantly and opens almost immediately with a very severe opening shock.

I had jumped an Eagle chute once on a fire in the Little Salmon River Canyon, and it was an experience to remember. I had been warned to expect a very severe opening shock so I prepared as best I could — tight boot laces, tight harness, tight face-mask straps, tight gut muscles, and what I hoped was a tight puckering string. However, in spite of all of those precautions, it was by far the worst opening shock that I had ever experienced, including one associated with a delayed free fall opening using an old military seat pack. When that old Eagle caught the air, my boots were snapped under me, my neck was wrenched, my head was snapped down to my chest and I was seeing stars most of the way to the ground.

A few months later in the early fall, we received a call from the fire dispatcher for an eight-man load to a hunter-caused fire near Cave Creek on the Big Creek Ranger District. I was included in the eight-man load along with Gene Ellis and six other jumpers. I wanted to use an Eagle chute again to prove to myself that I had the necessary courage. It’s sort of like getting bucked off of a bad horse—you need to crawl back on.

As we were suit up in the fire cache, I mentioned that I was going to jump an Eagle chute again. That was all Ellis needed to set him off. As I recall, he said, “I hope you break your damn neck and it jerks your boots off.”

That gave me an idea, and I said, “Gene, someday we are going to hang an Eagle chute on you and you’re not going to know it until you get the opening shock.”

He said, “You sons-of-bitches aren’t smart enough to put that thing on me.”

Spence Miller (McCall ’52) was helping us get ready, and I caught his eye and nodded. Spence switched the eagle to Ellis, and I went on acting as though I were really sweating out the jump with the Eagle that Ellis thought I had on. He badgered me all the way to the airport and into the plane until we were airborne and the engines drowned him out.

When we arrived over the fire, it was burning in heavy lodgepole pine on a north slope and was about 10 to 12 acres in size. The jump spot, a high mountain meadow about a half-mile from the fire, was interspersed with small lodgepole pine and surrounded by dense timber. After selecting the jump spot and dropping drift chutes, we started our jump run.

As I recall, Carl Shaver (McCall ’52) was the first jumper and went out alone. Jim Larkin was the pilot and got a good photo of Carl as his chute was opening with the fire below in the background. The photo was later made into an excellent postcard and was distributed all across Idaho.

Ellis was the second jumper. Without him knowing it, we told Jim Larkin what we had done with the Eagle chute, and we asked that he do all he could to slow the old Ford down before Ellis’ exit since Gene didn’t know that he was jumping an Eagle chute.

We came over the spot, Jim cut the engines and the Ford nosed over. Gene went out, and the remaining jumpers, the spotter, and Jim were glued to the windows to see the show.

We could hear the opening shock inside the Ford. It sounded like a cross between a sonic boom and the report of a .30-06. It snapped Gene almost up into the canopy, and then he got two aftershocks as he bounced.
twice more when he hit the end of the risers. I'm not sure, but I think it knocked him out or at least stunned him because he just hung with his arms to his sides and drifted away from the spot. As I recall, he hung up in some small lodgepole pines.

The rest of us jumped and were gathering up our jump gear and getting ready to go to the fire when Gene arrived at the jump spot, apparently none the worse for the experience. The only thing he said was, “Pretty damn funny.”

However, I think the experience had a somewhat humbling effect on Gene. He seemed somewhat withdrawn and quieter during the remainder of the fire season.

Gene was a schoolteacher and later took a teaching job at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) base in Spain. I'm sure he has thought about the Cave Creek jump many times since that fall day in the early 1950s.

I, too, have thought about that jump on many occasions and have said to myself, what if one of the following had happened:

- He had a streamer or other malfunction?
- He was knocked unconscious and was hurt when he landed?
- He had suffered neck or other injuries due to the opening shock?
- He had hit me with a big stick when he arrived at the jump spot?
- The list could go on and on.

It has been my experience that most injuries in any occupation can be traced back to horseplay. I think Del Catlin (McCall ’47), who followed me as project leader of the McCall Unit, recognized this also. Del had the three old Eagle chutes burned to remove a hazard. I think he probably did the right thing. However, on that fall day, long ago, it seemed like a good idea to hang one of those Eagle chutes on Gene Ellis to see whether it would humble him a little. #

**Member Profile**

**GEORGE TRANBERG**

George Tranberg 1952. George Tranberg 2001 (Courtesy of George Tranberg)

George Tranberg (Missoula ’52) spent three seasons as a smokejumper: 1952, 1955 and 1956. He had the distinction of losing equipment on his first jump, of jumping latest in the season, of hanging up in a burning snag, and of being part of the largest drop on record at the time.

George became a smoke-jumper after beginning his government career in 1951 at a “horse station” on the Musselshell River, near Martinsdale, Montana. The station is now in the Harlowton Ranger District.

On his first fire jump, after training at the old Nine Mile camp, George lost a water can and cargo chute. According to Denny Swift (Missoula ’50), who jumped with him, the items may still be there, near Walde Peak, in Idaho’s Clearwater National Forest.

After training, George was sent to Grangeville, Idaho, and on to a project on the Fenn Ranger District, near what would become Highway 12 on the Selway River.

His last jump of the year was on the Madison Plateau in Yellowstone National Park. That jump, on October 18, 1952, is believed to be one of the latest firejumps on record.

George volunteered for the draft in 1953 and spent two years in the Army. He returned in 1955 to jump in Montana and New Mexico. It was in New Mexico that he had the unique experience of hanging up in a burning snag. Later in that same season, on August 27, 1955, he was one of 103 jumpers to be dropped on West Horse in the Salmon River area — the largest drop on record to that date.

After his last year as a jumper in 1956, George joined the U.S. Border Patrol, where he was assigned to a position on the Mexican border. He retired in 1983 as the deputy chief patrol agent for the Blaine, Washington, sector.

George still lives in Blaine with his wife, Lise, and their three dogs. He devotes time to travel and doggerel poetry, some of which has been published. You can write to George and Lise at PO Box 505, Blaine, WA 98231-0505. #
It was late enough into the fire season that there were only eighteen hours of daylight; the other six hours were neither dark nor light, but rather three hours of red, pink and yellow sunset followed by three hours of colorful sunrise.

A DC-3 load of smokejumpers left Fairbanks on patrol to areas of the state where airline pilots had reported lightning and thunderclouds.

We landed in Nome and were just finishing a meal when we got a report of a lot of smoke farther north. We flew on up only to discover the smoke was coming over from the USSR.

We landed in Kotzebue and waited for a short while, then proceeded to fly a more or less northern path. On our way up, we kicked out jumpers and cargo on a couple of two-man fires and one four-

manner. It was now midnight, and sunset was glowing orange as it came through the clouds of smoke and reflected off the water. We landed in Point Barrow and had coffee while our plane took on fuel.

We left Point Barrow and were headed back when we spotted a five-acre fire not far from a small village on the bank of a small river. The village was composed of two or three small wooden buildings, maybe a dozen sod igloos, and a tiny airstrip.

The village was only a couple of miles from the fire, so we told the pilot to have us picked up at the airstrip in about two days. The rest of us jumped and got busy containing the fire.

The wind had the fire going at a fair clip, but we worked on both sides to pinch down the fire’s front. When the wind let up a little, we all worked hard and

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L-R: Gary Welch, pilot Ralph “Crash” Williams, Larry Welch, Bernie Welch Cave Jct. 1961. (Courtesy Larry Welch)
fast to put out the fire’s head before the wind decided to pick up again. We had to eat a lot of smoke for an hour or so, but we got the fire contained. The fires on the tundra usually go out by themselves after they are contained and can’t reach fresh fuel.

As soon as we were sure the fire was out, we loaded up and started our pack-out to the village.

Two miles isn’t a long pack-out even with better than a hundred-pound pack, but until you’ve walked across the grass clumps of the tundra, you can’t appreciate the effort it takes to stumble that distance. The tundra in many places is clumps of grass almost as big around as a five-gallon bucket. These clumps of grass were two to three feet tall and a half-foot to a foot apart. If we stepped right in the center of the grass clump, we could usually go 50 feet or so before one would tilt to the side and leave us up to our thermometers in ice water. Stepping in the center of the clumps was a challenge because each clump had a top like an umbrella or mushroom. The grass on the very top of the clumps overlapped each other and left us guessing just where to step.

We finally made it to the village. We were sopping wet from our many falls into the water, so we built a fire from driftwood to dry things out. By the time we got a camp set up on the airstrip, everyone in the village had circled around us to watch. I doubt that more than two outsiders had visited the village during a year, and none that arrived as we had.

Someone noticed there wasn’t a male person between the age of 11 and senility. When we inquired about the male population, we found out they had been gone two weeks hunting whales.

We had canned rations with us but thought we would buy something different to dine on. We found out that we had more canned goods than there was in the whole town. One girl offered us tea and muktuk (whale blubber). We went to her sod hut and all sat around to sip tea. She served each of us a piece of blubber about the size of a quarter. The whale meat was about a year old and considered a delicacy. Even in its rancid state they loved it.

When no one was looking, I pinched off a piece of blubber about the size of a match head and tried it out. Whew we! That stuff would gag a maggot. No wonder it kept for a year — no self-respecting bacteria would touch the stuff.
Just that one minute piece sitting on my tongue immediately sent the taste swarming from the back of my eyes to the depth of my throat.

A small Eskimo toddler kept begging for the meat, and we all tried to discreetly slip him our quarter-sized pieces. He ate that stuff like it was candy. He chewed each piece until there was only a small cotton-gauze-looking sinew left.

The girl explained that the village had only had a small amount of blubber left and would start eating this year's supply as soon as the men returned with their harvest.

She was apologetic for not offering us more muktuk, but she did want us to have some ripe fish heads that she had buried some time back. We gracefully declined and told her that we had had a good meal the day before and would be back in the land of plenty tomorrow. “Save those delicacies. We'll be just fine eating these nasty old fresh fish we caught in the river.”

While we were in her sod home, one of the jumpers saw a guitar, picked it up and started tuning it. Along with the sound of music, the igloo started rapidly filling up with villagers, so we all went back to our camp for a roomier area.

The jumper who played the guitar was a rural Montana boy, and I do mean rural. We never figured out how he found his way to town, but he evidently was asked this question quite often because he had a little story he told whenever someone asked. I think his education came from reading dime paperback novels. His silver tongue did get him involved in a barroom brawl now and again, but he was almost impossible not to like when you got to know him.

He wore a big black felt cowboy hat and a wall-to-wall pearly white grin dotted with snuff particles. He nearly always looked half drunk, and when he wasn't working there was a good reason for him to look this way. He joked a lot about being hungover, etc., but I never knew him not to do his share of the work.

The village kids all got their turn to sit in his lap and help play the guitar, and then they had to go back to their homes. Now it was the big girls' turn to help him play the guitar and sing.

From out of nowhere the devil's brew appeared. The girls were sipping and singing. All of the Montanan's songs were, by this time, funny ballads about barroom angels who had gone wrong, or right, depending on which side of the fence you were on.

He had the whole Sod City Tabernacle Choir singing, "There's a skeeter on my peter, can't you see? Can't you see?" Go ahead, hum a few bars! No one will know what's going on.

A mail plane came to the village once a week. There were wetlands between the airstrip and the village, so the villagers had put down 2-by-12-inch wooden planks across two-foot-long, small-diameter logs to make an elevated boardwalk. There was a mail cart of sorts. It was a wheelbarrow with a flat wooden plank bed, and it had a 2-by-12-inch board turned up edge ways above the wheel to keep the packages from sliding off when the handles were picked up for traveling.

These small girls couldn't handle much hooch and started passing out like flies. The oldest of the girls had been trying to talk the younger girls into going home. Now that the girls were passing out, the older girl got the mail cart and stated carting them home. She herself was a little loose legged and giggly. She had a ball trying to herd that wheelbarrow, loaded with up to two passengers at time, over the narrow boardwalk. She had more wrecks than Carter had pills. One especially round passenger never would have gotten home if it had not been for a couple of friendly jumpers who kept loading her back on the mail cart every time she rolled off.

A small turboprop airplane came to pick us the next morning. Its high-pitched whine from the turbo didn't do much good for hangovers, but all the girls ran down to the airstrip and waved until our plane was out of sight.

I'm sure the hangovers were soon gone, and the jumpers' rations we left didn't last long either, but I like to think that there are some Eskimos who smile and have humorous memories when they see or hear a small plane and think of the half-drowned smokejumpers who stumbled into their village and entertained them back in the early 1960s.

Larry Welch jumped at Cave Junction in 1961 and '62 before transferring to Fairbanks where he jumped through 1968. After returning to CJ for a few more years, his career ended with a broken pelvis in the 1992 season at Redmond. Larry taught school for 34 years and was a rancher in Texas during that time. He says he taught school just so he could have the summers off to jump. Along with Gary and Bernie, Larry made up the third Welch brother to jump at Cave Junction. Since they all were “big boys,” the crew was amazed that any of them could pass the 200-pound weight limit enforced at that time. They were never placed together on the jump list since the Twin Beech would be overloaded on a four-man request (easy Tex — just joking).
Sounding Off from the Editor

by Chuck Sheley  
(Cave Junction ‘59)  
MANAGING EDITOR

After our Board of Directors meeting in Seattle in March, I came home with a changed attitude as to how we should be reaching our NSA members. Over the past two years we’ve been meeting at the smokejumper bases and attempting to sell the NSA to the current jumpers.

We have had our failures and successes from this effort. On the plus side, the NSA has a good working relationship with the base managers. From my point of view, I could not produce a magazine or be an effective worker without the help of the veteran jumpers at the bases who supply me with base reports and answer my endless stream of e-mail questions. To you people I give my sincere thanks.

On the other side, we do not have many of the younger generation of jumpers who are members. About 30 of the jumpers who trained since 1997 are members. However, I’m not concerned at the low numbers of younger members as I think the NSA is something that will become important when a person reaches a certain point of maturity in their life.

When standing in front of a bunch of current jumpers trying to sell the NSA, I don’t have an answer to “What can you do for us?” Or maybe I do. We provide the network of communication for the 3,000 living jumpers in the country as well as sponsor reunions. But just as importantly, the NSA is involved in preserving smokejumper history. I still marvel at the video each time I look at that work created by Steve Smith. We have established a working relationship with the Evergreen Aviation Museum and the Museum of Mt. Flying to preserve and display smokejumper memorabilia. The summer T rail Program continues to grow under the leadership of Jon McBride.

How do we reach the men and women who are currently “on the job”? There’s no good answer for that one. We have jumpers at the bases who actively sell the NSA and their efforts are appreciated. We have two life members from the younger active jumpers.

The NSA is viewed by some as a retired jumpers group. From what I gather, most of our members have just switched jobs. Most of my life I had three or four part-time jobs going in addition to my teaching. Now, I have three or four part-time jobs in addition to my NSA full-time work. The difference is that now the work is volunteer and there are just expenses and no pay. Bottom line is that NSA members seem to be working and not many have become professional checker play-

ers.

Where am I going with this? We had over 70 at the Saturday evening social in Seattle. A lot of the success was due to the persistent work of Bill and Paulette Poppie who did the groundwork for the event. Out of the 70 plus who attended, over 70 were from the “older” generation. We need to put our efforts into reaching the rank and file NSA members who support us with their dues.

I would suggest that we take a new approach for future board meetings and socials. How about drawing six circles on the map of the western U.S. in which we can cover about 90 percent of our members. Hold the meetings in a centralized city within these areas. Judging from the conversation level at the Seattle function, people enjoy the conversation and fellowship and would like to get together more often than a five-year reunion.

The NSA continues to lack workers. Board meetings are filled with great ideas but few to make these ideas work. We need to focus on a very few goals and do them right. Make the best use of our limited time and money.

Let’s take a new approach. Take our valued time and money and reach the most number of potential members face to face. We have 1900 non-members out there. I have a feeling that once we establish a meeting rotation in high jumper population areas, the NSA will grow. Let’s not forget who brought you to the dance! #
Firefighter Jumped into Retirement
by Jodi Walker

LENORE--When his Social Security check arrived the summer George Cross was 62 he saw the irony in his summer employment. Already four-years into retirement from professor of health and physical education at the University of Montana, it was the last summer he strapped a pack to his back and jumped 1,200 feet into a roaring forest fire.

They called him the Gordie Howe of smokejumping. Now 76, Cross knows he could still pass the physical test to jump, but a 55-year-old age limit quashes any desire he might still have for smokejumping. But then again, a little thing like age never stopped Cross.

“I tried to get them to let me jump all summer,” he says of that first summer he worked on the inter-regional fire crew based out of the Missoula Arial Fire Depot. At 36 years old, the forest service wouldn’t train anyone over 27. And trained smokejumpers had to retire by 40. The Forest Service’s rules stuck and for the next 13 years the closest Cross got to smokejumping was dropping cargo from a plane to aid smokejumpers on the ground.

Then a break came in 1973. Unfortunately for Cross, the lifting of the age limit coincided with him breaking his ankle while teaching spring soccer. But Cross was first in line in 1974 and passed the physical test without looking back. Cross parachuted in World War II where he was in the 82nd Airborne but airborne training was nothing compared to smokejumping training, he says. A natural athlete, Cross competed in gymnastics at Indiana University after his tour in the Army. But four jumps into his smokejumping career, Cross broke his ankle again, putting him on the sidelines until the summer of 1975. That’s when his summer career took off. For 11 years he spent his summers looking fear in the eye and fighting flames.

Now, nestled in the hillside above Lenore at the Bumpy Road Rock Ranch, he feeds his adventurous passion with a fishing pole and is letting his creative side shine through in his sculpting. Accustomed to a smokejumpers loft where jumpers live in tight quarters, Cross’ cabin just below the main house on the Clearwater hillside is lined with Pulaski-framed awards, fire jumps caught on film and medals from the Senior Games which he and his wife, Marietta, participate in at a national level.

One wall is dedicated to his sculpting. Three-dimensional figurines depicting some of life’s tough moments are interspersed with humorous pieces poking fun at life. Only a few pieces have made their way to the main house — the most treasured, an exhausted smokejumper in full jumping gear. It sits peacefully under a glass dome in the corner of the tidy living room. Aside from a few smokejumping books in the bookcase, it is the only indication of the way Cross spent his summers for so many years.

Rocking gently in his University of Montana hardwood rocking chair, there is no doubt Cross has his loyalties. With 31 years under his belt at the university, it still stands second to his smokejumping peers.

“You’d probably find more camaraderie in jumpers than any other group I know of,” he said. “Once a jumper, always a jumper.”

The relationship builds from the first 35-foot tower the smokejumping students dive from. It continues though simulated parachute jumps, hours of calisthenics and rappelling down imaginary trees. It grows with the first four practice jumps and multiplies when the heat of a blaze hits as hard as the landing. But the pure hell that builds bonds closer than blood is in walking out of a fire.

“Everything you can’t eat or can’t burn up has to come off the fire.”

George Cross (Courtesy of Barry Kough/Tribune)
Each smokejumper packs 100 pounds or more of gear and equipment and following the arrow of a compass, wanders out of the charred forest. Cross’ longest walk out was a three-day, 21-mile hike out of Yellowstone.

There were no time limits put on firefighting. Smokejumpers were on the fire until it was out. If it flared back up, the jumpers were sent back in, with no pay, to put it out.

Only once did Cross fear for his life. But his feisty disposition may be what saved him. His team, fighting fire near Cody, Wyo., followed the leadership of a fire boss from the Dakotas. Approaching a 1,000-foot bluff, the fire boss told the crew to escape to a meadow nearby.

“We knew that thing was going to blow up,” Cross said. He argued with the fire boss as a B-26 dropped retardant right on them. Canteens were popping, cans of bean blowing up as the fire’s intensity grew. In 30 seconds the fire erupted and scorched the meadow. The crew stood near the bluff and watched.

“That’s the closest I’ve come to being trapped in a fire.”

Fear was never a factor for Cross. He passes off the danger of smokejumping like it’s little more than walking the dog.

“Retardant planes are much more dangerous,” he says.

The fact that Cross took up smokejumping at all can be attributed to his college students egging him on. Teaching physical education, he taught a lot of forestry students who were preparing to work summers in the field. His favorite trick was in his 2 P.M. P.E. class. He made the students run a mile in under seven minutes, wearing logging boots.

“They used to cuss me out,” he says with a smile.

Maybe suggesting he jump into fires was their way of getting even. Or maybe they could just see how much energy this professor had.

Jumping out of the planes is the easy part, Cross says. Once the smokejumpers land, that is when the work starts. But often times working on days there were no fires was harder than fighting fire.

“If you weren’t out on fire, you were out cutting brush, clearing trails, cleaning the forests,” he says. Often smokejumpers were released in controlled burns to keep them under control. In the short hours at the jump loft, they made parachutes and other equipment.

“All these guys are very handy with a sewing machine.”

The Crosses moved to the Orofino area in 1992. Smokejumping irony again hit when they moved into their home off Cavendish Grade just above Dorothy Robinson, widow of one of the first smokejumpers. Rufus Robinson and Earl Cooley made history 61 years ago when they jumped on a fire on Martin Creek in the Moose Creek Ranger District, near the Selway.

Cross made sure Dorothy was delivered to a meeting of the Grangeville Smokejumpers a few years ago, where she was the unbeknownst guest of honor.

“I’ve always regretted not having a tape recorder to record his stories,” Dorothy said. But the legacy of smokejumpers lives on in the immediate friendship Cross felt for Dorothy Robinson.

“You never jump alone,” Cross says, a philosophy which has evidenced itself in his everyday life.

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**LETTERS**

Dear Editor:

I have just finished reading the latest *Smokejumper* (January ’02), cover to cover. You will not blame me if I comment that I especially enjoyed the frequent notes from former CPS jumpers and the history picture of Allen Moyer, Joe Osborn and Harry Mishler. They trained in ’43 and ’44 and I knew Joe very well.

I have noted frequently references to what smokejumpers do after their days as smokejumpers. In my case, I had no choice. Region 1 made a deliberate decision not to keep any of the CPS jumpers, though I understand that R-4 and R-6 kept a few CPS men. Earl Cooley (*Trimotor and Trail*, page 65) explains, “Releasing our CPS crews meant a big training program the coming season. Nevertheless if these men had been retained, they would have been supervising or instructing returning veterans who would have resented them.”

Earl may or may not have been correct in his judgment about the feelings of the veterans. On my early teaching assignments I had a number of veteran paratroopers in my classes at Baldwin-Wallace College and Iowa, and established friendly relationships with several.

On my discharge from CPS in 1946, I joined the staff at BWC in Berea, Ohio. After two years there, I returned to the University of Iowa and received my doctorate in 1949. I joined the staff of Florida State University that September and enjoyed 45 years of teaching there.

—*Greg Phifer* (Missoula ’44)

Tallahassee, Florida

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Check the NSA Web site 14  www.smokejumpers.com
The death of Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter, has triggered some memories that I thought I would share. Perhaps they will put some of the rest of the world in perspective.

Mr. Pearl, like all correspondents, had to have been fully aware of the danger he could be in when on assignment. What we, as Americans, are shocked at is the way he died: a slit throat and then decapitation. However, many in the rest of the world regard this form of death as within their tolerance levels.

**Riyadh**

In 1990, just after the Gulf War began, my wife Nancy and I were living and working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Saddam was in Kuwait and the American Embassy was warning American expats in Saudi Arabia that terrorists were at large and to be cautious.

Some 17 to 20 terrorists of various Middle East nationalities were arrested in October 1990. They were all found guilty of crimes against the kingdom. (There are no laws or courts there as we know them. The law is the Koran and the finding of guilt or innocence is the responsibility of the local Matawa, the Muslim religious leader.) Fifteen were sentenced to death and, within a few days, on a Friday, the Muslim Sunday, they were lined up in Clock Square in Jeddah and beheaded, one by one, with thousands of men in attendance. The others were sentenced to an initial 100 lashes and then 40 a day each day for the next five years.

**China**

During 1995/96 we were living and working in China. In the fall of 1995, a group of 13 “bandits,” including three women, were arrested by the Chinese police and sentenced to death. University and high school students were told to attend the executions in the large soccer stadium. The entire five-hour execution was on national television. The 13 knelt in sand with a soldier beside each one. One by one they confessed their crimes. Then, on a signal, the soldiers placed their pistols against the back of the bandits’ heads. On another signal they shot them. One woman failed to die with the first shot and was shot several times.

In both executions the crowds cheered. Human life in most third world countries is not valued the same as here.

**Moscow**

During the 1993 civil unrest in Moscow, Nancy and I were caught up five or six times in the massive protests. The first time, we saw about 25,000 men and women, mainly older and nicely dressed, most wearing WWII medals on their chests, many carrying flowers. I took some heartwarming photos. Then it turned bloody.

In October a protest group coming up the boulevard near our apartment was stopped by the army and police. Water cannon and troops on foot and horseback charged the crowd. By now there were many young men involved. Hundreds were injured and one killed within 100 feet of where we stood. An army bus and truck were set on fire. But at no time was any property damaged, and there was no looting. (This was true of the months-long protests.) The civilians threw rocks. Yet, despite this happening right in front of the low wall where we stood, at no time did we feel threatened. I had my camera with the big lens and my large bag. Several injured, bleeding men came over and implored me to take their photo and show it to the world. Nearby were Bob Abernathy of NBC, a Canadian from CBC and a correspondent from CNN with their TV crews.

The following week we were at the entrance to Gorky Park when, within minutes, a thousand army and police with shields and batons ringed the entire intersection. The protesters came up the boulevard. We circled back towards the U.S. Embassy area. At that end it wasn’t so peaceful. Several buses were burning, a number of water cannon trucks were badly damaged, but only one ci-
vilian car was damaged. Finally, sweeps by the army and police dispersed the crowd. NBC, CNN, CBC and BBC were all there, plus the European news agencies.

I took Nancy home and drove back to the Embassy. In the large circle adjacent to the Embassy, the Parliament and the 20-story City Hall, the army had encircled the entire area with razor wire and trucks parked bumper to bumper. Several civilians in military clothing were haranguing the crowd. Then, off to the left, a group of 18 to 20 fully armed civilians charged up the stairs and began firing their weapons. I took refuge beside a truck with BBC and German TV crews. The rioters drove two huge army trucks into the front doors, and hundreds of protestors followed. Soon smoke was billowing out as they torched the building. Dozens of unarmed uniformed security troops left by a side door, running in panic as the rioters chased them.

As I stood with the two TV crews, we were confronted by three gun-toting rioters in camouflage clothing. They ordered us to come down and then one fired a burst into the air (I have photos). We dropped to the ground behind the concrete railing. Shortly they left in pursuit of more interesting quarry. It wasn’t until I was back in Redding looking at the slides that I realized a man had been killed just yards away. I later learned that another dozen had been killed as well.

The crowd then surged behind captured military trucks, now filled with a hundred uniformed gun-toting civilians. They began marching up the boulevard and past the newly painted and remodeled U. S. Embassy. As I moved with the protestors and the various TV crews, I wondered what was next. As we passed o’ Glory, as beautiful as a crisp new flag can look on a fall day, the marchers yelled about Clinton but didn’t throw a single rock or make any motion towards our flag. For me this was an incredible moment — I literally get goose bumps even now, thinking about it. I give credit to the fact that the protestors and rioters were focused on the government. I realized it was late and, not being a dedicated journalist and having a wife at home, I left.

That evening over 700 were killed when the marchers reached the TV tower and station. The Army got there first and set up an ambush. Several journalists were injured and two killed.

The following morning at 07:00 I drove down deserted streets and took up a site directly across the river from the Russian Parliament or White House, as it is called. Shortly BBC and CBC arrived, plus two European crews. Back behind us on the roof of a building were CNN and NBC and a host of others.

The ground began to shake and four T-72 tanks with 120mm main guns arrived and parked about 100 feet away, facing the White House. At 10:00 the 120s begin to fire. Huge chunks of concrete blew out of the walls, windows shattered and papers were blown to the wind as the high explosive shells did their work. I do not believe anyone there would have believed this was going to happen. Inside was most of the Russian legislature, hundreds of men and women. Smoke began to blacken the walls above the windows (again I have dozens of photos in sequence).

By noon the entire upper stories of the Parliament were ablaze. Down on the street, directly across the river, there was a lot of activity and I saw several large white flags. The tanks had ceased fire an hour earlier. Dozens of ambulances had arrived and intense activity was tak-

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Bolts
by Steve McDonald

In a lookout’s cab
You live in a web
Of big copper
Wires tied to the ground.

Tied to your bedframe,
Stove and firefinder,
’Cause you will get hit
With lighting bolts.

Bolts that come into
The cab with you
To jump around
Then go to the ground.

And you sit
On some wood
And pucker your butt
And wait to become a cinder.

And, when it’s over
You look for fires
And mark and report them
And contemplate the power of God!

Dr. Steve McDonald retired in 1996 after 36 years with the U.S. Forest Service. He is the author of the novels Baker 30 and Bitterroot and poems with forestry themes. Steve can be contacted at SEM42540@cs.com
ing place. By late afternoon I needed to head home so Nancy wouldn’t begin to worry. Our Canadian Embassy-sponsored apartment had cable TV, including CNN.

Up Close and Personal

There is a point to all of this. Daniel Pearl and all the thousands of correspondents from CNN, BBC, ABC, CBC, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the host of other media worldwide know and understand the risks involved. The media CEOs and corporate board members realize the risks. As I heard a number of times, “it is part of the game.” Bob Abernathy of NBC had a daughter in the 3rd grade class Nancy taught and he dropped her off at school each day. We chatted once a week or so, especially during the unrest. He shared his views and that reporting from “up close and personal” became an addiction.

I understood, especially when returned fire was ringing off the bridge above my head. What you, as the reader, can’t understand is these men and women do not feel they are in serious danger. When Nancy and I talked after the various “disturbances” we witnessed first-hand, we agreed that we just didn’t feel threatened. Pearl knew and understood the risks, that if captured he could be tortured and killed. He knew the preferred method of killing is decapitation.

What we, as media viewers and readers, need to understand is that many of these men and women will continue to die, as many have in the past, and that public outrage is a tad misplaced. We are making incursions into their world and their culture and we will possibly pay the ultimate penalty.

Ted grew up in Pocatello, Idaho. He was a tank officer in the Marines and an educator for the past 22 years living and working in seven countries. Ted is currently living in Sunriver, Oregon.

Richard says that smokejumping had to be the best summer job a college kid could have. He remembers averaging 80 hours/week during the fire season (straight time for overtime!), and at $1.65/hour, he was able to pay for college. The excitement, the fun of working in remote areas, and the great folks he worked with, made those days something that he will always remember with pleasure.

Richard was born and raised in Missoula, received his B.S. in aeronautical engineering from the University of Washington and his M.S. in industrial engineering from Stanford. He served four years in the Navy where he was a submarine officer stationed at Pearl Harbor.

Later, Richard and his two older brothers started Microflect Company in Salem, OR. Microflect designed, manufactured, and installed microwave towers and passive repeaters in this country and overseas. They sold Microflect in 1995.

Richard is retired and lives in Salem with his wife Joanna. They also spend time at Placid Lake in Montana where they have property. He can be reached at rakreitz@aol.com.
Chris Demarest, an NSA associate member, is a firefighter and author/illustrator of over seventy-five children’s books. From his experience as a firefighter he wrote and illustrated *Firefighters A to Z*, which was chosen as a Top Ten Picture Book of 2001 by the *New York Times*. In June 2002, *Smokejumpers One to Ten* will be released.

NSA: First of all, the obvious question: why a book on smokejumping?

CD: While working on the firefighter book I wanted to continue with the fire theme. The obvious angle would have been to follow it with a book on fire trucks or move on to rescue, EMT or police work. I wanted to explore an area little known outside the West and something that has fascinated me for a long time.

NSA: How far back does your interest in smokejumping go?

CD: In the 1960s there was a show called *Ripcord* about a couple of guys who parachuted into dangerous situations to save people and property. From that moment on I was hooked on parachuting. My father, who piloted small aircraft, was forever taking us to air shows. One year we were lucky to catch an international parachuting exhibition at a nearby airfield. I still vividly recall the sight of the round chutes popping open and sometimes drifting right overhead. Also in sixth grade we were each required to give an hour-long talk on a topic of our choice. I chose the history of parachuting.

NSA: What about your interest in art?

CD: My mother painted for a hobby and my father was always good at drawing perspective so I got it from both sides. I always loved to draw figures especially action-oriented ones. I received a degree in painting and immediately applied that talent as a house painter in Seattle. It was during that time that I started doodling and created a portfolio of cartoons. A year later I ventured back east and settled in the Boston area and started getting regular work with the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine and the *Boston Globe* newspaper. Children’s book illustration was a quirk as I was introduced to an editor who thought my style lent itself to that field. Most of my books are in some kind of cartoon, humorous style.

NSA: Then the firefighter and smokejumper books are a departure for you?

CD: The irony is my college training was in realistic figurative work. When I started work on the firefighter book, it was still leaning more toward the cartoon style, but the more I worked on it, the more realistic in tone and feel it became. I realized I wanted to take the reader into the inferno and really show kids what it’s like to feel the flames.

NSA: Research for your firefighter book was easy in that you belong to a department. How did you tackle smokejumping?

CD: Before the firefighter book, I’d done a cowboy book. Like the firefighter and smokejumper book it tells a narrative. There was a lot of research into almost each aspect of the cowboys’ lives; from the type of clothing reflecting the region they lived, to the gear and horses they rode. I even met a guy up here (N.H.) who competes in rodeos and who taught me how to rope. So when it came to an illustration of someone roping, I knew the position of the hands, feet and of course the correct way to hold the rope.

Once I’d been given the go-ahead to do the smokejumper book, I went on the Web and found the NSA site. From the beginning when I mentioned the project, Chuck Sheley received the idea with open arms and basically rolled the red carpet out for me. He lined me up with the Redding base and that summer (2000) I spent time at the base gathering information from the jumpers to the pilots. As an aside, I will say I was a little skeptical about how I would be received. Having served with two volunteer fire departments, where the level of testosterone could be stratospheric, I approached the base with a weary eye. Of course, what I found was a total acceptance and a willingness to share their knowledge. Being professionals, there was nothing to prove to themselves or anyone else. They were there because of their abilities.

It was important for me to visit the base because, outside of seeing the planes, the jumpers and the gear, I learned so much more than any video or book could offer. The layperson would never have known things like color-coding of the chute risers or that chutes came in different diameters.
My approach was to create a book that any smokejumper or pilot would look at and know everything was correct in its depiction. I’d like to take this time to thank, then base manager, Arlen Cravens and the rest of the base crew, for all their help.

NSA: Going back to your longstanding interest in parachuting, have you ever jumped?

CD: I wish. No not yet. I was fortunate enough to see a practice jump and wished like crazy the regulations would’ve allowed me to join them. Having already seen them packing chutes and getting my questions answered, I knew there was a reason why the collective safety record is so good. If the opportunity had risen, I felt I could have totally trusted them with my life and had a random chute strapped to my back. As for exiting, a slight push might have been necessary.

NSA: One last question. Are you continuing the fire theme with the next project?

CD: First of all, I feel very lucky to have my editor Emma Dryden. When she bought the firefighting book she pushed me to make it as realistic as possible. “More fire. More smoke.” was her chant. Like so many people from the East Coast, she knew nothing of smokejumping. But hearing my idea she basically bought the book sight unseen. In the middle of Smokejumpers One to Ten I convinced her to let me make this a fire trilogy. So Hotshots! is the current book on which I am working. It will be out the spring of 2003. I’ve set that in an urban interface to get away from the look of the latter half of the smokejumping book. Over the last year I’ve been touring the country as much as possible, talking up the smokejumper book. I have on loan a jumpsuit and helmet that brings the reality of what you jumpers do/did. You may find in the next ten or so years a lot more recruits from the interest created by my talks.

Chris Demarest can be reached at PO Box 1280, Lebanon, NH 03766 or Chris.L.Demarest@VALLEY.NET  Smokejumpers One to Ten can be found in the children’s section of any of the major bookstores.
Odds and Ends

by Chuck Sheley

Troop Emonds (Cave Jct. ’66) has been having success with his innovative fire tools. The BLM jumpers have purchased another 100 sets for this season, which will give a large exposure to the district personnel as they cross paths with the jumper operation.

The January issue of Library Journal gives another great review to the NSA’s video Smokejumpers: Firefighters from the Sky. A review by Cliff Glaviano of Bowling Green University states: “This outstanding video is highly recommended for all audiences.” Congratulations again to Steve Smith for his work and efforts on that three-year long project.

Dr. Stan Tate (McCall ’53) helped develop a TV program that featured sacred places in the Idaho forests. The program was aired last December and Stan narrated a section of his book Jumping Skyward in which he describes one of his jumps in the Snake River country.

There’s no moss growing on Murry Taylor (Redding ’65) after his retirement. He just signed a contract to do a play in New York at the end of 2004. He will be participating in the developing the script. Don’t quite know the subject but with his success with Jumping Fire, it will be good. Murry says he recently purchased a super modified dirt track racecar. This is retirement? Oh, he’s also started another book on smokejumping.

An interesting e-mail came across my desk from George Steel (NCSB ’72) relaying a bit of history probably unknown to most. “In July 1985, 20 volunteers from Fairbanks were officially transferred from Alaska to California. This was not a detail but a permanent change of duty station. We were stationed in Redding, CA. Our main duty was to cover the Great Basin. When we were in Nevada or Colorado we jumped ram-airs. When we were in Redding, we jumped rounds. Gary Johnson graciously let us go on Redding’s jump list when we were in town. In 1987 the entire California BLM jump base was officially transferred to NIFC to join with the Alaska jumpers who had been transferred to NIFC in 86”.

As we continue to get stories published in the magazine which show there have been one-man fire jumps, Paul Wilson (Missoula ’50) notes that during the busy 1956 fire season in R-3 there were several jumps of this type. Paul was assistant foreman on the Silver City crew that year and Paul Dennison (Missoula ’49) was the foreman. The Gila N.F. fire staff was aware of the need to man the fires and experienced jumpers jumped several one-man’ers near the roads.

I had a chance to visit with Redmond Smokejumper Base Manager Dewey Warner (Redmond ’75) during a January visit. The Redmond Air Center is being renovated to the tune of a $3 million project that includes a new air tanker station, a new dispatch center and a 1,000-square-foot storage facility. The Redmond A.C. includes a large fire warehouse and is home to a Hotshot crew in addition to the jumpers.

Do You Remember? From Fred Donner (Missoula ’59): In 1958, a DC-2 took off early one evening from Missoula to drop a number of two-man (remember, this is pre-1981) fires in the Idaho panhandle. Some of the fires could not be found by dark so some jumpers unsuited and got back in harness and chest pack for the ride home. Dannie Hensley (Missoula ’57) so-dressed leaned against the bar across the DC-2 door and attempted to urinate outside the plane. Fred Donner, with a cast on his broken leg and a spotter chute on his back had gone along for the ride and was sitting directly opposite the door when he was hit by a yellow mist. He was unhappy but not nearly as much as squad leader spotter Ray Schenk (Missoula ’56) who read the riot act to Dannie. Ray pointed to the urinal on the inside wall of the DC-2 to the uproarious laughter of the rest of the load. At the 1995 Missoula Reunion, Dannie told Fred that Ray had also told him that one more miscue would result in bodily harm.

Got a good note from Warren Ellison who piloted jumpers at Missoula and McCall from 1943–57. In the January issue of Smokejumper we had Warren wrongly identified in the historic picture on page 23. Warren is standing to the left of pioneer jumper Glenn Smith and is now correctly ID’d. Warren is currently living in Boise and is an NSA member.

Dee Dutton (Missoula ’51) passed along the information that Betty Stoltenberg, businesses management assistant at the Cave Junction base 1966–72, retired.
January 24th, 2002, from the Siskiyou NF after 38 years of work. Betty started in the S.O. and then transferred to the jumper base where she worked for six years. Betty stated that there was nothing the Siskiyou personnel could have done to prepare her for her job with the smokejumpers. She was trained for completing personnel papers and time slips, but at CJ she did everything except jump out of airplanes. Dick Wessell and Dee Dutton represented the jumpers at Betty’s retirement party. Betty stated that working with the jumpers was the most exciting part of her Forest Service career.

Jerry Dixon (McCall ’71) would like some help from the readers. “My friend Tom Blazing, long time BLM contract pilot, was killed last fall when his Aero Commander crashed into a pass near Wenatchee, WA. He flew detection for years in Alaska and I flew hundreds of hours with him. He was married on my dock in McCall in the late 1970s. Could you please put a note in Smokejumper magazine asking for more info on his crash and what is known.”

Got an e-mail that Dick Wessell (Cave Jct. ’56) is recovering from quadruple by-pass surgery for 80 percent blockage to both sides of the heart. After getting out of the hospital, he and his wife Sandy will be at Apache Palms RV Park, 1836 E. Apache Blvd. Space 41, Tempe, AZ 85281.

Chuck Burk (Missoula ’47) sent along an interesting note pertaining to the April 2002 issue. “The story ‘Missoula 1947 — How Many Fires on One Jump?’ rang a bell. I dug out my faded Forest Service diary and read the details. Ted Dethlefs (Missoula ’47) and myself were on the original fire and were later sent with the lookout to the second fire. We were released the following day and I got the lookout’s signature in my diary before we left to return to the original fire. Uncle Earl Cooley had stressed that we always cover out butts.”

Eric (the Blak) Schoenfeld (Cave Jct. ’64) long-time Alaska jumper, dropped me a line relating to the April issue and women in smokejumping. “Some years before women smokejumpers became inevitable, Alaska upped their entry-level fitness standards above the national standard. This not only to discourage female applicants, but ALSO to assure that when a female passed, she’d have a reasonable chance of becoming part of the crew.

Sandy Ahlstrom (Fairbanks ’90) was Alaska’s first female rookie. Her performance was exemplary. During 15 years as a spotter in Alaska, I visited numerous dispatch offices and talked with many female dispatch folks. Many expressed a desire to “try” smokejumping. I did my best to explain that one does not “try” smokejumping. They must “want” to be smokejumpers or they will washout early in rookie training. Sandy Ahlstrom arrived ready to do the same job as the rest of the rooks and, by and large, she did as well as (sometimes better than) most.

Caught a note that Mitchell, the son of Karl Brauneis (Missoula ’77) along with two friends won the State History Day competition at the University of Wyoming in the Junior Group Performance Division. They will now go on to represent Wyoming at the national competition in Washington, DC. Their presentation was on the development of the parachute and how it revolutionized the modern battlefield both here at home. The boys set up a drama featuring the USFS Parachute Project and how it interfaced with the development of the U. S. Army Airborne School. While in Washington, the boys will visit with the congressional delegation and tour our nation’s monuments and historic sites. ❧
Before I became a firefighter — while I was chasing smokejumpers around as research for my master’s thesis — it was as clear to me as the existence of mountains, how important it was that women jumped fires.

Now that I have become one of you — taken on the mantle of sky-god-hero and wage earner, for better or for worse — I sometimes have to fight to remember. Women can’t help but swallow some of the doubts directed at us, and on some days we believe the worst of them. But when I get a moment to step back from the choking smoke, the topography of reality reorients itself. It matters that we have done this, that we are pushing ourselves, going after the lives we want, adding daily our thinking, our energy and our calluses towards building a stronger wildfire organization. It’s important that we recall our history before it fades forever.

Although the press occasionally confuses us with the gods, we know our own mortality. Ours was not a widely celebrated story in the beginning, so there is much that has never been written down or even spoken. What follows is a brief history of women fighting wildland fire — a map on which you can trace your own stories.

The Forest Service, along with city and rural fire departments, recruited women to fight fires during WWII. Women came forward to serve for their neighborhoods, their country and themselves. When the war ended, so did their jobs. Two decades later, the daughters of those women grew disgruntled with low-paying office jobs — all that was available to them in the developing Forest Service. They, too, wanted the opportunity to work in the woods and earn a decent living. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, women began asking for jobs on district fire crews. In the locations where supervisors scoffed, they finally went to reporters and the courts.

The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management responded in 1971 by forming several all-women’s crews, such as Missoula’s Red Stars. In the beginning this was done partly to ward off bad publicity, but also because there were some men, especially those who had experienced working alongside strong wives and daughters, who believed this would benefit the fire program. For three years women worked these crews, gained skills and discovered that they enjoyed this work as much, and for the same reasons, as the men. The experiment was declared successful beyond most managers’ expectations. Then the women’s crews were disbanded and they were granted the dubious honor of joining the men’s crews.

I suspect this was a well-meaning move and meant as advancement for women, but I wonder if women wouldn’t have gained more confidence by running their own crews a while longer before joining the men. We will never know, because at this time women firefighters got scattered like so much dandelion fluff — landing one or two per crew. On some of these crews they were treated like able and welcome workers, but on most they were not.

At the 1974 National Fire Chiefs Workshop, Carl Hickerson, head of Forest Service Fire Operations for the Pacific Northwest, gave a speech entitled “Should Firefighters Wear Petticoats?” He proclaimed, “I simply cannot imagine a truly feminine woman ever considering fire suppression work and all the adversity, filth and hazard it entails. … In addition, I know in my heart and gut that there is not one woman in 10,000 who could have physically, mentally or emotionally followed precisely in my footsteps over the past thirty-two years of my personal involvement in fire control.” I am certain he had never met Deanne Shulman (McCall ’81). Even if he had, he wouldn’t have recognized the caliber of human who stood before him.

It was only natural that these women who had gained several years experience on district fire crews began looking to the next step — the IR crews. At this time the IR crews, precursors to our Hotshots, prided themselves in being as rude and crude as they could, seeming to feel that this behavior was synonymous with “tough.” Adding women to their ranks did not enhance this desired image in their own minds.
However, the rules were changing, and scattered superintendents hired a few women.

Crewmembers then set out to make sure these women failed. They withheld information and training critical for becoming successful firefighters. Everything about the women’s daily lives was sabotaged. In some cases even their bunkhouses were pillaged — dresser drawers pulled out and clothes dumped on the floor, a dead mouse or two mixed in for spice. Perhaps some of these pranks were meant in fun, but most turned mean. At least one woman was raped. Many more were ridiculed and badgered until all they could do was keep putting one boot in front of the other. One woman on a crew at this time told me that she would seldom drink water, because she was so concerned the men would play tricks on her when she went to pee in the woods. She worked dehydrated.

There were also the details of showers to be worked out in fire camp. During the 1970s only one shower truck graced each campsite, so either the women didn’t shower or there would be a big to-do about closing the facility to the waiting men while the women washed.

In the summer of 1977, a few women decided they were tired of this awkward and embarrassing situation. One evening a group of them gathered, marched into the shower truck among the men, stripped, showered, dressed and walked back out. Suddenly management seemed to see the situation in a whole new light. A second shower shelter designated for women materialized and there have been two in fire camps ever since.

It was the accumulation of these daily details and rituals that made life for these early women in fire so difficult. Risa Lange-Navarro, as the first woman on the Bighorn IR crew (now the Wyoming Hotshots), was driven through Greybull only on back streets her first few weeks on the job, because the embarrassed district ranger didn’t want the community to notice that he had hired a woman. In spite of such treatment, Risa wholeheartedly loved fighting fire, and after a few shifts with her — trying to match her in carrying hose packs and piss pumps up mountainsides — most men on the crew began to respect and enjoy working with her. A few years later, she married one of her crewmates. Tony (RAC ’83) says he knew he’d fallen in
love the night he got drunk and passed out, and Risa threw him in the back of his truck and drove him to the barracks. Neither he nor his truck is small.

By 1979 Deanne Shulman, who had six years of fire experience, including time on an IR crew, decided she was ready to try smokejumping. The only previous smokejumping attempt by a woman that I know of was by Florence Wenger in 1943. Her husband, Roy, was directing the Missoula smokejumper training camp at Seeley Lake that summer. “To keep busy,” Florence joined the rookies. She completed all the training and strenuous activity up to the practice jumps, and then was not allowed to proceed. Interviewed as an old woman, Florence said, “I’ve always felt a bit cheated. I could have been the first woman smokejumper. Alas! I was ahead of the times.”

It took until 1979 for those “times” to catch up. Deanne didn’t care so much about being “the first,” she just wanted to take the next logical step in her career. Most of the smokejumpers at the time abhorred the idea of a woman joining their lofty ranks. It is important, however, that a few men thought their comrades were full of shit, decided not to run with the pack and supported Deanne’s right to a fair chance. The first day of rookie training in McCall, Deanne passed all the initial physical tests without difficulty, then stepped on the scale. At the time smokejumpers were required to weigh 130–190 pounds. The scale balanced at 125 pounds and the trainers sent her home.

Smokejumper Allen “Mouse” Owen called Deanne not long after this rejection. He sent her his pack-out bag to practice with and told her he didn’t weigh the required 130 pounds and that he knew plenty of men who weighed more than 190 pounds. When a letter of complaint to the McCall management yielded no reply, Deanne filed a formal complaint, arguing that the weight limitations were being selectively enforced. Washington officials had only to review jump base records, where some bases hadn’t even bothered to fudge the books about who weighed too little or too much. In the spring of 1981, Deanne returned to McCall and successfully completed every stage of rookie training.

Missoula smokejumpers trained four more women the next year. The struggles were not over, and fire management positions remain an unfortunate battlefield for many women in fire, but official limitations had been lifted. These early women entered the profession at a time when most people didn’t believe they could succeed. They did it anyway, and not all the scars they incurred have healed. Some still work fires and some have moved onto other things. Regardless, their determination and courage made the route more accessible for those of us who followed. We are so proud of you.

We women who began fighting fire after 1982 face a slightly different situation from those who came before. Hopefully ours is not the burden of having to prove ourselves good enough, every minute of every day we swing a Pulaski, run a saw or direct fire tactics. Hopefully we have come far enough that there are whole hours when we can do our jobs as one human firefighter among other human firefighters. Some women swear they never experience discrimination anymore. Others feel like they still struggle to be given equal respect for equal work. Our experiences are as different as we are different from each other.

This past season, 2001, thirty-five women held slots on jump lists across the United States (out of approximately 400 jumpers). This is not exactly “taking over,” as we are sometimes accused of, but it is enough that we sometimes find ourselves in the door of the plane one after the other, being spotted by Kelly, Renee, Shelly, Robin, Marge, Kasey, Margarita or one of many other women who have earned squad leader and spotter positions. There are finally enough of us that it is clear there is no one way you need to look or act to be a firewoman.

Come May 1st (and weather permitting), I will zip that mustard yellow suit over my thighs, snap main and reserve chutes to my harness with the help of a bro’ or sis’, and do my best Big Bird shuffle to the closest spotter for a check. I will waddle over warm tarmac and clamber up metal steps into the welcoming cavern of the DC-3. Seat belts will snap, jet fuel fumes singe my nostrils and adrenaline tickle my blood. This will be my third season jumping fires, but that leap makes me new each time.

Lori currently lives and jumps in Missoula, MT. The University of Pittsburgh presented her with an MFA degree for creative writing a week before she graduated from smokejumper rookie training in June 2000. She is also a Nordic ski coach, a writing teacher, an enthusiastic dancer, and a poor guitar player. Lori has published stories about her experiences as a firefighter in the 1998 literary journal Cabin Fever, and in 2001 Fenske Company’s Under Fire, The West is Burning. She helped organize and spoke at the celebration of 20 Years of Women in Smokejumping, held last December in Sun Valley, ID. Many of you possess the experiences to fill in her story’s gaps, and she invites you to send your stories and information, so they can be added to our shared narrative. lori.messenger@juno.com
by Ted Burgon

Fred (Missoula ’65) was a jumper at Missoula from 1965 to 1967, and at Fairbanks in 1973. He was a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam, 1968–69.

He graduated with a B.A. in geography from the University of Montana in 1971. In the fall of 1973 he started Asia-America, a business importing ceramics from Saigon, Vietnam, with his brother, John. Fred was in Saigon shepherding what was to be their last shipment of ceramics that would leave port April 21, 1975. He was among the last Americans to leave Vietnam by helicopter just eight days later, to the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the South China Sea.

Asia-America was rebuilt shortly thereafter to become a major wholesaler of furniture throughout the United States, with Fred as president, and the name was changed to A-America. Fred and his brother, John, operate out of Tukwila, Wash., just south of Seattle. Inc. magazine recognized A-America in 1981 as the third-fastest-growing private company in this nation. A-America was in the top 150 privately held companies in Washington state in 1999 and 2000.

Fred thought in 1995 about a video on the smokejumpers, as there was a real need for the history of the smokejumpers to be recorded before all the “old-timers” were no longer with us to share their stories. This was the beginning of the smokejumper video that is now the primary visual resource on the history of the service. With Fred’s vision and determination, plus the involved help of Bill Moody and producer Steve Smith, the idea became a reality. From there it mushroomed with the support of countless members contributing to the project.

With his wife, Polly Peppard, he lives in Black Diamond, Wash. Their three sons currently attend the University of Montana in Missoula. As president of A-America, he is busy but finds time to pursue his outdoor hobbies of hiking, skiing and traveling. For A-America, he travels to Asia four or five times a year.

Fred is serving his second term on the Board of Directors of the National Smokejumper Association, and continues as chairman of the video committee.

Check the NSA Web site

(Featured Life Member)

FRED ROHRBACH

(Courtesy of Nick Holmes)
James A. Barber (Missoula ’60)

Jim died April 4, 2002, in Tucson, Ariz., at the age of 62. Born in St. Ignatius, Mont., to Emanuel and Ruby Barber, he was the third of eight children and an enrolled member of the Salish/Kootenai Nation. Jim was a Missoula smokejumper for two years while attending Western Montana College at Dillon where he studied to be a teacher and coach. Following graduation, he served in the Army in Europe for two years where he played football for an Army team.

Jim was recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1965 and, during the 1960s and 1970s, served in Laos where he was decorated for valor. He married Judy Hefty in 1965 and their children, Britt and Matt, were born in Laos. He transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1978 and spent the last 10 years of his government career as superintendent of the Tohono O’odham Nation in Sells, Ariz. Jim retired at age 55 to a life of golf and gardening. He was diagnosed with cancer on Jan. 31, 2002.

Survivors include his wife and sons, another son by marriage, Dan, and a granddaughter. Jim’s family requests donations in lieu of flowers. They may be made to the St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital, P.O. Box 50, Memphis, TN 26727, or the Community Food Bank, P.O. Box 26727, Tucson, AZ 85726-6727. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. James Barber, 9321 N. Gazelle Place, Tucson, AZ 85742.

Robert H. Dunn (Missoula ’58)

Bob died March 8, 2002, in Everett, Wash., at the age of 65. Born in Philipsburg, Mont., he was a graduate of the University of Montana. He retired in 1994 as deputy regional commissioner for the Social Security Administration after a 34-year career with the agency that took him to Oregon, California, Arizona, Alaska, Maryland and Colorado. Bob was president and founder of the Northwest Social Security Alumni Association and a member of the National Smokejumper Association, the Elks and the Eagles. He served on the Business Advisory Council for the Resource Center for the Handicapped in 1995 and was AARP’s Washington state communications coordinator in 1997. His wife Donna, Everett, two children, his mother, a sister and two grandchildren, survive him. Memorial donations may be made to the National Smokejumper Association, P.O. Box 4081, Missoula, MT 59806. Condolences should be sent to Mrs. Robert Dunn, 2811 131st St. SE, Everett, WA 98208.

John Timothy Koester (Cave Junction ’55)

Tim died April 15, 2002, at his home in Olympia, Wash., at the age of 64. He jumped from Cave Junction for two seasons, from Redding in 1957 and from Fairbanks during the 1963 through 1965 fire seasons. Born in Chatsworth, Calif., he graduated from high school in Kernville, Calif., then attended college in Southern California. He was a flight instructor, copilot for an airline, then flew for several years as a bush pilot in Alaska. At the time of his death, he was vice president of marketing for the Soloy Corp. He had enjoyed kayaking, hiking, sailing and running. His wife Janey, a daughter, and many other family members survive Tim. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. John Koester, 433 77th Ave. NE, Olympia, WA 98506. Remembrances may be made to Providence Sound Home Care and Hospice, Hospice Fund, P.O. Box 5008, Lacey, WA 98509.

Roy Mathias Mart (Missoula ’41)

Roy passed away of natural causes on May 23, 2001, in Missoula at the age of 85. He was born in Miles City, Mont., and his family homesteaded at Big Dry Smokey Butte near Jordan, Mont. He graduated with a degree in range management from the University of Montana Forestry School in 1940, then was a smokejumper for one season before entering the
Mary Asker, who hikes the six-miles between Pittsburg Landing and Kirkwood Bar in Hells Canyon at least twice each year, said she’s never seen the trail in better shape.

“I’ve been walking it for the past 15 years,” said the Lewiston, Idaho Head Start employee, “as a volunteer in projects like river cleanups and cleaning fire pits.

“But the trail has never been so free of rocks and brush as it is this year.”

That good condition is due to the efforts of other volunteers, a group of 10 former smokejumpers who took on the trail rehabilitation task as a project for the National Smokejumper Association.

“This is the fourth season we’ve worked on trail rehab,” explained NSA Trails Boss Jon McBride, “but it’s the first project we’ve tackled on either the Nez Perce or Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. Based on the beautiful country and the terrific support the Forest Service gave us, I guarantee it won’t be our last project in this area.”

McBride said his crew spent the week of April 22 working out of their camp at Kirkwood Bar, rehabilitating a total of 21 miles of trail, constructing one footbridge rebuilding another and cleaning 47 waterbars.

They worked on both the Idaho and Oregon sides of the Snake River, thus in two national forests. Forest Service Recreation Specialist Earl Baumgarten provided guidance and jet boat transportation to the crew, McBride explained.

The NSA official said the association fields six to eight teams of former smokejumpers to Northwest forests each summer. He explained that each team is self-sufficient, with its own cook and emergency medical technician.

In addition to their work on the Nez Perce and Wallowa-Whitman Forests, in past years NSA trail crews have labored on the Custer, Flathead, Helena, Lewis & Clark, and Sawtooth National Forests.

McBride said the Hells Canyon smokejumper crew included retired Nez Perce National Forest officials Ron Stoleson, Tom Kovalicky and Dave Poncin.

Stoleson was the Salmon River and Slate Creek District ranger from 1972 through 1979. He retired from the Forest Service’s Intermountain Regional Office in 2000 with 42-1/2 years’ service. He lives in Ogden.

Kovalicky, a Grangeville resident, was the Nez Perce Forest supervisor from May 1982 until his retirement in January 1991.

Poncin, also of Grangeville, served on the Nez Perce Forest from 1983 to 1997, initially as its resources staff officer, then as fire staff officer for both it and the neighboring Clearwater National Forest.

Trail Boss McBride said that, during the previous three years of the NSA program, volunteer smokejumper crews have rehabilitated 100 miles of trail, built or rebuilt 11 bridges, cleared 332 waterbars, cut some 1,300 logs that had been blocking trails, and refurbished several Forest Service guard stations.
Checking the Canopy

by Steve Goldammer  
(Missoula ’66)

The Business

It has now been more than 30 years and seven (at least that many) professions since I have jumped my last jump, put out my last fire, and mopped up through my last burning period, and still there is a lesson that the jumpers have taught me, and taught me well.

In the movie Cider House Rules there is a scene in which the boss of a group of itinerant apple-pickers finds one of his workers sleeping on the job, and dropping cigarette ashes into the cider he is suppose be stirring. He asks him, “What is your business”? The young man appears not to know what it is the boss is asking, so the boss asks him again: “What is it that you do?”

Perhaps it was so clear-cut what smokejumping was all about that one did not have to ask the question “what is it that we were doing?” but I suspect that it was more. Our business was to put out forest fires. Our business was to stop the destruction of trees, property, or even life that a fire had the power to incur. And what we did worked to that end.

Now on the one hand, that was just a job, a task to earn money for college, stuff, or for earning a living. But on the other hand, that was a vocation. That was our business! That was what we did! And we saw ourselves as providing the world with something pretty significant.

For instance, I remember the times we would “control the fire” and there would be weary celebration! Not sleep after a 24-hour day and night of digging line. Not separation of a crew that had fought together, back-fired, swung spruce boughs and cut trees for a common cause. Celebration, together, standing around the “campfire” telling stories, laughing, basking in the sense of accomplishment that was ours, and all of this before we fell deeply into that needed and earned repose. And I am guessing that this ritual was from a sense of purpose, our purpose that had been realized: stopping a fire!

I also recount that when the fire was going, and we lost it, or it flared up, or it was simply so huge we had to work untold hours, there was not a climate among those fighting the fire that we should simply stop, or give up, or that it just didn’t matter any more. That was not an option! And so we fought on, and to exhaustion. I say all of this not out of a sense of haughty pride, or to brag, or even to set ourselves over or apart from others who labor, I say it because at least to me it seemed to be, “our business” and we knew that.

Fighting fires is what we did, and we did it well.

I read a theological work by Martha Sayers that described Jesus as a carpenter. And the question was: what kind of work did he do? The author states, “I dare say that any ill-made furniture ever came out of that furniture shop, no wobbly tables, no crooked legs … for who could believed that out of the same shop of the one who created heaven and earth could come bad furniture? The first and foremost thing that God asks of us to do is ‘make good furniture.’”

Perhaps my memory is skewed too much by time and my bias toward “jumping”, but the lesson is still there. The business. What it was that we did, and how we did it, has served to be a yardstick for me to measure the rest of my life.

After his rookie year in Missoula, Steve “Goldy” Goldammer (Missoula ’66), jumped the next four years in Alaska. He graduated from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, with a B.A. in psychology and math, and flew as a pilot in the Navy. Steve retired in 1991 at the rank of commander. He then graduated from Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, with a masters of divinity and served as pastor at parishes in Preston and Kenyon, Minn. Steve presently works as an agronomist in Northfield, Minn., and says that he will never retire.
George Honey’s First Fire Jump

Printed from recollections of Robert B. (Bob) Scott USFS Lookout.

That night, the North Cascades had the first thunderstorm of the summer. There was lightning enough for the whole district! We had nineteen strikes that produced spot fires but many of them were rained out.

The next morning we could see several smokes, one of which was about three miles from the lookout. Ranger Frank Burge suggested that I should chase it for the experience and that the smokejumpers would be coming in to back me up if necessary. I had some trouble finding the fire but scraped a line around it when I found it. The fire was only about 100 feet in diameter. I sat down and waited for the plane. The jumpers indicated to me that they could see the fire but they headed up the hill to where they considered a better jump spot. I was amazed that it was easy to converse when they were coming down.

I hiked up the hill to find out where they landed. The jumpers were having a ball kidding each other about where they landed. George Honey (NCSB ’40) had landed in a soft spot in a small meadow and was up to his knees in muck. He had to climb out of his suit and wade to harder ground in his drawers. Virgil “Bus” Derry (NCSB ’40) was hung up about fifteen feet in a dead snag. After Bus made his letdown, they cleaned up and gathered their gear before hiking down to see how I had done. George said that I had done well and with a little mop-up the fire would be out. I asked about the parachutes and jump suits but they said the packers would take care of those items.

It was an exciting occasion for me and probably more so for George and Bus as it was their first fire jump.

Bob Scott is retired and currently living in Vancouver, Washington.

Smokejumping lost one of its original pioneers with the passing of George Phillip Honey on Dec. 3, 2001, in Entiat, WA, at the age of 95.

Member Profile

J. Charles “Hawk” Blanton

by Chris Sorensen (Associate)

NSA LIFE MEMBER Chuck Blanton began his smokejumping career at McCall in 1947 in a class of 26 rookies. He jumped through the 1950 season, completing a total of 44 jumps.

During the summer of 1950, Chuck was part of an eight-man crew, including Wayne Webb and “Paperlegs” Peterson that participated in the filming of the movie *Telephone Creek*. The show follows McCall jumpers through NED training and onto an actual fire in Idaho.

Chuck married the former Gladyne Taufen in 1949, and entered law school at the University of Idaho the same year. Chuck marked his 50th year in the practice of law in 2000, during which he was primarily engaged in civil litigation.

He has been active in many legal organizations, held leadership positions in the Episcopal Church in Idaho is a past exalted ruler of Boise Elks Lodge No. 310, a 32nd-degree Mason and a Shriner. He serves as chairman of the Idaho Elks Rehabilitation Hospital and the Boise State University Foundation.

Chuck’s son, Rick, began his own smokejumping career at McCall in 1974 and jumped through the 1997 season. Rick is currently employed at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

Hawk plays tennis three days a week and is an avid oil painter. He and Gladyne are world travelers and were in Ireland Sept. 11, 2001. The Blantons winter in Hawaii and summer at their home on Payette Lake at McCall.

Boise-area smokejumpers meet for coffee and fellowship the second Wednesday of every other month. Hawk Blanton is sure to be there if he’s in town.
Alaska

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks ’96)

Greetings from Alaska. Our previous base report left off with the end of Alaska’s 2001 fire season. Man caused fires kept the crew busy until the last jumper went out the door on July 29. The Alaska crew headed south on several boosts to the Great Basin and was blessed with fire action and overtime while scattered on jump lists from Ely to West Yellowstone to Redmond. By season’s end, Alaska jump kings were Joe Don Morton (Redding ‘95) and Mike McMillan, each with 14 fire jumps.

Fall and winter tree climbing assignments to New York and Chicago sent 14 Alaskans on the hunt for the Asian longhorned-beetle. The urban jumpers scaled trees, rain or shine, for about ten hours a day. The crew often drew crowds of onlookers and endured the obvious questions, as well as occasional verbal assaults from bewildered elderly ladies ordering them from the treetops.

In October, Chip Houde (Fairbanks ’88) joined the search and recovery mission in New York City as an operations specialist on a Type 1 interagency overhead team. Houde was stationed at the west command post for three weeks. Hank Falcon (Redding ‘83) responded as a situation unit leader. The federal team’s normal operational role change to one of planning and logistics as long-term organizational needs developed. “Nothing on TV prepares you for what it looked like at ground zero,” said Houde. “Every American wanted to help, and we were proud to have that opportunity.”

Ron Booker (Redding ’98) and wife Jacqueline had a son, Mykel, in September. Tom Roach (Fairbanks ’98) and wife Missy were married in Minnesota in October. Mike Bradley and wife Theresa were married in Alaska in November. Though not related, both the Roach and Bradley brides share the maiden name of Bakker. Jared Weber (Fairbanks ’01) and wife Heather were wed in December.

In January, Bruce Nelson (Fairbanks ’81) returned to Alaska after hiking the Appalachian Trail and then canoeing the Mississippi River, a total of 4500 miles during his 6-month sabbatical. Buck recently published an impressive hunting video that can be found at www.bucktrack.com. Nelson’s smokejumping experience and cheer is welcome back.

Happy trails to Jim Raudenbush (Fairbanks ’82). Bush departed Alaska in March for a loft supervisor position in Boise. He spent 8 years as Alaska’s crew supervisor through thick and thin. Bush’s tenure brought balance and level-headed leadership to many challenges facing the crew. Steve Theisen is filling the position until a new supervisor is named.

Eight rookie candidates will take their first test on April 22. Doug Carroll (Fairbanks ’94) is Alaska’s lead rookie trainer, joined by Matt Allen, David Bloemker (Fairbanks ’97), Charlie Brown, Ty Humphrey (Fairbanks ’98) and Robert Yeager. Carroll replaces John Lyons, whose 5 seasons as lead trainer was marked by his tireless dedication to high standards for the recruits. In March, Lyons worked in Washington, D.C., as a “suit and tie” watch officer for three weeks. He is relieved to be back in Alaska to just be a “regular smokejumper” for 2002.

Alaska welcomes three transfers this year. Derek Hartman (Redding ’98) comes to Alaska from West Yellowstone. Bob Schober (Missoula ’95) is here from Boise. Alaska’s wayward jumper Jon Kawczynski (Fairbanks ’96) comes back after 3 years in Boise, driving the largest non-military truck allowed on Ft. Wainwright. Regardless of Jon’s celebrated homecoming, we’re cooking a pig this spring and everyone’s invited.

Boise

by Steve Nemore (Redmond ’69)

Boise plans to have 86 smokejumpers for 2002. Our organization chart below now shows all the recent grade increases and new responsibilities. The traditional grade of GS-6 (journeyman 3rd year smokejumper) has now become GS-7 lead smokejumper … meaning that an experienced smokejumper who bosses a fire and supervises the crew is now a GS-7. (A GS-7
makes $14.66 per hour). Spotters are now GS-9 and our section leaders are GS-11. Finally, smokejumpers are being paid closer to what they are worth.

**Leaders**

- Smokejumper Chief (foreman): Grant Beebe
- Assistant Chief: Eric Reynolds
- Air Operations: Jon Curd; assistant—Emil Magallanes
- Training Manager: Ken Franz; assistant—Eric Walker
- Loft Manager: Jim Raudenbush; assistant—Marty Adell
- Prescribed Fire Manager: Bob Hurley; assistant—Kasey Rose
- Operations Chief: Hector Madrid
- Crew Supervisor: Mike Tupper; assistant—Al Seiler
- Chief Pilot: Kevin Stalder

Our average years jumping is ten and average age is 33.

We had 11 rookies who started training on April 15. The usual success rate is about 75%. “Washouts” (failure to complete training) are usually for injury OR quitting. The rookies that quit usually do so because of a personal realization that the training is too hard and the work will be too difficult ... all this agony “just to become a smokejumper.” It’s that “just to become a smokejumper” attitude that lowers their desire and provides them the excuse for quitting. The word “just” attempts to diminish the nature of our profession. Smokejumping is about heart, vitality and the joy and excitement of doing a dangerous job ... a job that needs to be done. A smokejumper is not common, usual or average. Smokejumping is NOT “just” another job. (Pretty heavy discussion for a pre-season report, eh?)

Our training theory is: If a rookie can drive-on, learn, perform, and gut it out through training, then they should make a fine smokejumper. Their desire will be proven throughout the weeks of training. The difficulties, dangers and misery of real fire situations will be conquered by the never-give-up attitude and expertise tested and honed during rookie training. Rookie trainers are Dave Estey, Mike Tupper, Dave Vining, and Allie Cushman.

In 2002 we’ll have three veteran women smokejumpers ... Kasey Rose 14 years, Allie Cushman 9 years, Michelle Moore 4 years, and one woman rookie. Matt Bowers, Alison Cushman, Richard Zimmerlee, and Dave Vining will be trained as spotters.

We will attend six different prescribed fire courses, 15 different fire suppression courses, two Incident Command system courses and four miscellaneous courses for a total of 193 students and many classroom hours.

The parachute loft bought 33 new main parachutes (model DC-7 built by Paraflite Inc.) and 25 new reserve parachutes. Total inventory is now 180 mains and 150 reserves. The Loft will build: 12 harnesses, 25 personal gear bags, 15 packout bags, 75 main containers, 75 main D-bags, 50 drogue D-bags, 25 reserve containers, 25 sets reserve risers, 7 spotter harnesses, and 25 travel bags ... and the never-ending repair of suits, chutes and gear.

Each smokejumper must pass two annual physical fitness tests:

1. **Smokejumper:** run 1 1/2 miles in under 9:30 or 3 miles under 22:30, 60 setups, 35 pushups, 10 pull-ups.
2. **National Firefighters pack-test** (arduous level): walk 3 miles with 45-pound pack in under 45 minutes.

No one yet has challenged the pack test record set by 55-year-old Alaska smokejumper Jim Veitch — 201 pounds 3 miles in 43 minutes.

Our aircraft will consist of four Dehavilland Twin Otters, one owned by BLM, one contracted from Ken Borek Aviation, and two contracted from Leading Edge Aviation. We’ll also get a Dornier from Alaska when their season is over (August).

Bruce Ford, Alaska smokejumper, will once again guide and interpret for four senior Russian smokejumpers who will be watching our rookie training. Every smokejumper has a week of fire refresher classes.

There will be three ram-air parachute refresher sessions taking place from February through May. Everyone gets a minimum of five jumps after classes and tower exits. Anyone transferring from the Forest Service will take ram-air training consisting of about 20 jumps.

Scott Salisberry has modified the Alaska tundra fire beater (invented by Alaska smokejumper Tony Pastro) to make it firepack-attachable and adapted to the sagegrass fuel type in the Great Basin. Scott will build 50 new beaters (about $15 each for material).

Tim Schaeffer built the mother of all bicycle racks outside the Loft entrance. A welded steel shed roof with hooks for 36 bikes with support poles set in many yards of concrete.
Dustin Matsuoka is our new EMT supervisor and will lead the 11 certified EMTs in currency and specialty medical training for aircraft and wilderness injuries. There is a smokejumper EMT-built trauma kit on each airplane.

Our plan: A safe and action-filled 2002 fire season.

**Grangeville**

by Jerry Zumalt (Redding ’70)

Grangeville plans on being fully staffed at 30 smokejumpers this season. We’ve hired two rookies and arranged details to train two Forest employees. Leading Edge Aviation will provide a Twin Otter with Bob Nicol as the primary pilot with either Bill Steck or George Matthews flying relief. The aircraft will be available from June 5 through September 27. We are hiring a squad leader to replace Chris Young who accepted the loft foreman position at West Yellowstone, and Willie Kelly is recovering from injuries suffered when hit by rolling rocks on the Earthquake fire last autumn. He recently had corrective surgery to his knee and hopes to be able to jump this season.

Our primary early season commitments have involved several prescription burn assignments to Mississippi and South Carolina in Region 8 that began in January. We will support the prescription burn and hazardous fuels program on the Idaho Panhandle Forest in north Idaho. Other spring work will target trail bridge construction in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Area with both aviation and ground crews and marking and cruising support to the Clearwater and Nez Perce Forests’ timber program.

Reduced funding and increased training and work demands continue to place considerable strain on smokejumper programs nationally. Grangeville’s priority continues to be well-defined accomplishment of safe and effective fire management plan implementation and meeting the resource objectives of our users. One challenge is to effectively participate in wilderness fire use efforts. To accomplish that mission, we committed Brian Ahshapanek to the Fire Use Training Academy in Albuquerque as a crew coordinator this spring. Another task is to meet both the demands for multiple-start, initial attack coverage and simultaneously provide leadership for emerging fire and extended attack, fire transition situations. We’re anticipating an interesting fire season, and look
forward to capitalizing on the benefits of mixed load operations with the Boise and Alaska BLM bases.

**McCall**  
_by Rick Hudson_ (Boise '73)

With over 30 inches of snow on the aircraft, McCall jump base and the surrounding river basins at 90% of normal snow pack, it’s foolish to predict the local fire season for McCall. Any early fire season will probably be in the southwest and in the Great Basin.

McCall filled 15 GS-6 positions with 6 month appointments to attend to loft work as well as early and late season prescribed fire projects. Presently eight jumpers are tree climbing in New York or Chicago with six more to followed in April.

Recruitment efforts have rounded up nine NEDS for rookie training which began May 28th. Five Region 3 detailers trained in McCall April 29th during the McCall Overhead Training. With severely dry conditions in New Mexico, they will probably join the detailers from Missoula and Redding and head south to Silver City shortly thereafter.

A Region 4 Twin Otter is expected to be the jump ship in Silver for the early summer. The remaining Twin Otter and DC-3 J42 will be the jump ships in McCall for fire and training.

_Leo Cromwell_ (Idaho City ’66) and _Jerry Ogawa_ (McCall ’67) are totaling their many years of smokejumping toward retirement. They may move a little slower from all those hard landings, but the bureaucracy moves even slower in accounting for their time in service. They will probably still be working (Leo at the McCall tanker base, Oggie in the jump loft) this summer. _Shelly Lewis_ (Grangeville ’97) and _Jeff Schricker_ (McCall ’98) have been promoted to the position of smokejumper squad leader. Shelly is a 2nd generation smokejumper, having grown up in Chamberlain Basin with her father, _Ed Allen_ (McCall ’68).

_Mark Koontz_ (McCall ’92) was enticed to the “Darkside” by our brothers from Boise BLM. We will miss the “Red Ant” and his professionalism in promoting smokejumper operations. _Melanie Dunton_ (McCall ’99), daughter of smokejumper and retired Alaska base foreman, _Al Dunton_, will take this summer off to prepare for her wedding this fall (to another smokejumper). _Joe Fox_ (McCall ’81), the man with two PhD’s, is taking another season off to tend a growing family.

The McCall Base will total 70 smokejumpers this summer. We are already looking forward to the McCall 60th Reunion in June of 2003. This will bring to-gether past and present smokejumpers from Boise, Idaho City, McCall and any base who wishes to attend.

**Missoula**  
_by Wayne Williams_ (Missoula ’77)

If this were fifteen years ago, I would be reporting that most of the Missoula jumpers are laid off and that Missoula would be gearing up for New Mexico around May 1st.

Missoula, like most of the bases, had another busy winter. We had 23 jumpers burning in Mississippi. They helped Region 8 accomplish more then 100,000 acres of dormant season burning. We have two jumpers in New York climbing trees in Central Park and three in Chicago looking for the dreaded Asian longhorned beetle.

The Missoula Loft trained nine FAA examiners as senior riggers. Two British Columbia Para-attack members (Canadian smokejumpers), Tom Reinboldt and Mike Parminter, also received senior and master rigger training. The Loft also manufactured 45 jump suits for the U.S. military.

Six Missoula jumpers were sent down to California as instructors for the Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Academy in Sacramento.

At this time, Region 1 plans on training ten to fifteen rookies, most of which will be detailers from the National Forest system.

Silver City, and Region 3 as a whole, is coming off one of the driest winters on record. The Gila crew is tentatively schedule to leave on May 12th and be operational on the 15th.

The welfare fund donated people, time and money to the following: Museum of Mountain Flying (Mann Gulch DC-3), Big Brothers and Sisters of Missoula, American Cancer Society, Leukemia Society, Missoula Food Bank, and the Twenty Years of Women Smokejumping convention.

**North Cascades**  
_by Steve Dickenson_ (LaGrande ’78)

Spring-like weather has finally made an appearance and we are grateful to see the snow depart. A heavy snowpack still exists in the Cascade’s but the hillsides are beginning to bare below 3000 feet.

The majority of the crew have arrived in early April for refresher and to assist other units in suppression and prescribed fire duties. We expect all of last season’s crew to return at this time. One of Redmond’s Sherpas will show up in mid-month for our refresher jumps.

News over the winter was highlighted by Sam and Annie Palmer’s new addition to their family, a girl
Eliza. **Stuart Hill** accepted a PSE 6 position and we are happy to have him aboard! **Dale Longanecker** is just finishing 25 new jumpsuits that appear to be up to his standards, a notch or two above what is desirable. **John Button** has the crew scheduled for various fire training from January to June, keeping him and the crew busy. We have selected 3 temporary rookies along with one detailer and will begin training here on May 20th. Redmond plans on sending five of their new jumpers up here and **Matt Woosley** has agreed to run the training this year.

The airplane contract will be a CASA 212 from Bighorn Aviation and **Kevin McBride** will be the captain again. The plane starts on May 31st and is a 119 day contract.

We look forward towards a busy and safe season for all smokejumpers and other firefighters in 2002.

**Redding**

by **Adam Lauber** (Redding ’99)

With snowcapped peaks, cool temperatures and light winds blowing through the valley, 25 jumpers returned to Redding in April to attend the first refresher training preparing them for the 2002 fire season.

As the 2001 fire season came to an end, many plans for project work, tree climbing and training classes were in the works. **Jerry Spence** (Redding ’94), **Steve Franke** (Redding ’87), **John Casey** (Redding ’99), **Rico Gonzales** (Redding ’99) and **Joe Gonzales** (Redding ’00) kept busy assisting Whiskeytown National Park with cutting fuel breaks and prescribed burning projects. Approximately 15 jumpers spent their Thanksgiving dinner in New York City assisting in another round of bug hunting. Rumor has it that **Rick Rataj** (Redding ’00) has gotten his New York residency after being bitten by another elusive bug, the love bug. **Josh Mathiesen** (Redding ’94) and **Luis Gomez** (Redding ’94) have been busy coordinating a crew module leadership academy in Sacramento. **Dorsey Lightner** (Redding ’89) brought back useful knowledge from the Fire Use Training Academy held in New Mexico.

The Redding Aviation Unit hosted new smokejumper pilot training in early April. There were many smiling smokejumpers from Redding, Redmond, McCall, Boise and Missoula who received up to five jumps in a three-day session.

Due to hiring blunders, the exact number of jumpers on the list for 2002 has yet to be determined. However, 16 new faces showed up in the middle of April for rookie training with the remainder of the crew making their appearance at the end of May.

A few folks stepped off the list. **Mark Lane** (Redding ’92) has decided to teach full-time in Southern California; **Karl Johnson** (Redding ’95) has requested a leave to pursue his interests with the military and **Johathan Veale** (Redding ’00) accepted a position with Santa Barbara Co. Fire. Congratulations to **Luis Gomez** (Redding ’94) as he heads to the high country as a GS-8 captain. **Joe Gonzales** (Redding ’00) heads down to the Mendocino N.F. where he accepted a GS-8 captain on the Hotshots. **Nathan Hesse** (Redding ’01) and **Casey Ramsey** (Redding ’01) are the newest GS-6 13/13 jumpers at the base.

We will have a Forest Service owned Sherpa and a contract DC-3T this season. Bob Coward, Dan Johnson, Rick “Hollywood” Haagenson (Redding ’79), Erik Hakenan, Eric Lancaster, Wendy Wetzall, Dave Seest and Travis Brown are the pilots for the 2002 season.

**Redmond**

by **Mark Corbet** (LaGrande ’74)

Redmond had their early refresher training the week of April 8th. Spotter refresher was the prior week. Five Redmond rookies began their training May 20th in Winthrop, Washington, continuing the tradition of alternating training between there and Redmond. Total number of jumpers at Redmond should again be at or near 43 for the 2002 season.

Several groups of jumpers have been working on fires in the SE since the first of the year. Both large and small fires have kept them very busy due to extremely dry conditions. Overhead and IA positions have been filled and task books signed.

Spring climbing by RAC smokejumpers in search of the Asian longhorned-beetle continues in New York and Chicago. Construction began in late March on the installation of a whole new heating and cooling system for the jumper building. Construction of a new ramp in front of the jumper building also got underway at about the same time.

Four new permanent seasonal positions were filled this spring by **Tony Johnson**, **Rob Rosetti**, **Mark Hentze**, and **Brandon Coville**. **Julia Johnson** is mending well from her disagreement with a rolling rock near the end of last fire season. Julia had her collarbone broken. No report on damage to the rock. She hopes to be back in action by May.

Bill Selby, our new operations foreman, is busy preparing for the upcoming season.
Better Clothing at Salvation Army Store?

Dave Flaccus (Missoula ’43) and I were chosen to jump a fire that I think was the first fire jump by CPS jumpers. I had patched and darned a denim work outfit with my newly acquired sewing skills learned in rigger school. I was pretty proud of the life and service I had added to the jacket and pants. The ranger that picked us up after the fire apparently was very disappointed with my appearance. He had the tact not to mention it to me but apparently was very persuasive with Fire Control at Region 1 headquarters. He and my outfit were responsible for getting CPS 103 jumpers a clothing allowance.

Phil Stanley
(Missoula ’43)

First Year At Redding Was A Big One!

In 1957, I returned to the Forest Service fire season in Redding, Calif., where a jumper base was being established. The preseason training was conducted at Cave Junction before we settled into our new quarters in Redding. The first foreman of the new base was Fred Barnoski, formerly at Missoula.

The fire season of 1957 featured hot, tinder-dry conditions in all the national forests of California. When the lightning began to strike, the fire northwest of 9 Mile Camp. I believe Bill Tucker (Missoula ’50) was the jumper who recounted their experiences with a bear who took over the fire. As the two jumpers headed for the fire they were treed by the bear. Each guy went up a separate tree. As the bear started to climb up after one of them, the other would climb down and throw rocks. Back and forth went the bear from tree to tree until she got tired. Finally at dark, the jumpers decided to come down to fight or flee. Fortunately the bear was gone by this time.

Hal Werner
(North Cascades ’48)

The Bear Facts

In June of 1952 two lucky veteran jumpers landed on a fire northeast of 9 Mile Camp. I believe Bill Tucker (Missoula ’50) was the jumper who recounted their experiences with a bear who took over the fire. As the two jumpers headed for the fire they were treed by the bear. Each guy went up a separate tree. As the bear started to climb up after one of them, the other would climb down and throw rocks. Back and forth went the bear from tree to tree until she got tired. Finally at dark, the jumpers decided to come down to fight or flee. Fortunately the bear was gone by this time.

Clayton Berg
(Missoula ’52)

Hostile Work Environment — A Life Saved

When my wife arrived in Missoula, she found a position as a secretary in an insurance firm. One of the partners found out that her husband was a conscientious objector, which created a hostile environment, and she resigned her position.

Over a year later the same insurance man suffered a heart attack while elk hunting. A squad of CPS-103 men parachuted in and carried the man through the rough country to a road where he was picked up by an ambulance. I am happy to report that he survived.

Murray Braden
(Missoula ’44)

We’re Gone!

We were dispatched to a fire on the Nez Perce in the Tri-Motor with a full load of eight jumpers and myself as the spotter. Right over Elk City there was a loud explosion and a violent vibration set in. The right engine was tilting forward and finally broke completely away from the plane. It suddenly occurred to me that the jumpers should leave the plane. When I turned around to arrange on orderly exit, I witnessed the last two jumpers going out the door.

Ted Nyquist
(Missoula ’54)

You’re a Pounder Huh?

The season before I became a jumper, I worked on the Interregional Fire Crew based out of the Redmond Air Center. I was a green recruit when I walked off the bus. When I asked the directions to the Suppression Crew barracks, they said, “Oh you’re a pounder, huh?” That was about the only reception I could get. The elitism was very noticeable.

Bruce Jackson
(Redmond ’69)

McCall Was a Wide-Open Town

Most of the crew were returning vets. They had made it through the war and they were gonna celebrate. McCall was a wide-open town in ’47. There was open gambling, girls, lots of...
They’ll Never Hire a Woman

I met a smokejumper during the winter in Mexico and told him that I would really like to be a smokejumper. He looked at me and just laughed. He said, “They’ll never hire a woman.” From that moment I was determined to be a smokejumper.

Wendy Kamm
(Missoula ‘82)

Nine Mile Was Like a Paradise

It was an old CCC camp with barracks that housed 30 or 40 men in single bunks. You might say the organization was like a logging camp. We were up at 6:30 each morning and out to calisthenics. Then it was to the mess hall where we were fed by logging camp type cooks. Great food, all you wanted! After breakfast we split into work groups. Thirty guys to the wood landing, five guys driving trucks, others to the filing shack to work on tools, and a group went to town to work on the parachutes. The routine at Nine Mile was great.

Chuck Pickard
(Missoula ‘48)

The Road Crew Can Drop Cargo Too

I went into construction after jumping. We had a road crew that I’d bring out when Francis (Lufkin) has a bust. They were pretty good at cargoing. So, he’d call and we’d bring in the road crew to do the cargo dropping.

George Honey
(North Cascades ‘40)

Jumping and Driving

I was driving a laundry truck and had made a few jumps and liked it. My older brother Frank had a parachute business in Los Angeles and he got in contact with the Eagle Parachute Company. Eagle had the contract for the experimental program. We made 60 experimental jumps into different types of terrain. Frank and Smitty both got hurt the first couple three jumps and Frank had to rustle up $500 to pay me to make the jumps with him. I liked the money and liked to jump so that’s how I got in.

Virgil Derry
(North Cascades ‘40)

Smokejumper Gets “Treed”

by Evelyn King

Visiting foresters were treated to an unexpected thrill Wednesday afternoon when a smokejumper, making an exhibition leap, overshot the target and landed in a tree.

A stiff breeze wafted the jumper slightly off course and the parachute hung up in the tree but Phil Robertson, Silver City N.M., who is in his third season of jumping, was not injured.

The exhibition was part of a demonstration for 27 foreign forest fire control specialists from 15 countries, who have spent a week in western Montana on a study tour.

The smokejumper and cargo drop demonstration were made in a small meadow at Nine Mile following a special firefighters luncheon.

Other demonstrations during the day were on a flail trencher, fire shelter, fire camp and various physiological studies.

A. A. Brown, director of the Division of Forest Fire Research from Washington, D.C., was chief of the five-week study tour in the United States.

—Missoulian, August 1944
Two weekends are scheduled so far this year in the NSA Trail Maintenance Project (TMP) — July 13–19 and July 21–27 — and you are invited to participate in one or both weeks. This will be the fourth year of the Project and we have learned (and are learning) a great deal about how it ought to run. (Even white mice can learn.)

The program is growing and evolving, and it is about time that we report to the NSA membership on where we stand, what we do and how we do it. The Forest Service has also been learning from our past performances and, while it would be immodest of us to give you the impression that the Forest Service is beating down our door to offer us nifty projects, the Forest Service is beating down our door to offer us nifty projects.

There is one Eternal Truth/Giant Principle that governs the conduct of TMP: If you want people to work for free, YOU HAVE TO TREAT THEM WELL. You smile at them, you thank them for their efforts, you feed them well (at no cost to the volunteers), and you try very hard not to jerk them around. There remain Forest Service rules that may not be broken. But some of our cooks may decide to provide from their own pockets the proper grape juice to accompany a meal. Some good elves may accidentally leave canned barley extract near a campsite. Volunteers are free to see to their own spiritual and spiritual needs without fear of rebuke. During most of the day, the bad news is that we are not 18-year-olds earning next year’s tuition. At cocktail time, the good news is that we are not 18-year-olds earning next year’s tuition.

It is a scientific fact that the trails are steeper and the mountains are higher than they ever were before. It is also a scientific fact that most of us are in similar states of age and decrepitude, so the crews move on and get it done at their own pace. Hiking distances vary, but usually are around 6 to 8 miles. A USFS packer or volunteer backcountry horseman will pack in the tools and gear to back country camps. Each backcountry volunteer brings a fanny pack or small backpack to carry his own water and lunch. In addition to the pack, each backcountry volunteer should bring a sleeping bag, small one- or two-man tent, work clothes, rain gear, gloves, sun glasses, bear spray, sun hat and personal items. And, now that we think of it, so should each non-backcountry volunteer.

The program has now grown to the point where a volunteer can elect not to walk in but to be driven to a guard station and work out of there instead of a backcountry camp. There are various reasons for wanting to work out of a guard station: the turning of too many calendar pages, too many hard landings, a preference for carpentry over trail maintenance, and many others (some of them nobody’s business but yours). Whatever the reason, don’t stay home because you have no business humping the hills or no wish to. We’ve got a place for you.

We haven’t yet decided how many projects we will take on this year, because we don’t yet know how many of you plan to volunteer. But we do have enough USFS projects up our sleeve to take care of everybody who applies. Obviously, we hope there will be a vast number. These projects are like mini-reunions, and the more volunteers there are, the more old friends everybody gets to see.

Our address is National Smokejumper Association, Trail Maintenance Program, Jon McBride (trails coordinator), PO Box 4081, Missoula, MT 59806-4081. Jon’s home phone number is (406) 728-2302, and his e-mail address is N2601@aol.com. If you have a choice and need to contact him, Jon would prefer that you e-mail rather than call. Please note that his e-mail address is the tail number of his favorite airplane. He chose this address partly out of sentiment, but mostly because he can remember this number, while he sometimes has trouble remembering his phone number. See you this summer.
Jump List

by Ted Burgon (Idaho City ’52)

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. On several of the submissions below I have tried to contact the person via e-mail only to find out the e-mail address is not current. If you change your e-mail address please update Smokejumper magazine. Be sure to include in your submission where you are currently living and what you are doing. I can be reached at burgon@bendnet.com

Alaska

Jason Jordet ’01 is a second year jumper with the Alaska Smokejumpers. He began his career with a state of Alaska Type II crew at the ripe old age of 15!

Boise

Jim Steadman ’73 worked on the San Bernardino National Forest before serving with the Camp Pendleton Fire Department and 12 years on the San Diego Fire Department. Jim has earned AA degrees in photography and fire science. He is living in Bellingham, Washington.

Cave Junction

Rick Blackwood ’79 has been the executive director of the United States Department of Agriculture FSA in Princeton, West Virginia, for fourteen years.

Jack Heiden ’54 is an orthopedic surgeon in Madison, Wisconsin. He is the father of Olympic Gold Medal speed skater Eric Heiden.

Ole Olson ’40 is retired from the Forest Service and keeping busy hand carving and painting waterfowl decoys in Townsend, Montana.

John Robison ’65 is retired from the Forest Service 25 years in Region 6. He is busy golfing and teaching part time in Sisters, Oregon.

Ron Price ’56 served as an infantry officer in the Marine Corps before working as a commodities trader for Merrill Lynch and E. F. Hutton. He travels outside the U.S. part of the year to scuba dive. He is living in Portland, Oregon.

McCall

Frankie Shoemaker ’70 has been a self-employed real estate appraiser in the Boise area for the past 25 years. He lives in Meridian, Idaho.

Ralph Wilde ’46 was in the Seabees in World War II in the South Pacific before jumping out of McCall for four years. He spent 30 years as a wholesale distributor for Standard Oil of California and is now retired in McCall, Idaho.

Missoula

Harry Brizee ’51 graduated with a degree in forestry from the University of Idaho in 1954. He spent 22 years in the Army Infantry including a tour in Vietnam before retiring. He resides in Lanham, Maryland.

Jim Hagemeier ’57 is retired from the Forest Service after 35 years. He keeps busy with hunting, fishing, hiking, traveling and volunteer work. Jim lives in Missoula.

Ed Hastey ’54 worked for the BLM for 42 years. The last 21 he was the California state director. He retired in 1999 and is now a consultant. Ed calls Citrus Heights, California, home.

Monty Heath ’67 is retired after a long career with the Forest Service in the Northwest. The last 10 years were spent on the Wenatchee National Forest. Monty’s wife, Becki, is the deputy forest supervisor for the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests. The Heaths live in Bend.

Tom Jellar ’69 flew KC 135 refueling tankers for the U.S. Air Force for nine years. He is now a pilot for U. S. Airways flying Airbuses. Tom is living in Clemmons, North Carolina.

Bill Joyner ’53 is retired from the Cumberland County, North Carolina Sheriff’s Department. Bill was a captain in the department. He lives on a lake and enjoys fishing. Both of the Joyner’s sons are volunteer firefighters and EMTs.

Russell Kapitz ’58 is retired after thirty-three years in manufacturing management. He lives in Prentice, Washington.

Check the NSA Web site

www.smokejumpers.com
Roy Korkalo ’61 earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Montana, a master’s from the University of Utah and spent 18 years on active duty with the U.S. Army. He has been employed by the Livingston Rebuild Center since 1988. He is a resident of Livingston.

Joe Kroeber ’62 taught school for 33 years, the last 28 in Jamestown, North Dakota, where he was head wrestling coach for eight years, assistant football coach for 17 years and head athletic trainer for 25 years. Joe now coordinates a FEMA project grant, titled IMPACT, for the city of Jamestown. He also serves in the North Dakota legislature. Joe jumped for 11 seasons between 1962 and 1986.

Dave Luger ’90 has been in education for 22 years and during that time coached track, football and basketball. The past four years he has taught in the building trades at Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates, North Dakota. He is living in Mandan, North Dakota.

Bill Morin ’46 retired in 2000 after a long career as a salesman in the food brokerage business. Jim and his wife raised five children and are celebrating their 53rd wedding anniversary in September. Congratulations Murins! They live in Butte, Montana.

Ron Pierce ’66 spent 32 years in a number of different fire control positions with the Forest Service. He spent 14 years with the smokejumpers. Ron is now retired and works as a fire control consultant and serves on the Troy, Montana, City Council. They are living in Troy.

Jim Prochnau ’49 owns Jackson and Prochnau, a forest engineering firm that operates in Oregon and Washington. Jim is semi-retired and does some forestry consulting in Siberia. He calls Albany, Oregon, home.

Ron Rockwell ’59 is a retired special agent for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Churchton, M.D., is home.

Joe Rumble ’49 served in the Navy during World War II before spending several seasons with the Forest Service. He earned degrees in mining engineering and metallurgical engineering from the University of Idaho. He spent 35 years in the mining and smelting industries. Joe is retired and lives in Monitor, Washington.

John Scicke ’49 spent 36 years building power line systems and as a power plant electrician. He is now retired and is learning to fly a helicopter! Way to go John!

Charles Simons ’52 is retired after teaching math for 42 years. He is a resident of Port Angeles, Washington.

Gus Ulrich ’53 is now retired after working 25 years as a town manager in various towns in North Carolina. He earned a master’s in public administration from Syracuse University. Gus lives in Holden Beach, North Carolina.

Bob Webster ’55 graduated from VM I and USC. He spent 20 years as an Army pilot before working as a commercial helicopter pilot for eight years. He current works part time in gun sales. Gus can be found in Balsam Lake, Washington.

Grangeville

Jim Phillips ’67 spent 25 years as a school counselor and 30 seasons with the Forest Service. He is now an EEO compliance specialist with the Montana Department of Transportation. Jim will be working on the NSA trail projects this summer. His son, Bill, will rookie at Missoula this year. Jim lives in Helena, Montana.

North Cascades

Ashley Court ’63 jumped out of the North Cascades base for twenty years. He has been the manager of the Bear Creek Golf Course in Winthrop for the past 20 years where he also resides.

Don McFarland ’63 was a teacher for 32 years. He still coaches cross-country track. Don spent 16 seasons in various positions in Region 6 including two years as a smokejumper. Don writes, “When Francis Lufkin hired me it came at a crossroads in my life and forever changed me and my future. To him and smokejumping in general, I am grateful.”

Jim Westhoff ’58 owns and is the president of Laboratory Environment Support Systems. LESS is in Scottdale, Arizona, and in the United Kingdom. Jim lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Redding

Derrek Hartman ’98 is currently assigned to the West Yellowstone Base. He also works as a screenwriter and owns his own film company in California. Dereck graduated from Montana State University in film and video. He is married to his college sweetheart who teaches elementary school in California. They are in Seal Beach, California.

Redmond

Nick Sundt ’80 is currently a program associate, Public Information and Outreach with the U.S. Global Change Research program in Washington, D.C. He lives in the Washington, D.C., area.


West Yellowstone

Brian Wilson ’98 returned to West Yellowstone in 2001 after working for United Parcel Service for two years. 

Ford Tri-Motor Pin

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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:

I just visited the site to look for any photos of my late Great Grand Father George Honey Sr. He was one of the first “hot potatoes” Not a quote you hear much anymore, except by the few who remember the old days. I found that quote in a old picture book from the USFS in Washington.

Joshua James Honey
josh_honey@hotmail.com

For the burning hole in your chest, I recommend Gaviscon.
sunil ramalingam
<sunilramalingam@hotmail.com>

I will never satisfy this empty, burning hole in my chest and find my place in life until I am jumping out of a plane into one of the most dangerous situations a human being can put themselves in. To all of you jumpers out there, I’m on my way and I’ll be damned if anyone or anything stands in my way!

derek dye
<dyedt@wku.edu>

I’m looking for Marty Beck, MSO 76. Does anyone know his address?

Philip Petty
<philpetty@smokejumpers.com>

Okay fellas, let’s all remember that we all do the same thing but different modes of transportation. Sure, smokejumpers range from many different backgrounds, hobbies and work ethic but there are a lot of helitack, Hotshot and engine folks who have the same qualities and interests. I’m actually enjoying a nice adult beverage with an umbrella sticking out of it with a Hotshot crewmember right now. Just because some people look up to and call smokejumpers the elite in wildland firefighting doesn’t mean that you have to gloat about it.

JoJo Jumper

Am doing some research on George (Ken) Sisler who jumped out of NCSB in 1957, served in Vietnam with the Special Forces and was awarded the Medal of Honor after his death. Please drop me a line if you have any information on his smokejumping or Special Forces careers.

Karl Johnson
<smokejumper6@juno.com>

Say john I sure do like your tough guy attitude. but here is a thought from an ex firefighter. What are you saying? Are the rest of us sissie FF’s just a bunch of pokes or what? Here’s another thought: Mann Gulch and Storm King got it? You’re saying they’re stupid? Lotta of world-class HS and SJ crews paid the ultimate price there.

Leo
St Paul MN

No wimps please, we only take the toughest of the tough in the world of smokejumping, and we are the toughest. In our ranks you will find world-class athletes and outdoorsmen, and men and women who have proved themselves year after year on the battlefield of fire. The fire war is fought every summer and every summer we lose good men and women do to its danger. The fires are only getting tougher and they have no mercy on the weak. Be for warned, fire will only kill those that are stupid, weak, and ill prepared. So if you want it bad enough there “wanna-be’s”, then come and get it.

John

Hello! I am an undergraduate anthropology student at Boise State University, working on an archival/research project about women in smokejumping. I would greatly appreciate any feedback: pictures, stories, comments, from anyone who is involved in smokejumping. male or female.

Jennifer Bedford
<jbedford@qwest.net>

I’ve read through all your great new information. Everyone that is interested in being a Smokejumper should look this site up. Oh, and I can’t forget to say HI! to my Smokejumper grandfather Ben.Musquez!

Irene Oliphant
GlennHights, Tx

Smokejumper History (Yearbook) Status:

The Turner Publishing Company promises to send the history books to those who have ordered them between September and December of 2002. Thus far, 200 have been ordered. If you haven’t ordered but would like one, you may send a check or money order to the Turner Publishing Company, P.O. Box 3101, Paducah, KY 42002-3101. Prices are as follows:

- Deluxe bonded leather edition, $79
- Deluxe edition, $44.95
- Embossing, $6 per book
- Protective plastic book cover, $2.75
- Kentucky residents add 6% sales tax
- Postage & handling: $6.50 for first book, $4 for each additional book.
by Ted Burgon

Bob goes back a long way in the Smokejumpers, (MSO ‘43) and again in 1946. He is still a very involved member. He married Colleen 54 years ago and considers that the major event in his life. They have three children, Pam, Scott and Robin and four grandchildren.

In 1941 he joined the USFS as a 16-year-old smoke chaser. Then in the spring of 1943 he jumped at the chance to become a smokejumper. One of his unique moments was a historical smokejumper “event” when he made a jump with his older brother Chet piloting the plane for Johnson Flying Service while his other older brother, Frank, was spotting, a real family outing.

That fall he enlisted in the USN and became a Seabee serving until 1945. During that time he was involved in the landings in the Marshall Islands.

Bob recalls spending eleven “miserable months” on Kwajalein. He learned to operate a crane that was a usable skill once he returned to civilian life.

After the war he attended the University of Montana for two quarters, “long enough to meet his future bride, Colleen” and as he says “so it wasn’t a complete loss of time.”

Upon returning to Washington state he was a heavy equipment operator from 1946 to 1949 in Spokane. In his spare time he became a volunteer fireman, a logical choice for a smokejumper. About now Bob decided to become his own boss and he opened a restaurant. During this same time, 1949 to 1954 he “lost so much in the first one” he opened a second one.

The first one, Bob’s Toughest Steaks in Town, was the typical “greasy spoon” or as he calls it, “a working man’s café.” The second was Steak Pit and a high-class restaurant with the charcoal grill extending into the dining area. As he put it, “quite nice, but a little before its time.” He was the chef and chief bottle washer, with Colleen helping on Saturdays.

Bob says that fortunately for him the Douglas County Fire District #2 “saved me” and offered him the position of fire chief. A position he held for “30 delightful years.” During this time he also played another tune and was in a dance band playing a mean trumpet. A six-piece band that “hung together” for 15 years. Since then it is down to three members who play the music of the ’40s and ’50s.

Not content with being a husband, a father, a trumpeter and a fire fighter, he did commercial SCUBA diving. One of the more rewarding and equally saddest times in his diving career was when he was called out to participate in searching for and recovering a number of water accident victims. He continues to dive but restricts it to working for Pump Company. This is for what Bob calls his “play money.”

It is obvious from his list of other activities that he continues to enjoy life and remains in good physical condition as he bikes, skis, kayaks, rows and runs.

When asked if he had any skills that he could apply to the National Smokejumper Association he indicated he would be able to help out the NSA when they needed a crane operator or a SCUBA diver. Bob did contribute insight into the smokejumpers during interviews for the video.

Bob Derry still able to get into his uniform on Veterans Day 2001 (Courtesy of Bob Derry)
The View from Outside the Fence

by Chris Sorensen (Associate)

Are smokejumpers at risk for Parkinson’s disease? I recently read that loggers are one of the occupational groups that have an increased risk for contracting Parkinson’s disease. According to the article, neurologists studying the disease theorize that Parkinson’s is either related to viral infections or environmental exposures. Groups with a higher risk for the disease are those where people work and live in very close proximity to one another including the previously mentioned loggers, miners, schoolteachers and those in the medical field. If loggers are at risk, then it’s reasonable to assume that there is the possibility that smokejumpers may also be at risk. I am aware of very few health studies that have involved smokejumpers and others in the wildland fire fighting community.

Last summer the University of Montana conducted a nutritional study using Hotshots. There was also a study done a number of years ago on carbon monoxide levels in wildland firefighters but few others. I don’t think anyone needs to push the panic button until more studies are conducted, but a correlation between working in forests and Parkinson’s disease is very interesting. I intend to follow up on this issue in the future.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has increased the maximum entry age for Forest Service wildland firefighters from 35 to 37. The move has been widely anticipated since President Bush signed the Federal Firefighters Retirement Age Fairness Act into law on Aug. 20, 2001, increasing all federal firefighters mandatory retirement age from 55 to 57. The new law makes the mandatory separation age for federal firefighters the same as that for federal law enforcement officers with 20 years of service — 57 years old. The previous maximum entry age of 35 for firefighters was set because it permitted 20 years of service before reaching the prior mandatory retirement age of 55.

According to the USFS 2001 National Smokejumper Report, 288 Forest Service smokejumpers jumped 591 fires in 2001. That is 100 less than 2000, probably due to more initial attack firefighters being hired through the National Fire Plan. Fire activity was equally distributed among the Northern Rockies, Eastern Great Basin, Northwest and Northern California.

The FS 14R reserve chute is supposed to be placed in service this year. A new lighter helmet and facemask system and a new letdown system are going to be evaluated in 2002.

The Associated Air Tanker Pilots are lobbying to get pilots included in the Federal Public Safety Officer Death Benefit Program. Currently the survivors of firefighters, police officers and emergency medical personnel killed in the line of duty receive approximately $142,000.00 from the federal government. It is inherently unfair that pilots involved in wildland fire fighting are excluded. Well over 150 pilots have been killed in the line of duty in the United States and Canada since 1958. Please visit the Associated Air Tanker Pilots Web site: www.airtanker.com for more information. Wanda Nagel, widow of CDF Tanker 96 pilot Gary Nagel is heading up the effort. Gary Nagel was killed fighting the Mount Edna fire near Banning, California, on October 5, 1998, when his Grumman S2 went down. He had 35 years experience in aviation.

When America came under attack on September 11, the wildland fire community responded. Shortly after the attacks, a Type I National Incident Management Team established an urban fire camp at the Jacob Javits Convention Center on the Island of Manhattan to support the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) and the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Teams from around the country. The Midewin Hotshots (Illinois) and the Augusta Hotshots (Virginia) were deployed to support logistic activities. Catering and showers were provided for 7500 rescue workers. Type I National Incident Management Team Stutler was divided into two smaller teams assigned to a warehouse in Edison, New Jersey, and to the Steart Air National Guard base in Newburgh, New York, to provide logistical support to the rescue and recovery effort in New York City. The Forest Service and NIFC were essential to the operations in New York and Washington. At the Pentagon site, Type I Incident Management Team Gage was assigned to...
BOB GORSUCH BEGAN work with the Forest Service in 1943 at the age of 16 as Chair Point lookout on the Nez Perce National Forest. The next year he was the lookout on Kelly Mt. 1945 and 1946 were spent in the U.S. Army where he was part of the Army of Occupation in Korea as World War II ended.

Bob joined the smokejumper unit at Missoula, Montana, in May 1947. That year they started a class of eight jumpers a month earlier than the main group of rookies. Training was at the Nine Mile “old CCC Camp” and the Ford Tri-Motor used either a hay field near Six Mile Creek or Hale Field in Missoula. The airfield at Ninemile and the Missoula County Airport were not yet built. After four seasons at the Missoula base, Bob started the first smokejumper unit for the National Park Service at West Yellowstone, Montana.

At West Yellowstone Bob had a four-man crew and the low bidder for the single engine aircraft was Abe Boler from Orofino, Idaho. Chuck Frensdorf was the pilot for 1951 and Slim Phillips for 1952.

Bob left the Park Service in January 1953 to return to the Forest Service. His 35-year career included assignments on the Kootenai, Clearwater and Flathead National Forests plus the Regional Office in Missoula. He retired in 1983.

After retirement Bob and his wife, Doris, moved to their property on the east shore of Flathead Lake and built their energy efficient home. A garden, 300 fruit trees, and a few acres of forest land keeps them busy when Bob is not working on disasters for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Bob’s FEMA assignments include all types of disasters in the U.S. and our island possessions. In the last 17 years he has worked on 53 major disasters. As the year 2002 begins he is on standby for the Winter Olympics in case of another terrorist attack.

Bob’s address is 9312 Hwy 35 South, Bigfork, MT 59911 and his e-mail address is gorsuch@bigsky.net

The View from Outside the Fence

Continued from previous page

the Anacostia Naval Station in Arlington, Virginia, to provide logistical support to the Urban Search and Rescue teams. A Forest Service team from Minnesota provided geographic information system mapping at Ground Zero. Maps of the site were produced on a daily basis for all of the agencies involved.

This column is dedicated to David R. Rendek Jr. who was killed in the line of duty protecting the nation’s natural resources on the Bitteroot National Forest September 3, 2001, in the finest tradition of the United States Forest Service. David worked at the Aerial Fire Depot before being hired on the Sula Ranger District.

Send comments and news items to ward_lafrance@hotmail.com

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

Number of different bases employed:
5-Tim Pettitt (McCall ’75), Chris Palmer (Redding ’75), George Steele (North Cascades ’72)

Number of aircraft types jumped (on the job):
16-Eric (The Blak) Schoenfeld (Cave Jct. ’64)
14-Willie Lowden (North Cascades ’72)
13-Murry Taylor (Redding ’65)
12-Bill Yensen (McCall ’53)

Fires spotted in a single season:
70-George Steele (North Cascades ’72) in 1994
60+Jim Veitch (Missoula ’67) in 1977, Skip Scott (Anchorage ’71) in 1977

Please send your information and marks to milestones@smokejumpers.com or mail them to Mark Corbet, 1740 SE Ochoco Way, Redmond, OR.
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