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## Smokejumper Magazine, January 2003

National Smokejumper Association

Delos Dutton

Deanne Schulman

Charlie Palmer

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER  
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2003

# SMOKEJUMPER



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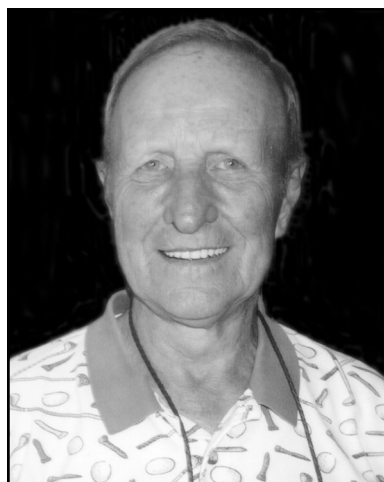
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## Message from the President



by Ron Stoleson  
(Missoula '56)  
PRESIDENT

OUR MEETING IN BOISE on October 12 was a great success. So was the social Saturday night that attracted over 100. It's pretty obvious that getting together and renewing long-standing friendships is important to all of us. Sponsoring these socials is a key way for NSA to foster camaraderie among members and non-members of our Association. The socials also give us a chance to market the NSA and its programs. As a consequence we pick up many new members at these activities. In Boise, Neil Satterwhite became our 91<sup>st</sup> Life Member. I'm hoping that within the next few months we will have passed the 100 mark in this category. Our total membership is nearly 1800 and we continue to have members renewing for several years at a time. This speaks well for the future of our organization and is good testimony to the benefits of membership. We don't seem to attract as many BLM jumpers as we would like. What can we do to change that?

Many things are going on all the time in your Association. The

directors and executive board are constantly at work to ensure we are relevant and progressive. We reviewed and revised a long range-planning document at our Boise meeting that contained specific activities for the Association and a process for deciding their priorities and timing. When this plan is complete we will make it available on our Web site so all can comment on or add to it.

It's amazing the amount of attention we get from being on the Web. We have been contacted by people in several countries who want the usual information but also by some who wish to do business with us. I recently received a query from an Italian public relations firm who has a client wanting to "sponsor smokejumpers." A German firm wanting to put our video on DVD for marketing in their country also contacted us. These kinds of activities take time but may lead to financial benefits to our organization. Remember — all of us are volunteers and we may not be doing everything you would like. We are always open to suggestions for new programs or changes to existing ones. We are particularly open to those suggestions that are accompanied by offers to volunteer to do the work.

I'm looking forward to our next meeting that will be held in Redding in April. Then, in June we will meet in McCall in conjunction with their big reunion and in October we will meet in McMinnville, Oregon. We are getting around the West.

I'm gonna call this enough for now — my computer is on the blink and have to get this to Chuck in time for his deadline. See ya next time. 🦅

# There Was No One-Man'er

by Delos Dutton (Missoula '51)

I read Dick Hughes' (MSO '64) comments "there are no one-man'ers" (*Smokejumper* magazine Oct. 2000) and almost decided to make a comment. Later when I read Bob Schumaker's (MSO '59) story about Don Dobberfuhr (MSO '58) (*Smokejumper* magazine Oct. 2001), I decided to take the bait and write what was almost considered a one-man'er.

In 1957 I was on the New Mexico crew which consisted of 18 men plus Roland (Andy) Andersen (MSO '52) who was the foreman in charge of the operation. During the season, lightning was reported over the Gila N.F. and we were dispatched to jump two fires. The flight was made in

the DC-3 with Andy as spotter and me as his assistant spotter. We found the assigned fires and dropped men on them and continued the flight looking for targets of opportunity. More fires were found and we manned them. In a short time all of the jumpers had been dropped on fires. Andy and I were the only jumpers left on the airplane and we found two more fires. Andy always carried his jump suit and parachute on all flights in case a jumper was injured. I did the same in case one of the fires required crew action. There were two fire packs left on the airplane so I volunteered to jump the fire down in the canyon on a small spur ridge and Andy decided to take the fire on the ridge. A few minutes later I found myself riding my parachute to my very own private fire. I retrieved my fire pack and found that it only had a McCloud. In New Mexico to reduce the weight of the fire pack, one jumper would have a Pulaski in his fire pack and his partner would have a McCloud. I realized that rank has its privileges and proceeded to the fire.

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### *Smokejumper base abbreviations:*

Anchorage .....	ANC	Grangeville .....	GAC	Missoula .....	MSO
Boise .....	NIFC	Idaho City .....	IDC	Redding .....	RDD
Cave Junction .....	CJ	La Grande .....	LGD	Redmond .....	RAC
Fairbanks .....	FBX	McCall .....	MYC	Winthrop .....	NCSB

## Elections for NSA Board of Directors Chuck Sheley – Election Committee Chair

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at various places in the Pacific Northwest. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2003.

Even though you would be obligated to two meetings a year, it is important to remember that you can be a valuable working BOD member regardless of where you live. In the day of e-mail, a functioning board can work with its members spread across the U.S. If you have ideas and are willing to roll up your sleeves, please consider joining the NSA work force.

### *Election timeline and procedures:*

1. Jan.–Feb. 21, 2003, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 21.
2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
3. Ballot sheet inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.
4. Ballots must be received by May 21st.
5. New board members to take office July 1st — election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper*.

Please call, write or e-mail for your filing papers. My contact information is in the box on the left. The time to act is now!

The fire was burning in grass near a dead tree. There were embers floating out of the tree so I made a fire line around that area and burned it out. The dead tree was about 18 inches in diameter and the lowest limb was out of reach. The tree had to be felled and a Pulaski was needed for the job. The closest fire was across a deep canyon and on the top of a ridge. I got out my map and compass and determined the heading to that fire was southeast. It was getting late in the day so I took off at a fast pace following the compass heading down into the canyon and up the hillside. Hours later I was approaching the top of the ridge where it was very steep. I was using my hands for support when I pulled a rock loose which made a lot of noise as it rolled down the hill. A voice said, "What is that?" I replied and completed the climb to the fire. It was just turning dark when I borrowed a Pulaski so I refused the offer of hot food and went back to my fire.

The fire line had held while I was gone but the tree was still producing embers. I chopped it down, put out the fire, and finally took a rest break and cooked some food. After a good night's rest, I checked the fire and found it was dead out.

There was a jeep road a short distance west of my fire that belonged to a couple of people who lived in the wilderness area. They had an agreement with the Forest Service that they could use the road until they had to leave

the area because of their age. Andy's final instructions were to pack the gear to the road and meet a person the forest dispatcher would send in to pick me up.

When I arrived back at the base, Andy met me. When I started to brag about my one-man fire, Andy said it didn't happen. "There was no-one man smokejumper fire and there will never be a one-man smokejumper fire. Make your time slip and fire report the same as mine." That was not all bad because Andy had put in for more overtime than I had. I later talked to Andy about the fire. He said it was a very quiet night and he could hear me chopping on that old pine snag for the longest period of time. Chop, chop until it finally fell. The final report showed that two men had put out two fires and there was, "no one man'er."

I want to thank Bob Nichol, Andy Andersen and Tom Uphill for supplying the data for this story. 🙏

*Dee jumped Missoula 1951 and 1952 and New Mexico 1953. He then went into the U.S. Air Force from July 1953 to July 1955. He returned to Missoula where he continued jumping until 1966. Dee became project leader for the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in April of 1966 and served through June of 1975. He then became fire equipment specialist in the R-6 office. Since this story was submitted to the magazine, Dee passed away on May 11, 2002.*



Top L-R: Cal Salars dispatcher, Jim Spence, Ken Benish FS pilot, Archibald FS pilot, Orville Luttrell aerial patrol pilot, Baker R-5 mechanic, Therman Yates TB pilot, Tuck Grime TB pilot, Joey Baldwin fire mgt. officer, Bobby Fisher visitor, Dick Tracy. Middle L-R: Bob Nicol, Roland (Andy) Andersen Foreman, Harold Gene Crosby (McCall), Delos Dutton, Tom Uphill, Jerry Nystrom, Pete Hoirup, Ken Smith (Idaho City) Bottom L-R: Doyle Musselman, Dave Beavan, Phillip Schmid, Bill Murphy, James Austin, Darrel Eubanks (Idaho City), Frank Drake, Thomas "Shep" Johnson (McCall), Donald Webb (McCall) (Courtesy of Delos Dutton)

# On Becoming a Smokejumper

by Deanne Shulman (McCall '81)

**T**True ecologists and proponents of chaos theory will say everything and everyone is connected. With a gentle half-smile, they will explain how the slight air movements made by the flitting wings of a butterfly in China will have effects around the globe. Pondering such fundamental connections, I know with certainty that a man I never met influenced the course of my life.

## Getting Ready

It was early June of 1979 and the second day of the long drive from California to Idaho. I was due to report to work on June 11, as a rookie smokejumper at the McCall smokejumper base. With five previous seasons of firefighting experience under my belt on engines, hotshots and helicopters, I felt comfortable with my technical skills and had been working out extensively in preparation for the physical demands of smokejumping. The required physical fitness test of a 1.5-mile run under 11 minutes, 25 pushups, 7 pull-ups and 45 sit-ups was given on the first day. It was understood that passing this test only indicated a minimum fitness level for success in the rookie program. I had also been consuming large quantities of high-calorie food to gain the 5 pounds I needed to meet the minimum smokejumper weight requirement. Ice cream, cookies, pastries and candy were regular menu items each day. On the day of my departure, the bathroom scale satisfactorily recorded exactly 130 pounds.

Two days of driving allow a person much time to think. As I considered the challenges facing me in my new job, excitement and exhilaration alternated with apprehension and nervousness. Parachuting from a plane, carrying 100-pound packs on mountainous terrain and climbing trees posed the most difficult tangible aspects of the job. The intangible challenge was the fact that, if successful in completing rookie training, I would be the first woman smokejumper in the United States. The smokejumper community was close, much like a fraternity, and there would be some who would resent and resist a woman's entry into an exclusively male world.

## Fit but Underweight

At McCall there was no women's barracks, so I settled into a small trailer in the married smokejumpers' housing area. On Monday morning, I reported to work along with ten other nervous rookies. After an orientation period, two of us who appeared outside the regulated acceptable weight range (130-190 pounds) were separated from the group and taken to the hospital to be weighed. A nurse took me to a private room with a scale, asked me to undress and formally documented my weight at 125 pounds. I knew my weight had dropped since leaving California, primarily due to nervousness, but I had not expected this to be an issue. Later that afternoon, the physical

fitness test was administered to all the rookies. As I finished the last pull-up and dropped from the bar, one of the experienced smokejumpers gave me a secret wink of support. There had been much speculation among the jumpers on my fitness test performance, and it seems I had passed the first hurdle.

The following morning, I was called into the base manager's office and terminated for being underweight. After having passed the fitness test the previous day, I was stunned and devastated. Fighting back tears, I left the office facing an uncertain future. As I made my way across the compound to the trailer park, some of the jumpers approached me with comments:

"They can't do this to you, you passed the fitness test."

"Don't be upset, you probably wouldn't have made the pack-out anyway."

"Go talk with the personnel officers at the supervisor's office."

"Call **Allen Owen** (Cave Junction '70), alias **Mouse**. He is a 4'11", 120-pound Vietnam War vet who got Congressional waivers on the height and weight requirements. He'll know what to do."

Towards the end of my walk across the compound, a smokejumper furtively approached and spoke in a low voice, "There are two smokejumpers at Missoula who weigh under 130 lbs. They haven't been fired."

After visits to the personnel office that afternoon to discuss the situation, I gloomily packed up my truck in the evening and left for California the following day. It was a long brooding drive back home, as I considered options and tried to envision another future. Somehow, it just didn't seem fair.

## Equal Opportunity?

After finding a job as a fire prevention technician at Lake Tahoe Basin for the summer, I told a few trusted people my story and asked for advice. Through these conversations, I discovered there had been and continued to be occasional cases of smokejumpers outside the regulated height and weight requirements. Apparently, although the upper height and weight limits were based on parachuting safety considerations, the lower weight limit was based on the Forest Service estimate of a minimum body weight to successfully pack out 100 pounds of gear. This estimate failed to take into account individual strengths, motivation and determination. It seemed to me rather presumptuous of the Forest Service to assume body weight as the only determinant of a person's ability to carry heavy packs.

A phone call to Mouse, the 4'11" 120-pound ten-year Cave Junction smokejumper squad boss, was particularly inspiring. He was indignant and outraged at the infringement on my rights as an American citizen. His philosophy was that each

individual has the right to compete for any job and proven performance should be the only criterion for success. If a person could do the job, regulations for minimum height and weight were extraneous. I had passed the fitness test and had every right to continue through rookie training. My rights as an American citizen had been violated and I should file an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint. The gender issues of whether women "ought to be smokejumpers" seemed completely irrelevant to him, and I loved him for that.

On June 22, 1979, after much thought, I sent the following letter to the Payette National Forest Supervisor.

---

TO: Payette National Forest  
Forest Supervisor

DATE: June 22, 1979

I was offered a position as smoke-jumper at the McCall Smokejumper Base on the Payette National Forest. On June 11, 1979, I reported to work. On June 12, 1979, I was terminated because I weighed 125 pounds, five pounds under the 130-pound weight requirement as specified by the manual. I am not objecting to the legality of my termination of employment. I was indeed five pounds underweight according to the employment specification.

But after further inquiry and much thought into the matter, I feel I must bring certain points to your attention.

1. Upon questioning various people, I found evidence of inconsistency in the strict application of the physical requirements of height and weight to all persons employed as smokejumpers. Some persons, who are a few pounds overweight or underweight, or a few inches too tall or short, are still employed as smokejumpers, although they are not within the required height and weight range. In essence, minor deviations are sometimes allowed in order to accommodate individual cases. Perhaps my being a woman was the factor that promoted such an unusually strict application of the requirements in my particular case.
2. The weight and height restrictions are 130 to 190 pounds and 5'5" to 6'3". The weight requirement is

based on the size of the canopy of the parachute. A heavier person tends to land with too much impact and a lighter person tends to drift with the wind. The height requirement, as far as I could discover, is based solely on the sizes of the smokejumper suits. In examining these physical requirements, it is quite obvious that a much higher percentage of physically fit men fulfill these requirements than physically fit women. Therefore, men and women do not have an equal chance for smokejumper employment, simply based on the design of the equipment used. A wider size variety of smokejumper suits needs to be designed. Research needs to be done to modify the existing parachute or have different size canopied parachutes, so that otherwise qualified women have a truly equal chance for smokejumper positions.

In the near future, as more women enter the firefighting field, this problem will have to be dealt with. At the present time there are no women smokejumpers, and there have been none throughout smokejumper history. Hopefully, when the problem of unequal opportunity is resolved, others will not have to face what was for me, months of physical and mental preparation, all in vain, and a bitter end to a dream.

I would appreciate a reply to this letter.

Sincerely,

Deanne Rae Shulman

---

On July 12, I received a bureaucratic response from the forest supervisor, with assurances that my termination was in no way related to being a woman. I was angered at this impersonal response to what had been such a momentous decision impacting my life, and at the moment after reading the letter, decided to pursue an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint. I was stubborn and focused, and I would not allow my dream to fade so easily.

My formal Equal Employment Opportunity complaint, filed September 24, 1979, was based on two premises. First, the height and weight regulations were inconsistently applied and my termination would therefore constitute disparate treat-



ment; there were no previous instances of a rookie termination for not meeting height/weight requirements. Secondly, the height and weight requirements were discriminatory towards women and smaller men, and were arbitrary as indicated by the presence of current smokejumpers not meeting requirements, yet still performing satisfactorily.

## Resolution

Over the next nine months, my complaint was investigated and sluggishly moved through various offices of the Forest Service. In late May of 1980, a resolution was reached with the following agreements. I would receive the difference in salary and overtime for that summer's work period, between the GS-4 fire prevention technician and a GS-5 smokejumper position. I was offered a job non-competitively as a smokejumper at McCall for the 1980 or 1981 fire season, providing I met the minimum weight requirement of 130 pounds on the day of appointment. I was not required to maintain this weight after the initial weigh-in.

By this late date I had already accepted a job offer on a helicopter rappel crew in Oregon for the 1980 season, and I decided to wait until 1981 to return to McCall. I needed the time to prepare psychologically as well. In the meantime, I had kept in occasional telephone contact with Mouse, who had been very encouraging and offered advice on how to prepare physically for the program.

## Inspiration

During the winter of 1980/81 while working out in preparation for the 1981 rookie program, I received a package at home from Mouse. It was his pack-out bag and a letter.

---

February 20, 1980

Dear Deanne,

Enclosed is my pack-out bag as promised. It's made of nylon so water won't bother it, but it should be kept away from heat or nylon-dissolving chemicals. You should shoot for 80 pounds over two miles of level ground at least once a week. Retraining for experienced jumpers begins the last week in April, so if you could return it then, I'd appreciate it.

Good luck, and keep the faith,  
Allen (Mouse) Owen

---

I practiced dutifully as per his recommendation and returned the bag as requested.

In June of 1981, I returned to McCall, weighed in at 132 pounds, and successfully completed the smokejumper rookie training on July 10. My rookie training experience constitutes a whole other story, best left for another time.

Late in the busy season of 1981, I returned to McCall from a fire and found this note addressed to me.



*Deanne Shulman (NSA File)*

---

September 1, 1981

Dear Deanne,

We jumped the West Yellowstone National Park just a few hours before you landed at McCall, so I missed seeing you. Congratulations on making the grade as a jumper. I hope it was worth everything you went through to get the job. We leave for Fairbanks tonight at 1800, so it doesn't look like I'll see you at McCall this year. A few hard cores still don't like the idea of a woman jumper, but most of the rest had lots of good things to say about you. Guess that's all for now. Keep up the good work and lots of luck.

Mouse

---

I had been looking forward to finally meeting Mouse in person that season and, although disappointed, figured we would meet some time in the future. Smokejumpers are mobile, and given time, we all meet each other somewhere — on a fire, in a plane or in a ready room. But time, a gift much taken for granted, was not given.

Five days later, I heard of Mouse's death. The base received this notice from the Alaska smokejumpers.

On Sunday, September 6, 1981, at 1400, Allen "Mouse" Owen was killed at the North Pole Skydiving Club, twenty miles south of Fairbanks, Alaska. He had been participating in Relative Work Competition, a contest where four-man teams attempt to form various hook-up patterns while in freefall from 8,000 feet. On



his fatal jump, Allen's team successfully formed five separate patterns, capturing the weekend record. At 3,000 feet, immediately after their parachutes had opened, Allen and another jumper collided with each other. They both were using square ram-air canopies that have a considerable forward speed. Somehow, due to the collision, Allen's canopy began to malfunction, putting him into a strong spin. Apparently, his lines were entangled with his body, preventing him from jettisoning his main canopy that would allow a safe, clean path for his reserve deployment. At 500 feet, his canopy collapsed completely. Observers saw his reserve pilot chute flash out and entangle into his main parachute lines. His reserve parachute never did deploy. A Registered Nurse immediately made full resuscitation efforts. An ambulance arrived on the scene within ten minutes. Doctors at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital believe that Mouse was killed on impact.

None of us here at the Alaska Smokejumpers can really comprehend that Mouse is gone. He was our cheerful friend and one of the toughest, most careful, and skilled smokejumpers. Mouse has become a

legend within the whole Smokejumper World, not only because of his small size and powerful strength, but also because of his vivacious spirit. Mouse lived more fully, did more things, and was more active than any one of us. We will miss him.

The Alaska Smokejumpers

That evening at dusk, while sitting alone among the trees, I felt the breath of a breeze on my cheek and knew it began as a flutter of a butterfly wing in China. Mouse's spirit was strongly present and there was a connection to it all. 🌲

*Deanne started as a seasonal fire fighter in 1974 and worked as a smokejumper out of McCall from 1981-1985. She has worked on the Sequoia National Forest since 1986 as assistant district fire management and fire management specialist. Her focus recently has been international fire and disaster response programs, taking her to ten different countries over the last six years. She serves as project leader for a variety of training and capacity building projects, and is part of a fire ecology research team in Russia.*

*Deanne can be reached at: dshulman@lightspeed.net or PO Box 3, Kernville CA 93238*

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER MILFORD PRESTON

---

by Ted Burgon

MILFORD GREW UP IN BERKELEY, California, and attended Berkeley High School. At that time BHS would select one person from each of three sports, track, basketball and football, to work for the U.S. Forest Service. He was selected from the football team. He ended up on a nine-man tanker crew on the Shasta Trinity's Big Bar Ranger District out of Junction City. His crew boss was **Larry Butterfield** (RDD '65); also on the district was another retread, **Richard Farmer** (RDD '64). When things heated up both Larry and Rich would be assigned jump status out of Redding. It was because of the respect Milford had for these two men that he decided he wanted to be a smokejumper.

He spent three summers on the tanker crew before he got his "lucky break" and was selected to work on the Redding Inter-Regional Hotshot Crew. His boss was another retread, **Charles Caldwell** (RDD '65). Charlie's crew, at that time, was one of the best in the country. For the next two summers Milford was a Hotshot.

In 1974 he and five other Hotshots were selected as rookies to train in Redding. Milford was the first "black guy" to become a smokejumper at Redding. At that time **Dick Tracy** (MSO '53) was the foreman.

In a twist of fate his first fire jump was

on the *Milford* District of the Plumas National Forest. Despite his luck over the years Milford was destined for some hard times. He wrote, "Driving my parachute was a problem for me. I was the 'hang up king.'" Fortunately this was to change. At the end of his rookie year they were detailed to Virginia with a crew from Cave Junction. During this time he mastered the toggles and ended up with the most jumps on the crew, with most of them being ground landings.

His second season saw him assigned to the "Land of the Midnight Sun." Milford wrote, "I was hot," and with his usual determination he won the first two jump pots. A Redding jumper on detail told one of the Alaskan bros. that Milford was one of the most improved jumpers he had seen of the rookies going into their second year.

Being an Alaska smokejumper was like "being on the All Star Team" for Milford. He jumped out of Fairbanks for five years with some "of the greatest guys from the lower 48."

Today he works for Sierra Designs as an outdoor retailer. At the end of this year he will have worked for them for 17 years. He and his wife, Patricia, plan to move to Las Vegas. They have one son, Courtney, and now twin grandsons, Elijah and Isaiah. Jogging and hiking are still in his life, as is being a season ticket holder each year for

the Oakland Raiders.

Milford, besides being a life member of the NSA, is also a member of the Triple Nickle Association.

Milford was asked, "How do you get young smokejumpers involved in NSA?" His answer was, "At the beginning of each season when the crews are 'refreshing' and the NEDs are in rookie training, send a couple of life members to each base to talk to them. For example, **Murry Taylor** (RDD '65) and I could go talk to a class at the Redding base to let them know what the NSA is all about and how special it is to be a smokejumper. You're never an ex-smokejumper; you're just one who is not on the jump list anymore. You'll always be a smokejumper."

His last comments were on the Triple Nickles. "Man, what can a guy say about these guys. They were the pioneers and heroes for all minorities who are jumping today. I was talking to Joe Murchison at the 2000 Triple Nickle reunion. A guy pushed me away and said you're not a Triple Nickle! I begged to differ. I talked to Joe and Walter Morris about minority recruiting."

Milford also has some ideas about minority recruiting for the smokejumpers. After all, recruiting for jumpers and recruiting for NSA are not all that different. 🌲

# Into a Burning Tree

by George Tranberg (Missoula '52)

In the summer of 1955, I was a smokejumper on the Gila N.F. in New Mexico. At 3:50 P.M. **Max Allen** (MSO '48) and I were dispatched to a fire on the North Fork of the Mimbres River in the Gila Wilderness Area.

As our old DC-3 with its fabric-covered control surfaces rumbled down the dusty blacktop of the Grant County Airport, the cargo and crew almost sliding out of the open door, I thought of my previous fire jump. I had "stacked-up," spraining my ankle severely. There were no helicopters to pick me up, so I had to endure a painful three-day horseback and truck trip out of the backcountry to the hospital in Silver City.

For nearly three weeks I had to limp around the parachute loft waiting to heal and get back to jump status. I was ready!

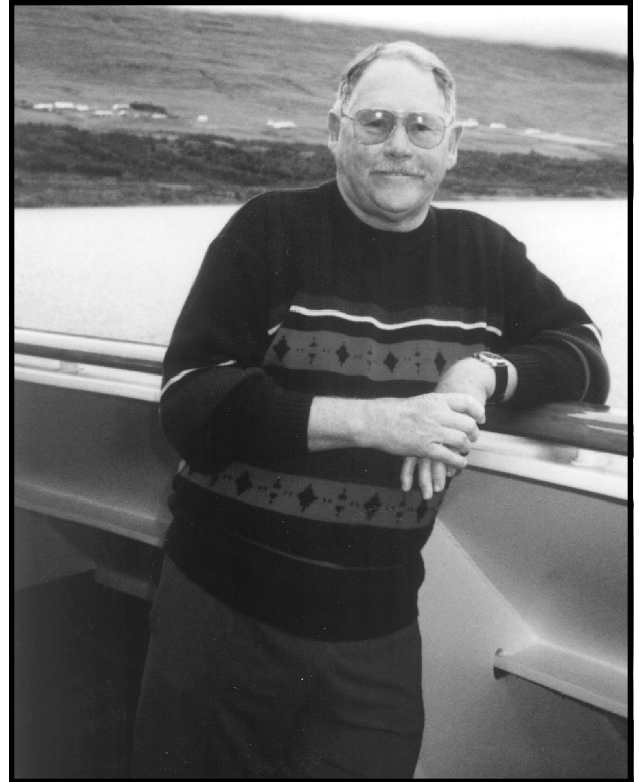
At 4:40 P.M. we were over the fire. The Doug jinked and danced in the high, hot air of the Mimbres Mountains, where the elevation often reaches 10,000 feet or more. On our first pass I could see that the fire was confined to the top of a gigantic yellow pine snag with branches that reached out like some prehistoric monster.

**Herb Oertli** (MSO '48) gave Max his instructions. "Land on the north side of the ridge that the tree is on, in the dense willow thicket." Max was to jump on the first pass and I would follow on the second. After Max had landed, he signaled back that the landing site was a bad one. Herb told me to try the south side of the ridge, which looked good from 1,000 feet.

Over the jump spot Herb told the pilot to cut the engines and gave me a slap on the leg. I stepped out the door into the smell of avgas exhaust that had become familiar. After the opening shock, I checked my canopy, tugged on the right guideline and began my descent. About halfway down I realized that the landing "spot" that had looked so good from the air was strewn with rocks and boulders hiding in the tall grass. I made the decision to try to cross the ridge and land in the willows on the north side. As I turned my chute to cross over, I realized that I was being blown into the burning snag. I was caught in the outer limbs.

As I hung there I remember thinking, "I've got a problem." Chunks of burning bark, hot pitch and widow-makers were whistling by my head. Were it not for the jumpsuit with its high, wide collar and padding, I would have been seriously burned.

Instinct and training took over. I started the letdown procedure. After quickly threading the rope through the D rings, I tied off to the risers. My descent was flawless until part way down when a line from my chute caught in my gear and brought me to a sudden stop. With the fire heating



*George Tranberg (Courtesy of George Tranberg)*

up, things were looking rather grim. Struggles only tightened the line. More burning chunks whizzed by and landed with a spray of sparks on the ground. If it went up I was fried! I hung on with one hand and clawed for my folding belt knife. I found it and cut the offending line and was free. On the ground I used the letdown rope to keep the harness and chute from burning.

Max ran up and asked how I was. "Fine," I said. "Let's get busy and knock this thing down." We fought the fire for two days. The fire was one of the most dangerous that I had ever fought. Max and I could not get close enough to bring the tree down with the crosscut saw as the widow-makers were constantly falling. After the tree burned and fell we were able to put the fire out.

We returned to our base in Silver City. I had been able to save all of my gear except the main parachute. I do not think my foreman was too happy when I dropped the risers on his desk and said, "Here's your chute." 📌

*George retired from the U.S. Border Patrol in 1983 as the deputy chief patrol agent for the Blaine, Washington, sector. George and his wife Lise still live in Blaine. He can be contacted at: PO Box 505, Blaine WA 98231*

# Of Mud Pits and Men

by Charlie Roos (Redmond '97)

Last March in a smoky casino somewhere near the Puget Sound, a large group of resident former jumpers gathered to celebrate the common bonds that tie the past with the present. Gallant stories were swapped (some of them purported to be true) and friendships were rekindled or made for the first time. And of course, philosophies of all sorts were flying around the room as thick as Alaska mosquitoes.

One philosophy emerged at the tail end of the night that caught my ear in particular — the philosophy of training. Although it was well past the time to go home, the company and the conversation was much too good and intriguing to even consider an exit. And so we sat until hours unknown, debating what training was, how it should be done, and how it could be better. Five people of varied backgrounds and ideologies fired politely at each other with varying philosophies and degrees of passion regarding the nuances of firefighter training — especially smokejumper training. The fissure that emerged was the vast degree of difference between smokejumper training and the actual smokejumper job. In reality, the two have very little to do with each other. How often does a wildfire stop and ask you to do seven to ten pull-ups? To this faction, performance based standards were the arguing point. Line digging and packouts are the primary job of a jumper and the PT standards should reflect these activities — although simulating these in a standardized test presents some difficulty.

But, in defense of the training standards, **Murry Taylor** (RDD '65) had a point that was hard to argue: the standards, especially difficult standards, show heart. Difficult standards, whether or not they show immediate relevance, do show who is devoted enough to train hard and earn their place every year. And really, who could argue that it takes a lot of heart to accomplish the smokejumper mission? So what is the real answer? At the height of the battle I could hold back no longer, it was time to enter the fray and I had the idea of the century: mud pits.

Yes, mud pits. Every single base should have a giant mud pit battle that is the basis for job selection. You want to see who is physically fit? Who is creative? Who can handle pressure? And most importantly, who wants it the worst? Well, all you have to do is throw sixty or seventy candidates into a giant mud pit and stop them when there are enough left to fill a rookie class.

Even more so, the mud pit is the answer to those petty work place squabbles. Nobody would have to waste time with personal vendettas or grievances when they could simply invite the offending party(s) to the mud pit to work out their differences the old-fashioned and efficient way. Think of how quickly the local gossips would be curtailed if



*Charlie Roos (Courtesy of Charlie Roos)*

they faced an impending thrashing in the pit. Conflicts that used to fester for years could be curtailed in ten minutes — and think how much the possibility of mud battle would promote physical fitness standards among tenured jumpers.

All right, I am being somewhat facetious, but there is a method to my madness. The fact of the matter is there are numerous basic and proven ways of tackling problems that are frequently ignored in the name of “progress.” And, these simplistic ways are relevant to more than just training. Every facet of operations and life in general tend to benefit from this way of thinking — the way of real progress. It is the search for true effectiveness and not change solely for the sake of change.

I’ve made a business of using technology for training. I operate in a world of intellectual property and know more about patents, copyrights, and trademarks than anyone really should. While I’m a big proponent of technology when necessary, I am a bigger proponent of old-fashioned simplicity if that’s all it takes to get the job done. Take for instance the U.S. Marines and their sandbox training for armored warfare. We share the same proven principles that have been used by the aviation industry for decades, yet they use something as simple as a dirt pile to convey the same



MUD PIT: CHECK ALL RULES HERE....

- ☒ GENDER EQUALITY
- ☒ CONFLICT RESOLUTION
- ☒ TOLERANCE MANAGEMENT
- ☒ DOWN & DIRTY

(Courtesy of John D'Anna)

message that I illustrate with thousands of dollars in digital technology. The difference is my equipment fits nicely in an airplane's carry-on compartment. The point is, we both follow proven basic principles, but we use the tools that are needed for our individual purposes — no more, no less.

Outside of training, another fine example in the operational realm is the venerable Pulaski. Because it is old, it is repeatedly challenged regarding its effectiveness. For decades it has been challenged by numerous custom tools and motorized contraptions — but has yet to be beat as an all-around fire tool. Granted, many of these tools do a better job in certain fuel types, but there has never been a greater dirt-moving tool than the basic Pulaski. It is portable, effective, and easy to manufacture; therefore, it has held its own over the decades as the backbone of fire fighting tools.

On another fire front, recent advents in portable mapping technology have opened new possibilities for aerial fire operations. It is now possible to put a laptop on board an aircraft with maps of any local area, and at the same time, project images of the fire back to dispatch. But why? What problem does this solve and how does this improve efficiency? The fact is, jumpers and other aerial firefighters still have to work off of paper maps in field operations; and sending a picture of a smoke column is only adding to the “ooh ahh” factor of technological “fire fighting” while it solves or improves nothing — and it could be argued that it creates more problems than existed already.

What I'm trying to illustrate is this: a progressive mind is one that looks in all directions for solutions — whether it be for training, operations, or life's everyday issues. The truly progressive mind looks to solve problems and improve efficiency by the application of numerous means. It does not create more problems or duplicate effort by using complex technologies to create an illusion of progress. In other words, looking forward is not always the answer. Quite often, the answer is right in front of our faces or else lightly buried on the past. Some of the greatest ideas already exist and are simple in form, yet we get caught up in complexity and technology and call it “progressive.”

To be truly progressive is to look for real efficiency, true effectiveness, and ultimate improvement. It is to realize that potential solutions not only lie on the future, but also in the past and present — as long as you aren't stealing someone else's ideas without permission. Don't read me wrong, because there are infinite technological possibilities for the future, but there are abundant simple options awaiting revival from the past. I'm telling you, the good old-fashioned mud pit is where it's at. If I'm wrong, I'll come to your place and eat my laptop and digital projector in front of you. 🐷

*When he is not working with the Seattle Fire Dept. or taking flying lessons, you can reach Charlie at: [c.j.roos@lycos.com](mailto:c.j.roos@lycos.com) or 1010 NE 61st St., Seattle, WA 98115.*



# Sounding Off from the Editor



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

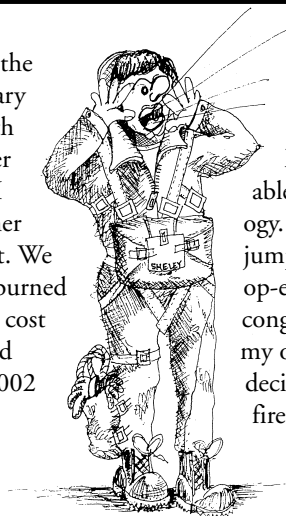
IT ALL STARTED WHEN Wes Brown (CJ '66) mentioned something about the fire being within seven miles of his home. Checking the network news, I found that a large fire was burning out of control and threatening Cave Junction and other towns in the Illinois Valley in southern Oregon. Wanting to help in some way, I drove up to Cave Junction, where I

rookied and spent some of the greatest years of my life. Gary Buck (CJ '66) and Wes both have homes near our former base that were threatened. I really wasn't much help other than lending moral support. We now know the Biscuit fire burned over 500,000 acres and has cost over 150 million dollars and was the largest fire of the 2002 season.

I did have 10 hours of driving time to think over the situation.

Lightning started the fires and no action was taken on them until the third day. When we had jumpers at Cave Jct., fires like this were usually manned within an hour of discovery. I don't even want to get into the closing of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, as there are many sound arguments on both sides of that issue. However, I am totally disturbed with the current fire management actions.

My initial reaction was to find out why jumpers were not used on



these lightning started fires in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area. With the help of many people, I was able to put together a chronology. I also found out there were jumpers available. That led to an op-ed piece and letters to my congress people. The response to my op-ed was so good that I decided to run a special Biscuit fire section in this issue of *Smokejumper*. Please take the time to read the comments by our members.

I see our current fire fighting operation hobbled by rules, guidelines and more rules. We should probably be cross training lawyers in the use of Pulaskis.

Can you picture a situation where you have the fire about hooked and need another hour to complete the line? Stop! Your crew has just reached its maximum number of work hours and must rest until the proper ratio of work/rest hours is achieved. By that time it's dark and you can't work at night. When it gets daylight and the work/rest ratio is correct, the fire is burning and the situation looks dangerous. Time to "disengage" which is long for "leave." You take your crew to the nearest meadow and start building a fire camp for the upcoming project fire. Big mistake!

The meadow is within two miles of the fire and the burnout will start at least eight miles on the other side of the ridge. Time to "disengage" again. Sorry if I'm having too much fun with this.

I've read several articles saying the Biscuit fire was much larger than it would have been if no action were taken. In other words, the area burned would have been smaller and a couple hundred million dollars saved if we just let it go. Is anybody else discouraged at what's going on?



## Special Offer!!

Reunion 2000 photographer **Douglas Beck** (CJ '70) turned over the remaining group photos to the NSA. These are color 8 x 10 and available for **\$5.00 S/H included**. We have the following photos:

- |                    |                          |                     |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Alaska Group    | 2. Boise Group           | 3. Idaho City Group |
| 4. Cave Jct. Group | 5. Cave Jct. Group /Gobi | 6. McCall Group     |
| 7. Missoula Group  | 8. North Cascades Group  | 9. Redding Group    |
| 10. Redmond Group  |                          |                     |

*Use the merchandise order form and indicate which photos you want for your collection.*

# Jumpers from the North

by Charlie Palmer (Missoula '95)

**F**or hundreds of years, the relationship between the United States and Canada has been forged by the geopolitical commonalities shared by the two countries. Following colonization attempts by both British and French forces, each has become a sovereign, democratic nation. Indigenous peoples, coupled with immigrants from around the globe, have formed a vibrant, multiethnic, multicultural population in both countries. From the shared 4000-mile long border that joins each nation, to the Rocky Mountain Range that divides them both, the similarities between the United States and Canada far outnumber the differences. It should come as no surprise, then, that the two have established a relationship in an area of interest to all of us: smokejumping.

While Americans trace their roots in smokejumping to the late 1930s, their Canadian counterparts in the process of "jumping out of perfectly good airplanes" did not begin until the 1950s. The province of Saskatchewan formed the first Canadian smokejumper crew, which operated for several years. By 1974, both the Yukon and Northwest Territories had contract smokejumping crews, and these programs were in place intermittently until the mid-1990s. The fall of 1995 saw the last fire jumped in the Territories when the implementation of local hire and no-contractor policies ended smokejumping in Canada.

Following the termination of the Yukon program, some of these "downsized" personnel sought employment with the British Columbia Forest Service (BCFS). With their feet in the door, these individuals began promoting smokejumping as an efficient and effective method of fire suppression. In 1998, the Northwest Fire Centre approved an employee initiative and began the current parattack (smokejumping) program as a two-year pilot project in Smithers, British Columbia. With assistance from the Missoula smokejumpers, in particular Base Manager **Dave Custer** (MSO '70/now retired) and current jumpers **Jeff Kinderman** (MSO '75) and **Everett Weniger** (MSO '80), the Canadians were able to secure the equipment and training needed to help get their fledgling program started.

After this two-year trial, an evaluation team determined that the Smithers area did not provide a sufficient fire load to adequately test the program. Based on these findings, a search began for an area that sustained enough fire activity to properly evaluate the effectiveness of smokejumping in B.C. After considerable investigation, Fort St. John was selected as the new home for the BCFS parattack program. The relocation to Fort St. John proved successful. After just one season, the evaluation team had enough data to conclude the parattack program provided economic and logistical advantages to the province in suppressing wildfires in northern B.C. By the spring of 2001, upon the recommendation of the evaluation team, smokejumpers became a permanent addition to British Columbia's fire fighting team.

At the present time, the base at Fort St. John is home to

24 parattackers. Utilizing a 300 Series Twin Otter, the outfit initial attacks fires throughout the northern half of B.C. For canopies, the jumpers have been using FS-12s loaned to them by bases in the United States. Fuel types are similar to Alaska, with extensive tracts of black spruce, and some pockets of pine and white spruce. With water readily available in the form of lakes and rivers, suppression tactics rely heavily on pumps and hoses. Paracargo has become an integral part of the program, as has the reliance on helicopter support. Fire season typically runs from mid-May to mid-August.

The relationship between the Canadian and U.S. smokejumping programs continues to develop. During the winter of 2002, Canadian parattackers **Tom Reinboldt** and **Mark Parminter** were in Missoula to work on their Master Rigger certifications, under the guidance of loft foreman **Todd Onken** (MSO '82) and assistant loft foreman **Hardy Bloemeke** (MSO '77). Reinboldt, jumping since the Canadian program began in 1998, has been thankful for the, "tons of support from the Missoula base." He notes, "It's been great, because without the support of the U.S. there wouldn't have been a Canadian crew." Parminter echoes this sentiment. "So far, this has been a great partnership, as the help from Americans has really allowed us to get our feet off the ground."

While there has been a significant American investment into B.C. program, the relationship between the two smokejumping programs has been anything but one-sided. In 1999, several Canadian jumpers found themselves on American jump lists, helping to suppress fires in this country. "Coming down here is an eye opener," states Parminter, although it was unclear if he was referring to the behavior of the fires, or the behavior of American jumpers after they get off their fires. Both Parminter and Reinboldt see the potential for booster crews in the future between the two countries. In such a scenario, American bases would boost to Fort St. John when it needed additional personnel, and Canadians would come south when U.S. forces were depleted. Says Reinboldt, "A porous border would be great, one that is as seamless as possible considering the fact that international entities are involved."

Charlie Palmer was a rookie in 1995 and has completed eight seasons of jumping. He has B.A., M.A. and Ed.S. degrees from the University of Montana and is currently working on a doctoral dissertation in educational guidance and counseling, with the goal of becoming a certified sports psychologist.



You can reach Charlie via e-mail at: [msocharlie@earthlink.net](mailto:msocharlie@earthlink.net) or write him at: 91 Campus Drive #1911, Missoula, MT 59801.



Charlie Palmer (Courtesy of Charlie Palmer)

# Somewhere North of Powell R.S.-1943

by Asa Mundell (Missoula '43)

Since the Camp Menard contingent of jumpers was so close to the airfield in Missoula, it seemed that we often got calls for fires in Moose Creek and McCall when their jumpers were out on fires.

It was the end of the '43 season and four of us had been stationed at Moose Creek with the Ford. A call came out for two jumpers and **Loren Zimmerman** (Missoula '43) and I were selected to jump it.

The first night on the fire it started raining and we had to move from under the stars into our pup tent. The next day it continued to rain and that night it snowed. This was September! We worked the fire until it was dead out which took us three days. We let the rain do its job and sometimes just huddled in the combined tents eating our three day's supply of Cracker Jacks and K's. On the morning of the third day, we took off to a lookout we could see in the distance. Leaving the tools and chutes on the trail, we slogged our way up and down the hills and canyons. At about four in the afternoon we got to the lookout only to discover that it was a hunter's camp and not a lookout. Their cook radioed the Powell Ranger Station to pick us up and then fed us venison

stew and baked beans while we waited for our ride.

Arriving at Powell, we were again just in time for supper and, even though we had enough beans and stew, dug into more and better food there. And the part I will never forget. After a summer of dirty sleeping bags, three nights in the rain and snow, we went up to the loft and found a place to sleep. There I saw an ordinary camp cot with a pillow and clean white sheets. I guess I have never before or after appreciated a bed like that. I may have even been a bit homesick. 🐻

*After jumping the 1943 season, Asa transferred to Norwich, Conn., where he also took part in an Infectious Hepatitis Guinea Pig experiment program to help develop a preventative inoculation for the disease. He later graduated from Kansas Wesleyan and attended Iliff School of Theology and received a Th.M. degree. Asa served churches in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, before coming to Oregon and retiring from the United Methodist Church in 1987.*

*Printed with permission from Static Lines and Canopies by Asa Mundell. He can be reached at: 15535 SW Bridle Hills Dr, Beaverton, OR 97007 or [asamund@juno.com](mailto:asamund@juno.com)*



*Asa Mundell 1943 at Seeley Lake (Courtesy of Asa Mundell)*



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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

# DOUGLAS P. STINSON (CAVE JUNCTION '54)

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DOUG GREW UP ON a hardscrabble farm in the Missouri Ozarks. Oak/pine forests abounded on the hills and in the hollows. It was a natural path into forestry at the University of Missouri.

The summer of 1952 found Doug on a Douglas County fire crew in Sutherlin, Oregon. This was his first view of the Northwest and it was "love at first sight." Nineteen fifty-two was a record fire year in southern Oregon and quite the initiation into fire fighting.

In 1954 Doug joined the ranks of the smokejumpers at Cave Junction under the tutelage of Jim Allen and Orville Looper and was quickly whipped into shape. This was a quiet fire season and he made only two fire jumps into northern California. The base plane was a Noorduyn-Norseman, a reliable old workhorse. However, it was challenged by the hot, Gobi Desert climate and on a hot, windless afternoon, strained to get out of the Illinois Valley. The four jumpers would move as far forward as possible, literally onto the backs of pilot Ed Schultz and spotter Rod Newton. It would take several passes around the valley before enough altitude was gained to slide over the pass and make the downhill run to the Shasta-Trinity Forest.

After graduation from the University of Missouri Forestry School, Doug returned to Cave Junction for the 1955 fire season. The Noorduyn-Norseman was gone and in its place was a sleek Twin Beech. Again, the fire season was fairly quiet — at least that was what the old fire warriors said. The Twin Beech ferried a crew to Joseph, Oregon, for a fire jump on the Snake River. Coming into Joseph was a new experience for pilot Shultz and the Twin Beech. Six jumpers were aboard with the spotter, pilot and all their gear. When the plane finally stopped at the end of the runway, it was 10 feet from the fence. Pilot

Shultz said, "Damn!!!"

The fire season wrapped up in late September and the young, budding Stinson went to work with Dick Templin in Grants Pass. Doug cruised timber while waiting for U.S. Marine Corps orders to report to Quantico, Virginia, for Officer's Candidate School (OCS).

Having been a smokejumper and timber cruiser in Josephine County made the physical part of OCS relatively easy. Many times, Stinson was thankful for CJ training rigors.

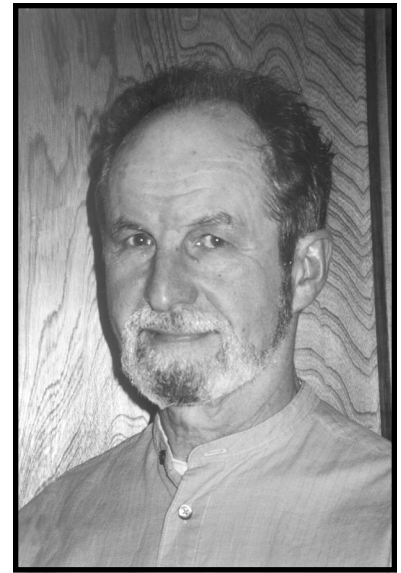
The Marine Corps tour was a fun time for young, single Doug. It gave him the chance to see the Philippines, Okinawa and Japan. His final stint was at Pickle Meadows (Bridgeport, Calif.) at the Marine Cold Weather Training Center. There he was ski and rock climbing instructor. That was choice duty and Doug even thought of becoming a regular career Marine. But the forests were calling loudly and he left the Marine Corps in April 1959. Also, the commandant said that if the Marine Corps wanted Stinson to have a wife, it would issue him one!

After leaving the Marine Corps, Doug went to Juneau, Alaska, and became a junior forester with the U.S. Forest Service. Soon he was in Ketchikan where he had his second great love affair (the first was with Douglas fir trees) with a teacher named Fae Marie Beck. That relationship was consummated in marriage and three children.

In 1964 Doug left the USFS and went to work for U.S. Plywood in Roseburg, Oregon. The desire to own forestland of his own was always strong with Doug, so the first tree farm was acquired.

In 1970, Doug transferred to Seattle with U.S. Plywood. A year later he was manager of their Morton, Wash., operation.

In 1978 he left U.S. Plywood to join Conifer Pacific where he managed a plywood mill. His real



*Doug Stinson*

love was the forest and he continued to buy forestland. 1990 was the year he quit being a corporate forester and became a full time tree farmer in Toledo, Wash., where he and Fae Marie live and manage Cowlitz Ridge Tree Farm. Two of their children are foresters and all are involved in their limited family partnership.

"Smoke jumping at Cave Junction was a highlight of my life," says Doug. The camaraderie and unique qualities of the different jumpers were special. 🌲

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### Please Help When You Change Your Mailing Address

The postal service does NOT forward your copy of *Smokeyjumper* when you move or leave home for an extended time period. It is returned to us and the NSA is charged an additional first class postage fee. With 30–40 returns per mailing it gets expensive and takes a lot of time. Please let Chuck Sheley know if you have any change in your mailing address. Contact information is on page three. 🌲

# Sawtooths to Selkirks

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

There are few people who can stand on a mountain ridge and look to the far horizon, identifying every mountain and ridge until they fade into the blue Idaho sky. Josh Burnim is one, having just hiked and boated more than 400 miles to Hoodoo Pass in the Bitterroot Mountains, on the Idaho/Montana border from the Sawtooth Mountains.

As he packs his gear to hike Section 8 with me, he takes his compass, which hangs around his neck, and checks his declination. Then he looks south, with his wide-brimmed hat covering his dark hair, and softly says, "There are the Selway Crags, and that would be Kelly Creek."

He then faces north and names the landmarks we will cross to hike the 64 miles north to Lookout Pass, as the evening sun reflects on his bushy beard. "There on the horizon — that must be the Cabinet Wilderness. I start there July 9."

We are on the Idaho/Montana border in the Bitterroots. It is an awesome space. I have flown south from my Alaskan home and driven north from Salt Lake City. During that time I have slept only three hours to join Josh for this section of his Sawtooth to Selway hike on this, the first day of July.

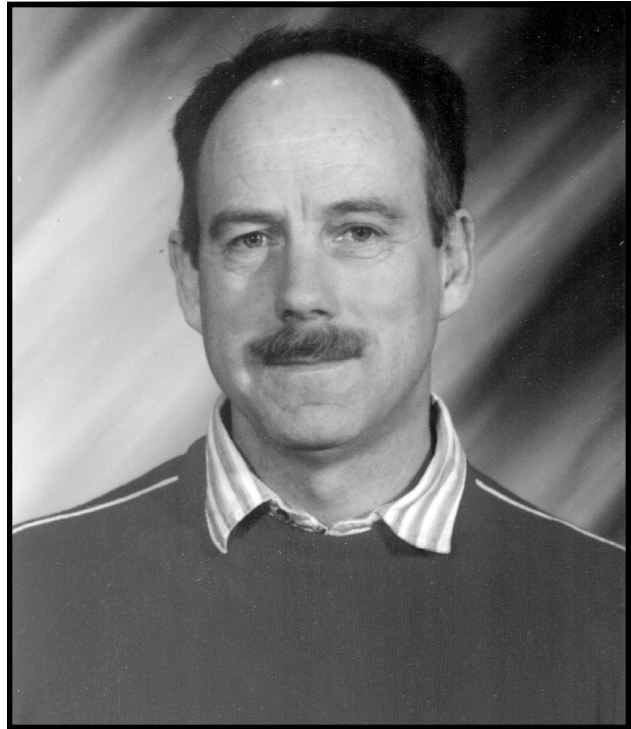
It has been 30 years since I was in these mountains, and then I arrived via parachute and the open door of a DC-3 jumpship out of McCall.

Of the 64 miles we hike from north of Hoodoo Pass to Lookout Pass, 40 miles will be on Forest Service road. Yet on those 40 miles of road that rides the Bitterroot Crest, we meet only four vehicles. However, we see very little megafauna and nothing approaching the wildlife Josh has seen in the wilderness portions of the hike.

Josh has had black bears come into his camp, dodged rattlesnakes on the Salmon, taken a swim in the Middle Fork of the Salmon, hunkered down during thunderstorms, and heard wolves howl during his two-month trek north from the Sawtooths.

As we hike, Josh is constantly taking in all that is around him. He makes note of where he sees white-barked pine, which would be important if this is ever to become a corridor for brown bears. He wants to know the names of all the birds and flowers. Having done my graduate work at Idaho State University in biology, I know most of them. Our hike becomes a walking natural history lesson, and I learn as much from Josh as he learns from me.

I traversed the Salmon River Mountains from McCall to Stanley with Eric Ryback in spring of 1975 (*Idaho Statesman* by Ken Robinson, July 1975). When I taught kayaking at ISU that spring, Eric was one of my students, and I talked him into coming with me as he was the first to hike the Pacific Coast Trail and Continental Divide from Canada to Mexico.



*Jerry Dixon (NSA File)*

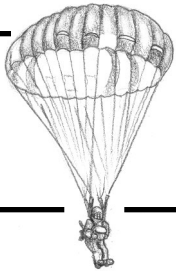
I see the same passion for wilderness travel in Josh that I saw in Eric. It is a fire that burns deeply and finds expression in hiking from horizon to horizon through wild country.

Josh is hiking to promote connections, both human and wild. He wants to educate people about these spectacular places in Idaho and to preserve and restore wildlife habitats in the Yellowstone to Yukon Region.

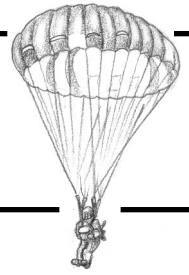
I am an ultramarathoner, extreme skier and Class V kayaker, but I am not a purist. When we reach a pass south of Lookout with transmission lines that form a solid wall of sonic buzz, I suggest bailing to the highway. Josh will have none of it: "I have a route and I'm going to follow it. No shortcuts."

We are hiking the 64-mile section in four days instead of six; it helps starting some days at 5:20 A.M. I follow Josh's lead to Lookout Pass, a place where I have never been in my life. It was a shock having hiked the spectacular Bitterroot Crest to arrive there and find a freeway. My concern on arriving is the condition of my feet, while Josh is concerned about how a migrating wolf or bear would cross the highway. 🐾

*Jerry currently teaches gifted students in Seward, Alaska. He can be reached at: js2dixon@hotmail.com or PO Box 1058, Seward, AK 99664*



# Odds and Ends



by Chuck Sheley

When I arrived home from the CPS-103 smokejumper reunion in Hungry Horse, Mont., I had a big stack of mail to go through. Was glad to hear from:

**Brian Miller** (Redding '85) who went into the field of medicine at what I would consider late in his career. Brian is now doing his residency and says that he is doing those 100+ hour workweeks in general surgery as an intern.

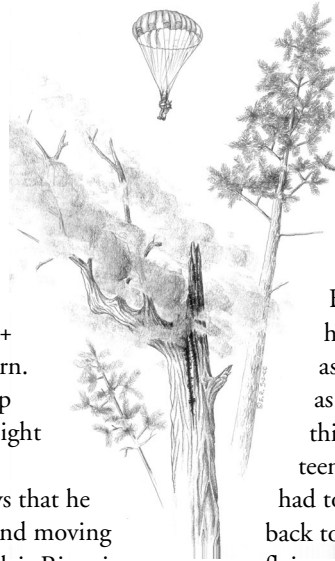
I appreciated his comment through: "steep learning curve but not as ball-busting as all night digs on the Klamath."

Life Member **Jim Clatworthy** (Missoula '56) says that he will be retiring at the end of August (2002) and moving from Rochester Hills, Mich., up on the St. Clair River in Port Huron.

**Jim Allen** (NCSB '46) passed along the program from the 1963 AAU National Decathlon Championships held in Corvallis, Oregon. It brought back memories as early in the fire season, **Charley Moseley** (Cave Jct. '62) was among the 26 athletes going for the national title. Charley represented the University of Alabama, but in reality, he was running for the Gobi Athletic Club. Decathlon meets are sparsely attended and the other competitors must have been wondering how a guy from Alabama had such a noisy group of supporters such a long ways from home.

Just got an e-mail from **Sunil Ramalingam** (NIFC '93) that he now has a new son Benjamin born August 8, 2002. Wife Anne-Marie and the new baby are both doing fine. Sunil has gone from jumping to practicing law in Moscow, Idaho.

Was exchanging e-mails with **Jerry Dixon** (McCall '71) and got some interesting bits of information. Did you know that **Clay Morgan's** (McCall '74) wife, Barbara Morgan, is an astronaut and has a mission in 2004? **Dean Hovdey** (McCall '69) married Patty Boydstun who skied in the 1972 Olympics in Sapporo taking 5th in the slalom. They own Hometown Sports and have a super display of jumper memorabilia in their store in McCall. I requested more information on the Morgans as astronauts are few and far between. Jerry came back with the following: "I have known Clay and Barb since 1974 when I helped train that class in McCall. They both attended Stanford University. Barb is a teacher and her first assignment was on an Indian reservation in Montana. She was the first



alternate for the teacher in space program in 1985. January of 1986 she was at Cape Kennedy with Clay watching the liftoff of the space shuttle carrying seven crew—members and America's first teacher in space Christa McAuliffe. The shuttle exploded and all were lost. Through incredible perseverance Barb stayed with the program which means she has had to go through years of the rigorous astronaut training. She may go into space as soon as 2004. Clay, a gifted author, has supported her in this and they now live in Houston with their two teenage sons. When we saw them in McCall. Barb had to get back to Boise so she could fly a NASA jet back to training in Houston. She has many hours now flying trainer jets. One of the great quotes from her I heard this last visit was, 'Teaching is as hard as training to be an astronaut.' "

From *Sun - San Bernadino County*, Saturday, August 10, 2002: "It has been years since anyone parachuted into the San Bernadino Mountains to battle a hard-to-reach blaze. But firefighters had to do it this week after a plane crashed in the San Gorgonio Wilderness and the pilot set a fire in order to attract rescuers. "It was the first time smokejumpers had fought a fire south of the Tehachapi Mountains since 1964, said **Pat O'Bannon**, assistant director of fire operations for the northern (zone) U.S. Forest Service. Five smokejumpers led by **Josh Mathiesen**, parachuted into the area and hiked their way to the crash site. The jumpers flew into the San Bernadino Mountains from their base in Redding after Marine Corps Capt. Stephen Freeman's T34C apparently had an engine failure and went down at the 10,000 foot level. Freeman set fire to the brush near his crashed plane to attract attention, said Lt. Singley of the Sheriff's Dept. Forest Service officials said the two-acre fire is under control." **Comment:** Has the Marine Corps heard of signal mirrors?

**Charley Moseley** (CJ '62) has informed me that he has been successful in encouraging the North Cascades jumpers to host a reunion. All NCSB & LaGrande jumpers please mark **June 13-14-15, 2003** on your calendars. **Mike Fort** (NCSB '61) will be heading up this reunion.

**J.B. Stone** (MSO '56) finally had time to take part in the trail project last summer and spent one week at the Black Bear Guard Station. "What a hoot! This is a worthwhile and admirable project — I plan to go next year."

Just had an amazing first for me. Got home and returned a call to **Mark Corbet** (LaGrande '74). What's the big deal? Mark and his partner had just finished work for the day and were sitting at 6600 feet on the east slope of Mt. Bachelor in Oregon. I had been discussing my problems with the fire initial attack system. He wanted to show me that it is working right in some forests. The Redmond smokejumpers had jumped ten fires that day with 20 jumpers. That's pretty efficient use of resources. Shows what can be done if the action is taken early in the game. Even here there was a problem though. After a night of lightning the jumpers were on at 0700 and ready to go but had to wait until the dispatcher came on at 0800 before they could leave RAC. Sounds like a union job.

Mark also relayed that earlier this season, on a single jump, **four** jumpers out of Redmond put out **nine** lightning caused fires. The tenth one was too big to handle by the time they got to it. Wished the Siskiyou had called those people — the taxpayers would probably be \$150 million richer now.

**Now here's a real surprise:** from *NY Times*, August 25, 2002. "The United States Forest Service, now battling one of the worst fire seasons in history, 'misplaced' about \$215 million intended for wildfire management because of an accounting error. The Forest Service expects to spend a record \$1.5 billion this year to fight wildfires that have consumed more than six million acres in the West and killed 20 firefighters. Over the last decade, the Forest Service failed 8 out of 10 inspector general audits — a record the taxpayer group called among the worst in the federal bureaucracy."

**Ray Martin** of Kooskia, Mont., sent an article from the *Clearwater Progress* dealing with an historical event in smokejumper history. Ray's father-in-law was **Howard Engle** who was the Forest Service packer stationed at the Moose Creek Ranger Station in 1940. Most of us know that **Rufus Robinson** and **Earl Cooley** made the first fire jump in July of that year. Now for the rest of the story: It was Howard Engle who met Robinson and Cooley at the fire and packed their gear to Tony Point Lookout from where Cooley finished the trip to Moose Creek. Robinson must have wanted to get back on the jump list quickly, as he left Cooley and Engle and took a shortcut back.

**John "Doc" Lammers** (MSO '71) also forwarded the same article with an interesting note. The front-page headline leads with "Keck to be honored." John says this lady was also a packer but worked in the '60s-'70s. He believes "she walked a number of jumpers into the dirt."

This has been the biggest fire season in more than a decade for **Alaska**. More than 2.2 million acres burned making it the fifth most destructive season since record keeping started in 1955. **Mike McMillan's** "Alaska Base Report" in this issue should be loaded.

The Fairbanks *Daily News-Miner* had a feature article on **Bob Moloney** (MYC '64) who has owned the Midnite

Mine and Bar for over 30 years.

"The 58-year-old Moloney is a pilot, hunter, cross-country skier and engineer. He came to Fairbanks in the summer of 1966 as a smokejumper for the BLM. He spent the summer fighting fires in Alaska before returning to Georgia Tech for his senior year to finish a degree in civil engineering.

"He wound up back in Alaska for good in 1969 after serving two years as a loadmaster for Air America during the Vietnam War." The article was passed along by **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ '64) who worked with Maloney at Air America and was one of the original partners in the Midnite Mine.

**Stan Cohen** from the Museum of Mt. Flying sends an update on the Mann Gulch Doug: "Our new 18,500 sq. ft. hangar is now open and the Mann Gulch DC-3 will be put in shortly. We are in the process of cleaning it up before putting it on display inside. We will start restoration this fall. In August the museum received a \$40,000 grant from the Steel-Reese Foundation to restore the plane. It is hoped to have it restored in time for the NSA 2004 reunion, depending on volunteer help. We are continuing fund raising for the possibility of flying the plane that is very expensive. A professional display on the plane and the Mann Gulch fire is planned for the future. NSA members are welcome to help in the restoration."

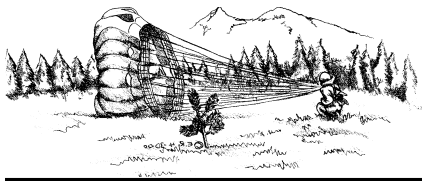
**Jack Saunders** (MSO '61) dropped an e-mail recently from Marfa, Texas. After graduating from Texas Tech in 1964, he bought a ranch in Marfa and has been a cattle rancher since except for 11 years at Seagraves. Jack has owned his own planes with multi-engine and instrument ratings but has not flown in about 8 years.

"**Wild Bill**" **Yensen** (MYC '53) was recently written up in the *Star News* in an article about his hobby of woodcarving. In recent years Bill's interest turned to carving with a chainsaw. One work, which can be seen in his front yard in McCall, depicts a smokejumper dressed in field gear and suspended from a parachute.

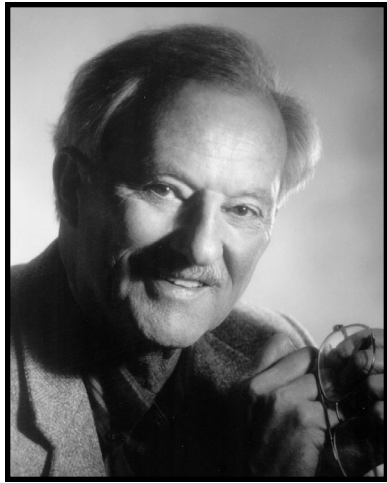
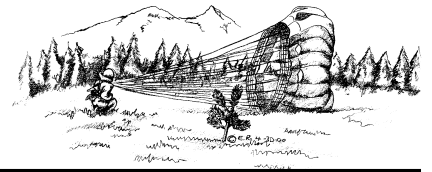
**Jon McBride** (MSO '54) reported to the NSA Board, in a Boise meeting, that the year 2002 Trail Maintenance Program showed a continuing growth in the program. Last summer 76 volunteers took part in 10 projects. Look for a complete report in the Trail Maintenance bulletin that will be mailed to you.

**Tom Decker** (IDC '64) recently retired from the U.S. Army and is now a part-time parish pastor at the St. John Lutheran Church in Long Beach, Calif.

**John Driscoll** (MSO '68) ran for the U.S. Senate from Montana as a write-in candidate last November. John recently returned to Montana after retiring from the Army. He had worked on the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon the past three years. John is a former state public service commissioner and ex-speaker of the Montana House of Representatives. He was working at the Pentagon on September 11. 🕯



# Checking the Canopy



by Stan Tate  
(McCall '53)

## Surprised by Joy

IDAHO SMOKEJUMPERS HAVE a deep fear of having to parachute onto the rim of Hells Canyon. It is a deeper gorge than the Grand Canyon with similar walls of rock. Late one summer my greatest fear became a reality. I was chosen to jump on a small fire on the rugged side of Hells Canyon.

Shell Oil Company was filming our jump, so that was one consolation. As our aircraft circled the jump spot, which was a quarter mile from the fire, I was terrified as I looked down at the

formidable canyon. The spotter told us the wind was blowing toward the east and that we were to jump out directly above the Snake River, 6,000 feet below.

My partner (Max Allen-Missoula '48) jumped first and spiraled down toward a small meadow beside a blue lake. The unforgiving wind carried him right above the lake. He landed in the middle of it and then stood up in shallow water, waving his streamer telling us that he was all right.

The spotter told me to avoid hitting the water and land in the meadow. I bailed out above the river and headed for the meadow. About 500 feet above the clearing amid the huge cliffs, my partner shouted to me to land where he did. I circled over the lake and was hit with an aroma like the fragrance of a San Francisco floral shop. I thought my partner was half submerged in the oscillating shallow water below.

By then I couldn't avoid hitting the water. To my amazement, it wasn't water but a natural pasture of blue lu-



pine waving in the breeze. Soaring like a bird, I caught a celestial glimpse of God's glorious creation. I landed in this floral garden surrounded by a field of wildflowers as tall as my waist. I felt like I had dropped into the Garden of Eden — everything was perfect. Two white-tailed deer stood be-

side us, wondering what we were doing there.

I thanked Almighty God for changing my greatest fear into one of my most profound moments of exhilaration and joy. Sometimes our worst fears turn into our greatest accomplishments. When we believe in God we are constantly surprised by joy. 🙏

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## MEMBER PROFILE ALEX THEIOS

ALEX ROOKIED AT CAVE JUNCTION in 1965 but also jumped three seasons in Fairbanks. After leaving Fairbanks in 1970, he went to Wyoming and took a job running a private guest ranch along with being a hunting & fishing guiding in the foothills of the Wind River Range. Besides skiing Jackson Hole in the winters, Alex raced sled dog team professionally in Western states, plus Alaska. In 1979 he purchased 17 acres land in foothills of Tetons and lived in Jackson Hole area until 1994.

While spending three winters in Scottsdale, Arizona, he started to play golf and went to work for the Tournament

Players Club. In the fall of 2000, his wife, who has been in the fine art business for twenty years, got an offer to put together a brand new gallery in Billings, Montana. It was an offer they couldn't refuse and they bought a home in Billings on the Briarwood golf course where Alex went to work as a marshal-ranger. They still spend at least a month or more at their vacation/retirement house in Powell River, British Columbia, every summer where they hope to retire there eventually. We lost track of Alex for 30 years and are glad to have him in the NSA and looking forward to the next reunion. 🙏

# The Youngest Smokejumper: A Biography of John Lewis (McCall '53)

by Ken Hessel (McCall '58)

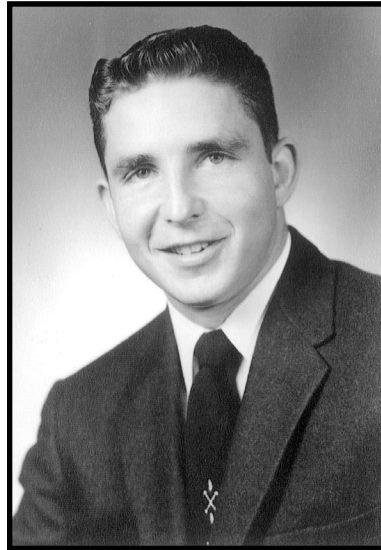
**H**e packed a lot into his short 26 years: bronc and bull riding in Texas, smoke-jumping in Idaho, the Bay of Pigs invasion, CIA flights over Tibet, re-supply missions from Okinawa and Thailand into Laos.

John Lewis was born on June 10, 1936, in Lampasas, Texas, a small town of 5,000 people. His early years were spent attending school and enjoying the normal pursuits of a young Texas boy.

During his tenure at Lampasas High School, where he excelled as a scholar and athlete, John heard stories from an older friend, DeWayne Davis (McCall '53), about fighting forest fires in Idaho. The story that fascinated him the most was the one about smokejumping. Being a somewhat adventurous soul anyway (he was already a pretty fair bronc and bull rider), John decided he was going to become a smoke-jumper come hell or high water. At age 16 and a junior in high school, John made plans to head for McCall as soon as the school year ended.

As John's sister — my wife Leah — tells the story, it was with great trepidation that she and her mother drove John a few miles out of Lampasas on June 3, 1953, and let him out on Highway 183 North. Once out of the car, John told them to head for town and "don't look back." His mom cried all the way home, feeling certain she would never see him again.

Undaunted by the nearly 1800 miles ahead of him, John stuck out his thumb and arrived in McCall, Idaho, three days later. On June 8, John, who became known to his fellow jumpers as "Tex," signed on as



*John Lewis (Courtesy Mark Corbet)*

a "brush crew smokejumper." He was assigned to the Krassel Ranger District along with nine other men in the same status. Others on the crew included Stan Tate (McCall '53) and Miles Johnson (McCall '53), who were to become John's close friends.

The Krassel brush crew was hired in anticipation of a severe fire season. Forester and veteran jumper Reid Jackson (McCall '49) was asked to ramrod the crew, along with his other duties. About the middle of July, when smokejumper foreman Lloyd Johnson moved on to a new career, Jackson was appointed interim foreman. Shortly after Reid was appointed, a decision was made to bring the ten-man brush crew into McCall for formal smokejumper training. The "brush crew smoke-jumpers" went on the jump list around the first of August, much to the chagrin of the veterans, who could see a lot of overtime going out the window.

John made his first fire jump on August 16, 1953, on the Nethkin Trail fire. He was 17 years, two months and six days old — possibly the youngest smokejumper ever to make a fire jump? John's last fire season with the smokejumpers was 1959.

After graduating from Lampasas High School in May of 1954, John enrolled at the University of Texas, where he attended during the winter months until December 1959. During this time he also attained his private pilot's license and owned a single-engine plane (Stinson), which he used in managing his cattle business and to visit friends around the Western U.S.

In December 1959, John was asked if he'd be interested in a job with the Central Intelligence Agency. Needless to say, he jumped at the chance and soon thereafter was making night flights over Tibet in support of the Tibetan people in their struggle against the Chinese. Beginning in October 1960, he was a crew member on aircraft flying re-supply missions from Okinawa into Laos, in support of General Vang Pao and his Hmong army.

In January 1961, John was on his way to Guatemala to help with preparation for, and ultimately to participate in, the April 17 Bay of Pigs invasion. In May, he was again engaged in re-supply flights to Hmong troops in Laos — only this time the flights originated in Thailand.

On August 13, 1961, at the age of 26, John died in a plane crash while dropping cargo to General Vang Pao and his troops in Laos. Also killed in this plane crash were Darrell Eubanks (McCall '54), who

was John's close friend from home, and Dave Bevan (Missoula '55). These three smokejumpers were the first Americans killed in the Laotian theater of the Vietnam War.

On March 7, 1994, in Miami, Florida, the Cuban Veterans of the 2506 Assault Brigade awarded John Lewis a posthumous medal for valor for his participation in the Bay of Pigs invasion. The medal was presented to four Americans by the Board of Directors of the Association of Veterans of the Bay of Pigs. Legendary pilot Connie Seigrist

accepted John's medal, and later gave it to his mother in Austin, Texas. 🇺🇸

*On November 8, 2002, the Central Intelligence Agency posthumously awarded John the agency's medal of valor "in recognition of his exceptional support to the CIA in April of 1961." The medal was presented to John's sister, Leah Hessel, in LaGrande, Oregon, by a CIA emissary. A small group of family and friends, including Tom "Shep" Johnson (MYC-56) attended the ceremony.*



Reid Jackson (Courtesy Stan Tate)



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### (Missoula '71)

### (Redding '59)





# Touching All Bases



## Alaska

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks '96)

*The Alaska smokejumpers have unveiled their new Web site. For updated crew info and photos, please visit [www.alaskasmokejumpers.com](http://www.alaskasmokejumpers.com).*

As the lower 48 heated up in 2002, many Alaska jumpers went south early June, setting a pattern of a shortage of initial attack and overhead resources for the summer. Alaska utilized 28 Forest Service and 16 Boise BLM boosters in '02. With a steady and prolonged fire season in Alaska the movement of smokejumpers between north and south remained constant.

As soon as Alaska sent more of its jumpers south, the interior heated up again and again and the Alaska "hostages" did very well at home. One load jumped 5 fires in 6 days, with a handful jumping 2 fires in a day. The Alaska base filled four resource orders for jumpers to the lower 48 during July and August. The crew filled overhead positions on the Alaska Type I Team on all three of its assignments down south. They also filled positions with the military and other overhead teams.

The last Alaska fire jumped was September 6 near Beaver. The most fires jumped by an Alaskan this season was 17 by **Paul McGuire** (FBK '02) The most Alaska fires jumped was 13 by **Mike McMillan**.

At season's end, Alaska smokejumpers were sent to Minnesota on a burning detail. Others attended a fire use training academy, worked in-state burn projects, and returned to Chicago and New York on tree climbing details in October and into the winter. Our team of climbers in Brooklyn discovered infestations of the Asian longhorned-beetle previously undetected. The bros braved downpours, endless piles of trash and minefields of dog poop in an area best described as the projects to wage war on the insidious tree beetle.

Back at base several folks continued work on their land and cabins, but **Ivan Smith** (MSO '95) lost his race with old man winter and will have to fill his foundation in next spring. His 30 x 30 ft. mud pit may resemble a bog come May, (nothing a Mark 3 and a gang of helpful bros. can't fix).

In October **Marty Meierotto** (FBK '94) was honored with an iron block complete with chain and padlock on the afternoon of his bachelor's party. Coaxed into work on a day off, he was at first courteously presented with the medieval contraption but quickly replied, "I'm not putting that thing on." Promptly tackled and shackled by 8 of his closest friends, they soon convinced him it was for his own good. He was able to drag his anchor into many but not all of Fairbank's finest drinking wells. On October 12, Marty and Dominique were married on a bright and brisk Saturday at a local Alaska lodge overlooking Fairbanks. Surrounded by their family and friends, the couple wore black and white bunny boots for the touching outdoor ceremony, and Dominique shined as she sported a grey arctic fox coat draping her head and shoulders. Marty, an accomplished Alaskan fur trapper and adventurer, was



quite choked up throughout the touching ceremony. The Alaska Smokejumpers wish the Meierottos all the best.

**Statistics for Alaska 2002:** total fire jumps (430), practice jumps (631), project jumps (6), total jumps (1067), number of fires jumped (76), number of boosters (44).

**Ten-year Alaska average:** fire jumps (383), total jumps (1041), number of fires jumped (63), number of boosters (54)

**Statistics for Alaska jumpers in the lower 48:** total fire jumps (126), practice jumps (62), number of fires jumped (61), number of practice jumps (32), total jumps (188).

**Ten-year average for AK jumpers in the lower 48:** total lower 48 jumps (256).

## Boise

by Steve Nemore (Redmond '69)

The 2002 season set BLM Boise

smokejumper records as the 86 Boise jumpers made 1275 fire jumps on 202 fires. In addition, 160 boosters made 462 fire jumps. We averaged over 100 days of travel per person — that's standby, training and on fires.

Nine rookies completed the five weeks of training: **Zuri Betz, Jess Bohnsack, Lakota Burwell, Dik Lagerwerff, Justin McGregor, Scott Murray, Ryan Swartz, Ryan Jordan, Justin Krahn.**

We had three transfers from other smokejumper bases: **Hans Germann** (jump king with 21 fire jumps) - Redding, **Mark Koontz** - McCall and **Jim Raudenbush** -Alaska.

Five jumpers got "real" jobs before, after, or during the fire season: **Scott Salisberry** (aviation manager for Arizona BLM), **Emil Magallanes** (coordinator for BLM Nevada State Office,) **Bud Derham** and **Tim Pettitt** (Remote Area Weather Stations of the National Interagency Fire Center) and **Joel Kerley** (air attack manager for BLM Idaho in Shoshone).

**Allison Cushman, Dave Vining, Rich Zimmerlee, and Matt Bowers** were trained as spotters this season while **Michelle Moore** and **Eric Walker** completed the two-year Technical Fire Management course. (They love statistics-ask 'em!) **Danny Arnold, Tim Caughlin** and **Joel Kerley** were qualified as air attack supervisors.

**Dennis Terry** is recovering well from an early season fire jump femur break. **Lee Rickard** healed a café fight referee-induced broken jaw. **Steve Baker** will shed the knee brace and seek permanent surgical repair of a fire jump knee injury.

**Kevin Stalder** was again the stability in the "Otter Corps," piloting many hours and overseeing flight operations. **Ben Hinkle** was the able relief from the National Office.

**Walt Wasser** lost ground to **Dale Longanecker** (NCSB) and **Mark Corbet** (RAC) in the quest for all-time fire jump king, by being unlucky ... he got only eight fire jumps this year ... we should all be so unlucky!

BLM Boise jumpers not only jumped lots of small fires, they participated in the large "national news" fires as air attack

supervisors, overhead team members, military crew bosses. We did lotsa good initial attack but we could have done more as was the case at all bases. We experienced too much "sideline standby" when we should have been in on the action. Perhaps next year the system will recognize the nationwide non-use of smokejumpers and include us more deeply as essential initial attack forces.

Right now the hunters are still in the woods, the homebuilders are hurrying to beat the snow, and the travelers are loading their pickups. We'll have jumpers working at various times all winter: meetings, teaching fire courses, receiving fire courses, building equipment in the Loft, hiring new people, making spring training schedules, doing prescribed fire projects, and re-energizing for the 2003 season.

Oh, and don't forget ... **Fitness is for life** .... and it's sorta important for next April's PT test!

## Grangeville

by Jerry Zumalt (Redding '70)

The season started early in the southwest with smokejumper detail commitments to Silver City and Albuquerque, NM. Grangeville supplied personnel and foremen (**R.Nelson** and **M.Kuehn-Tabor**) to ABQ in May. Booster requests were also filled to the BLM in the Basin and Alaska. With the exception of a quick trip to Redmond with jumpers from MSO, GAC and MYC to drop a couple of fires, June was devoted to training. Four Grangeville rookies completed their training in Missoula: **Sarah Berns**, **Gabe Cortez**, **Jay Stalnacker** and **Matt Taylor**. Squad leader **Willie Kelly** accepted temporary AFMO details to the Gila NF and, later, to the Moose Creek Ranger District on the NPF.

In early July, we moved the Otter and jumpers to Miles City, Mont., to staff several fires and returned to GAC to jump the Wallowa-Whitman on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Lightning activity was relatively moderate in the Northern Rockies this year, and, consequently, fire suppression and aircraft use was about 65 percent of our annual long-term average. Grangeville put 124 jumpers on 37 fires, and flew about 135 hours in support of fire management efforts. Grangeville did supply ground resources and leadership on local large fires and DIVS participation on a North Idaho Overhead team. Activity was limited in late August and September although dry weather and low fuel moisture conditions were present. The atypical burning conditions continued through late October while most of the GAC contingent pursued either wily white tail bucks, aggressive and numerous large steelhead or hard to find elk.

Late summer project work included climbing Larch trees to harvest cones on the Nez, and working to clear trails in the eastern portion of Moose Creek. Autumn found most of the jumpers committed to local RX projects, timber cruising and TSI assignments on the Gallatin, and on fire detail assignments to South Zone in R-5, or climbing for the USDA-APHIS in Chicago and New York. GAC filled several permanent positions by hiring **Mike Blinn** (RDD), **Barry Burris** (MSO), **Gabe Holguin**, **Allesandro Potenziani** (RDD), **Matt Smith**, and **Mike Ward**. **Melanie Pfister**, **Dan Helterline** and **John Davis** accepted permanent transfers to Missoula.

## McCall

by Rick Hudson (Boise '73)

The McCall smokejumpers dove right into the 2002 fire season in May with 13 detailers to extremely dry Region 3. The traditional Silver City Detail took five jumpers from McCall to fill out their ranks around "The Shrine" at the Drifter. A few days later, eight McCall jumpers left to round out a 30-person detail in

Albuquerque.

**Rich Nieto** (MYC '87), Cibola N.F. fire staff officer, successfully worked to establish the 2nd R-3 detail at the Double Eagle Airport outside Albuquerque. The Cibola Smokejumpers took action on fires on the National Forests of the Cibola, Carson, Gila, Santa Fe, Apache-Sitgraves and the El Malpais and Albuquerque BLM. Several fires on the Gila brought the Silver City and the Cibola jumpers together for combined initial attack. The details were kept busy until chased out by the seasonal monsoons early in July.

During the 2002 season, McCall had success with a spike base in Ogden, Utah. A turbine DC-3 and 12 smokejumpers opened up the base June 7th this season and maintained the Ogden Spike throughout the summer until September 19th. The Ben Lomond Hotel became home to some jumpers this season more than anything they had back in McCall.

The first fire jump of the season from McCall on June 5th, took an Otter load to the Vale BLM area on the Grande Ronde River. Boosters left several days later to BLM jump country around Cedar City, Ely and Grand Junction.

The last jump of the season was an Otter load rescue jump to assist Life Flight in extracting an injured hunter from the Frank Church River-of-no-Return Wilderness, 14 miles from Chamberlin Basin airstrip. The highlight was listening to the wolf howls echoing around the starlit basin before daybreak.

Jumpers moving up this season included **Brad Sawyer** (MYC '98) taking an AFMO job in fuels on the Sawtooth N.F. His brother, **Brent Sawyer** (MYC '98) detailed into a smokejumper squad leader position for the season. **Chuck Buescher** (MYC '79) detailed to the Southwest Coordination Center in Albuquerque and **John Humphries** (MYC '79) detailed into the Payette Forest Aviation Officer position. **Ted Spencer** (MYC '88) detailed to a dispatch position for the summer at NICC. **Shawn Denowh** (MYC '98) detailed to the White River N. F. engine for the season. **Leo Cromwell** (IDC '66) detailed to the tanker base and **Jerry Ogawa** (MYC '67) managed loft duties in McCall. Both veteran jumpers, Leo and Oggie, are awaiting the gridlock of retirement paperwork. **Rob Berney** (MYC '97) took the season to live and work on Hoonah Island in Alaska.

A rookie class of seven "Neds" completed training the end of June and most jumped their first fire the following day. The Neds totaled 70 fire jumps and 123 training jumps among them. There are few things as rewarding as training rookies, infusing the organization with new blood and maintaining smokejumpers at the top of the food chain.

The pesky Asian longhorned-beetle has kept off-season smokejumpers in the trees of Chicago and New York for the third year. This year McCall jumpers have been swinging through the trees for over 2000 person days for the department of ag. On their own during the evening, they take in ball games, shows, blues clubs and make history in the Big Apple and the Windy City.

McCall smokejumper committees are presently working on the 60 year reunion for June 21, 22 and 23, 2003. All jumpers are invited, especially the McCall, Idaho City and Boise alumni. Smokejumpers are all encouraged to come see friends you've lost touch with and embellish those jump stories your family can't stand to hear again.

A memorial of R-4 smokejumpers and pilots fallen in the line of duty is being constructed by jumpers through generous donations from the NSA and private individuals. It will officially be dedicated at the reunion this spring.

## Missoula

by Andy Hayes (Missoula '79)

For Western Montana, this was a below average fire season. Missoula trained 11 rookies this season (16 for all the region). All of Missoula's were part of the Detail Program. This means they were here for this season only to use smokejumping as part of their career development and were paid for by their home units. We had 26 jump fires out of Missoula, for a total of 173 fire jumps out of 106 resource orders. Even though it was a below average season in Region 1, we did send out a lot of boosters and we were jumped out ten different times. Missoula's 11 rookies had an average of 12 fire jumps each. Silver City had an inter-base contingent of 30 jumpers, and Albuquerque had an additional 30 jumpers at the height of the fire season.

The season was very busy around West Yellowstone in July with us sending boosters there or jumping fires out of Missoula in the WYS area. The season seemed to taper off radically around West at the same time it picked up on the western part of the region. The Missoula jumpers made the majority of their time on fires while on boosters to the Great Basin, Oregon and Washington. At one time we also had 22 jumpers out on single resource assignments. We also had three to four detailed to the Great Northern training crew, two detailed as AFMOs and one as a WFU advisor. We now have 12 jumpers back East climbing for APHIS, five on detail to Asheville, NC, 10 to North Dakota, 4 to Fort Howes, and a couple of other crews out doing prescribed fire locally. We also have supplied jumpers to the Superior N.F. for burning, to the BIA for cone picking and the B-D for fire re-hab this fall.

We are happy to have Keith "Skid" Wolferman back with us after his 7 months in Uzbekistan with his reserve unit. Now we are off to a winter of project/ fuels work, sewing projects, training and getting ready to send our folks off to Region 8 for burning this winter.

## North Cascades

by Steve Dickenson (LaGrande '78)

Planning early refresher training turned out to be a good idea as NCSB smokejumpers went to New Mexico in mid-April and action never really slowed down until the first of October. Jumpers were sent to Alaska, Idaho, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Oregon where they worked until mid-July. Fire season began for NCSB on June 26<sup>th</sup> when the whole base jumped a 50-acre fire on the Okanogan N.F. Redmond and NCSB trained the 2002 rookie class up here this season starting on May 15<sup>th</sup> and finishing 5 weeks later. Four Redmond and two NCSB rookies successfully negotiated the training program and the NCSB rookies had their first fire jump a week later. We welcomed boosters from Redmond, Missoula, Alaska and Boise this year, thanks for the good help! A couple of fires of note this season were two on Rainer National Park during August. NCSB had not jumped a fire in the Park since 1965 and both fires used the same jump spot that was used in '65!

NCSB jumpers took action on 61 fires this season with a total of 249 fire jumps. Boosters from other bases made 65 fire jumps on 22 fires.

The aircraft contract was from Bighorn Airways with the CASA 107BH getting 150 hours of flight time this season and was ably crewed by Kevin McBride and Butch Hammer. **Matt Woosley** stepped up and provided leadership for us by performing the duties of training supervisor and **Neil Campbell** accepted a temporary squad leader for the season. The safety record for the base was excellent again this season with two ankle sprains that occurred on the same fire jump. Project work again finds us climbing in New York, Chicago and Seattle, providing a jumper crew for prescribed fire in Minnesota and burning locally here for the forests. We also assisted a Fire Use Management Team in the Pasayten Wilderness by

jumping in at selected locations to monitor, protect structures and perform light hand tactics suppression. This was highly successful due to the ability of the program to deliver smokejumpers and equipment safely and effectively at a reduced cost.

The fire season of 2002 was busy and rewarding. The crew at NCSB continues to provide skilled and professional smokejumpers to assist fire managers in suppression, fire use, prescribed fire and project work.

## Redding

by Josh Mathiesen (Redding '94)

The California smokejumper program is continuing to thrive bolstered by another successful season. The 204 fire jumps within Region 5 was slightly below the 10-year average but the contribution of 246 fire jumps outside the region by California smokejumpers was well above average. The season breaks down as follows:

*January 1<sup>st</sup>*, the year begins with a vacant base manager position. **Don Sand** (RDD-79) is acting manager.

*March 25<sup>th</sup>*, 23 smokejumpers begin the first refresher.

*April 8<sup>th</sup>*, R-5 smokejumpers coordinate a Regional Crew Boss Academy with 55 students completing the 4-week Academy.

*May 24<sup>th</sup>*, 13 rookie smokejumpers complete their training and subsequently draw for the list.

*June 2<sup>nd</sup>*, the first fire jump in Region 5 occurs on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

*August 7<sup>th</sup>*, California Smokejumpers initial attack the Shields fire on the San Bernardino National Forest. This is significant because smokejumpers have never been used on the San Bernardino nor have they been used this far south within California. The trip was approximately 530 nautical miles from Redding Smokejumper Base. Five jumpers were deployed (last 5 in town).

*October 26<sup>th</sup>*, the last fire jump within the region occurs on the Klamath National Forest.

*November 4<sup>th</sup>*, a significant commitment of California smokejumper tree climbers to the New York City APHIS project.

**Tim Quigley** (RDD '79) has assumed the acting base manager position.

## Redmond

By Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74)

Fire jump action began for the Redmond Smokejumpers with boosts to Silver City and Albuquerque, New Mexico, followed by Grand Junction and Canyon City, Colorado, then Cedar City, Utah. Our jumpers at those locations made a total of 55 fire jumps. By the first of July fire activity took off in Oregon. Our heaviest users were the Umatilla, Willamette and Deschutes forests, with 65 percent of the 346 fire jumps made out of Redmond this season. 80 fire jumps were made on the Deschutes, 76 on the Willamette and 70 on the Umatilla. Despite a few records setting large fire around the state 68 percent of our fire jumps were 2 and 4 person fires. Paracargo delivery of water handling gear was used very effectively on a number of fires again this season. Its arrival within hours instead of days, on several occasions made the difference between a small fire and one costing many thousands.

As of the first of October, a wide range of project work is just beginning. Contour tree falling to minimize erosion is underway on two local area large fire sites. This week crews will once again be heading to New York and Chicago in search of the Asian longhorned-beetle. By next month local project climbing and saw work plus details to S. Carolina will provide work through the end of the year. ☺

# The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**  
(Associate)

ACCORDING TO CATHY Siegner of *Queen City News* in Helena, Montana, Governor Judy Martz's recent election as chairperson of the Western Governors' Association has handed her a bully pulpit from which to preach on some of her favorite hot-button issues. At the WGA's annual meeting in Phoenix in late June, she said her top priority as the group's chairperson next year will be reducing wildlife risks, which, in her world, means maximizing timber harvests and restricting legal appeals by environmental groups.

The governor's stance on "forest health" wasn't lost on Seattle-based reporter Elizabeth Arnold of National Public Radio. In a July 5 NPR story ("Fire Finger Pointing") about how various groups are blaming each other for Western forest fires, Ms. Arnold used an audio clip wherein Gov. Martz equated appeals of timber sales to "environmental terrorism." Subsequent to the governor's comments, Ms. Arnold reported, offices of various environmental groups, particularly in the Southwest, received threatening telephone calls.

The NPR reporter went on to cite a recent U.S. General Accounting Office report noting that while 20 federal timber sales had in fact been challenged in fiscal 2001, none actually landed in court. Finally, Ms. Arnold threw in a

pungent quote from Republican Gov. Jim Geringer of Wyoming. He said that inflammatory rhetoric doesn't help to move along the debate over timber harvesting and fire suppression. He probably wasn't referring to Gov. Martz, but the shoe certainly fits. The GAO report was requested by U.S. Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, no fan of environmental groups. The GAO issued its report ("Forest Service: Appeals and Litigation of Fuel Reduction Projects") on Aug. 31, 2001, and based its findings on U.S. Forest Service stats. Here is the abstract:

The nation's forests have undergone significant changes during the last century and a half. Human activities, especially the federal government's decades-old practice of suppressing all wildland fires, have resulted in the dangerous accumulation of hazardous fuel on federal lands. To help address this problem, Congress provided the Forest Service with more than \$205 million in fiscal year 2001 to reduce these accumulated fuels. To put as much of this money on-the-ground as quickly as possible, the Forest Service identified and funded those hazardous fuel reduction projects for which it had completed the necessary environmental analysis. As of July 2001, the Forest Service had completed the necessary environmental analyses and had decided to implement 1,671 hazardous fuel reduction projects in fiscal year 2001. Of these projects, 20 had been appealed and none had been litigated. Applicants included environmental groups, recreation groups, private industry interests, and individuals.

Governor Martz was awarded the Communicator of the Year award by the Montana Wood Products Association at their annual convention.

The Earth Liberation Front which claimed responsibility for an arson fire

August 11, 2002, at the USFS Northeast Research Station in Pennsylvania has now threatened U.S. Forest Service administrative and research facilities nationwide. A letter faxed to a newspaper in Warren, Penn., said the agency's facilities "will be targeted for complete destruction."

The Earth Liberation Front's letter claimed that the fire was in response to timber sales, oil drilling and "greed-driven manipulation of natural resources" in the Allegheny Mountains. "Their blatant disregard for the security of life and its perfect Natural balance, indifference to strong public opposition and the irrevocable acts of extreme violence they perpetrate against the earth daily are all inexcusable and will not be tolerated," read the letter. "If they persist in their crimes against life, they will be met with maximum retaliation."

Earth Liberation Front members warned they might resort to violence. "While innocent life will never be harmed in any action we undertake, where it is necessary, we will no longer hesitate to pick up the gun to implement justice and provide the needed protection for our planet that decades of legal battles, pleading, protest and economic sabotage have failed so drastically to achieve," the group wrote.

The ATF and FBI are offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for setting the fire. ATF agents staff a 24-hour hotline at 1-888-ATF-FIRE.

On July 9, 2002, the Forest Service and FEMA responded to Chuuk, Guam, Micronesia and the Northern Mariana Islands in response to a July 4 typhoon. The Forest Service was charged with operating a distribution center for disaster supplies in the Chuuk State.

In 2002, there were two fatalities associated with practicing for or taking the Pack Test, one in Montana and one in California. Does anyone recall any deaths resulting from the Step Test? 🐾

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

### "BEARLY" A SMOKEJUMPER

# BY KARL MAERZLUFT (FAIRBANKS '67)

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FULL OF DREAMS AS ANY TEENAGER, I sometimes studied the Forest Service advertisements in *Popular Mechanics*, admiring the guys hanging in the silk of a white parachute. This was so far out of my universe in Cleveland, Ohio, that I didn't dwell on it much.

Born in Germany in 1942, I had already struggled to survive the war, postwar Germany and my family's emigration to the U.S. in 1956.

Living in Cleveland was not my cup of tea, so I endeavored to get myself drafted in 1963. The Army was only too happy to oblige and sent me to Alaska, where I began the journey that would turn those parachutes dreams real.

### Promise of Adventure

When I finished my stint in the Army, I had some choices to make: stay or go back to Cleveland. Staying won, hands down. I started at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, working in a tourist shop to survive financially.

One day my roommate Stan Loudon, who worked roadside fire suppression for the BLM in Fairbanks, asked why I stuck with that dead-end job. Why not have a little adventure and be a smokejumper? I could spend the government's money while being paid to fish where nobody had been for 100 years!

Applying was easy; being selected was another matter, but eventually it worked. In 1966 I was installed as the fire guard in Ft. Yukon, a native village at the river's most northern point. That was when the party started. First, they bought all the beer in the village — not too difficult since it was officially a dry village. The home brew was another story, but somehow we all survived the frequent trips to the outhouse.

In the years since then, I seem to have forgotten all the hard work and remembered only the adventures. Being selected to be on the jump roster for my second year with the BLM was a thrill I cannot describe. The training was thorough and all the old hands were giants in my mind.

Fires were plentiful and the fishing was awesome, to say the least. During the two years of jumping I managed to exit an aircraft and land successfully at least 35 times. That includes training jumps and all fire jumps, even the eleven-man stick near Tok, Alaska. It was a tiny little fire, but the Grayling—oh man. ...

The fishing and hunting trips organized from Ft. Yukon were some of the best not even money could buy. But the bears were yet another story.

### Loaded for Bear

I discovered that many Alaska fires had bear problems, and somehow I was usually involved. Having learned to respect the awesome muscular power of these huge carnivores in earlier years, I had promised myself not to go hunting trouble.

Because 1968 was a very dry year, none of the trash could be burned on the Manley Hot Springs fire. By fall the bears were having a field day, digging the stuff up and making a mess easily seen from the air. I was one of a half dozen jumpers dispatched with a civilian contractor to clean up the garbage. Being only 2 miles from the village and the hot springs, we were able to make the best of a bad situation: garbage during the day, then hot springs, beer and dinner in the lodge at night.

This went on for a few days, until a bear decided to visit the

camp. Regularly, at 2 A.M., this critter would show up and do some exploratory eating. One night he ate all the candy, but the next night he ate the cigarettes and that sealed his doom.

Don Gordon (MSO '59) had brought his Springer Spaniel along for some good company. We all felt that the combination of dog and bear could be a very exciting mix. I was appointed to be the executioner, since I was the only one with a resident hunting license. The trouble was that the only weapon we had was a 300 H&H with a scope. Using a scope at night, one would be hard-pressed to see a bear's outline at any distance. Further complicating matters was the camp layout — fuel drums in one corner, helicopter in another, all-terrain Cat in the third corner and tents with sleeping guys in the remainder of the encampment.

In desperation, I parked the pickup in front of my tent, attached a string to the light switch, so I would have to only pull and blaze away. Wrong! That night the bear did not show at 2 A.M. as he always had. Nor at 3 A.M. Nor at 4. By then my butt was getting sore sitting on that wooden crate. I quietly got up, placed the rifle on that hard box and decided to go for a little stroll and see if I had overlooked something. I sure had. I was not 10 feet in front of the truck when, from the corner of my eye, I spotted a shadow that was not supposed to be there. "Man, why did I leave that rifle back there?" played over and over in my mind as I slowly retraced my steps.

By the time I picked up the gun, I could hear the bear biting through the C ration cans strewn in front of the truck. I crept forward, safety off, ready for a shot across the hood at this fearsome animal. Just as I lined up, he began to wander to the other side of the vehicle. Not wanting to shoot him in the rear end, I had to quickly reposition myself by the tailgate. His head down, not 4 feet away, this black monster was coming towards me alongside the pickup. Not being able to see anything through the scope, having long ago forgotten about the string and the switch, I just held the rifle barrel in the general direction of the critter's neck and let fly. There was one horrendous boom in the still of the night and it was over. He was down. He didn't move even when I poked him with the barrel. I went to bed.

The next morning, none had heard the shot. The old Cat driver almost did a somersault once he had washed his face and put on his glasses. Not two feet away from the washbasin lay the bear — quite a start first thing in the morning.

Of course, I had to stay in camp and cook dinner since I shot the damn thing. Skinning it out was fairly easy, but when I looked over my shoulder at the carcass, it looked like a man spread-eagled between two trees, and I had to cut him down. Dinner was a total

### 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.



*Karl Maerzluf*

success, but the season was pretty well over. Still, back at the loft, they were looking for a volunteer to help out with a fire near Anchorage. I stayed on to fight the fire, while all the others went back to the bases in the lower 48 states.

### **Grin and Bear It**

Stepping off the helicopter at the burn just outside Palmer, Alaska, the first words I heard were from the fire boss: "Got a hunting license?"

It seems a bear was marauding the camp. Obliging, I asked for a rifle and was pointed to the "warden." A gang of trustees was on the fire and the warden had chosen to leave his rifle leaning against the tent post. The nondescript 30-06 was supposedly sighted in for 200 yards.

Armed with this information and the rifle, I headed for the nearest willow tree at the base of the hills where the bear was moving through the tall grass and shrub. The incline of the terrain and the profuse vegetation made for a difficult shot, but I managed to squeeze one off and I could hear it connect. Still, this animal ran straight up the hill for about 100 yards. In total amazement, I fired again and brought him down this time.

To see how badly I had aimed, I skinned out this little 3-year-old grizzly and found the entry holes only one inch apart. This amazing animal had gone 100 yards without a heart, uphill yet. To think of what a fully-grown grizzly could do once he decided to have you for lunch could give one the shivers. I had heard such stories, but now I had seen one up close and personal.

There were many other amazing events during those brief three years in fire control. None were as dramatic, but all left an indelible impression that shaped the rest of my life and working career.

### **Flying High**

In 1969 I decided to stay inside the airplanes. **Nels Jensen** (MSO '62) — jumper, squad leader and friend — helped me obtain a private license. After 5 months at flight school in Santa Barbara, I came back with most of my ratings in hand and got my first job with Wien Airlines. A phrase that has stuck with me over the years is the definition of luck: When preparedness meets opportunity, you have luck! Apparently I was sufficiently focused and prepared to find myself in the right place at the right time.

Fifteen years later, a corporate raider killed the airline and put the money in his pocket, tax-free. Nice move. The event was devastating for the employees, the Alaska state economy and the emotional well-being of those who had invested a lifetime in that enterprise and were too old to start over. Somehow I landed on my feet over and over again.

Spending a year or less with each outfit, I went from jobless in 1984 to Skybus Airline in Denver, to Royal West in Las Vegas, to America West in Phoenix, to Pacific Interstate in Las Vegas, to Total Air in Los Angeles, to American Trans Air. None of them was a real career move, so when Southwest Airlines called in 1990, I did not hesitate to jump ship. I had attempted to land at SWA for the previous 5 years without much success, so I was ready.

This year marks the 12th year of employment with this outfit and, the Good Lord willin' and the creek don't rise, I will retire with honor in December 2002.

### **Smoke Dreams**

I used to wake up in a lather, having dreamed I'd quit my flying job to go back to jumping. The years have dimmed the vivid memories of those years, but what a happy time it was. Having been in Alaska for the '64 earthquake, the '67 flood and all the fires, it's no wonder that I seem to have chosen to remember only the fun times. Perhaps some summertime trail building will recapture a little of that flavor. Next year! 🐻



# Items from the Fire Pack



## Scramble the Eggs – Hold the Toast

All the supplies, which were dropped on the Horseshoe Canyon fire, were received in good shape except one package that was comprised of a partial case of eggs and 17 pounds of bacon. When this package was dropped, the bacon was uppermost and when it landed we had raw scrambled eggs. We would have preferred our eggs on top of the bacon. We presume that this package was inadvertently hooked to the chute upside down.

C. A. Merker  
Gila N.F. Supervisor

## Only One Serious Injury

The only serious injury that I sustained was on my 88<sup>th</sup> jump. I had a severe oscillation and the first thing that hit the ground was my right shoulder. Two year later I had to have it practically rebuilt. They put a pin in there to hold things together.

Wayne Webb  
(McCall '46)

## Twin Beech Crashed

I started as the PT trainer in 1958, my second year. Then we had our Twin Beech crash which killed three jumpers and a pilot, including a couple of primary instructors. I then began to train the rookies in their second week of training.

Bill Moody  
(North Cascades '57)

## Remembered Experience

I had four special projects in the CPS program but smokejumping was the highlight of the four. Although I only spent one short summer in Montana, it was a summer of growth for me in many ways. The experience was one I shall always remember.

Vernon Hoffman (Missoula '43)

## 1939 Original Group

In the fall of 1939 a group was dropped in Region 6 to determine the feasibility of dropping firefighters by parachute. The group consisted of Frank Derry, Chet Derry, Virgil Derry, Glenn Smith, Richard Tuttle and Allen Honey. Francis Lufkin made a jump near the end of the experiment.

Earl Cooley  
(Missoula '40)

## Mixed Support

We (rookies) were a real tight group. Some of the experienced guys at the base were real supportive and some were openly hostile and wouldn't talk to me. Looking back on it now, that was probably pretty standard for those going through the training program.

Deanne Shulman  
(McCall '81)

## Our Jumping Solved That

We jumped the Apache Creek fire at 0530. Cook was injured and unable to work. I built 13 chains of line and cold trailed the rest. Help was supposed to arrive by 7:00 P.M. but they didn't get there until 0700 the next morning. It could have spread but our jumping solved that.

Leonard Peterson  
(Missoula '46)

## Founded Montana Press Publishing Company

We were released in November following the end of the war and I decided to settle in Missoula. I developed a small printing business into a full-fledged publishing house know as the Montana Press Publishing Company. My interest in skiing led me to be one of the founders of the Snow Bowl Ski Area near Missoula.

David Flaccus  
(Missoula '43)

## What Is an Atomic Bomb?

In 1942, I left my position as an instructor at Drexel University and reported to the CPS program. After making my training jumps at Missoula, I was sent with eleven other men to Cave Junction where I made eight more fire jumps. On August 6, 1945, word came over the radio that an atom bomb has been dropped on Hiroshima. As the only professor on the crew, I was asked to explain what I knew about an atomic bomb. I now have been a professor of economics for over 30 years at Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio.

Albert Gray  
(Cave Junction '45)

## Heck of a Way To Treat a Rookie

I had gotten the flu and missed the first two rookie practice jumps and so was on my first jump while the rest of the class was on their third jump. The other three in the load jumped and I thought that the spotter, **Tony Percival**, would throw another set of streamers before they kicked me out. I was sitting in the door when the plane lerched and the pilot **Bob White** stood it on its wing. I was scrambling for all I was worth to hang on. As soon as the plane came back to horizontal, I saw Tony and Bob laughing for all they were worth. They thought it would be fun to see if they could shake me out.

Bruce Jackson  
(Redmond '69)

## Jumper Camaraderie

I keep in touch with more people that I jumped with than my fraternity brothers. Frat brothers are supposed to be close but the camaraderie developed in jumping is greater.

Max Glaves  
(McCall '47)



## I Can Tell by the Look in Your Eyes

It was a different bunch of fellows at the smokejumpers. **Frank Derry** said, "I can tell by the look in your eyes that you can do this job." I spent two years with the Cave Junction group and it was an experience that gave us the feeling that we made a real contribution to our country. It was here that I formed some of the closest friendships of my life: **Floyd Yoder**, **Ken Diller**, **Gus Jansen**, **Winton Stucky**, and **Ray Hudson** to name a few.

**Calvin Hilty**  
(Cave Junction '43)

## It Was a Football Helmet with a Catcher's Mask Attached

At first they didn't give us any kind of line and it was about 100 feet from the last limb to the ground. The

ground crew was giving me advice on how to get down. I just wrapped my legs round the tree and slid all the way down. We got a line after that. We also started wearing football helmets after I got my face beat off. It was a football helmet with a catcher's mask attached.

**Virgil Derry**  
(North Cascades '40)

## Inside Connections for Pioneer Smokejumper

I knew Roy Mitchell (assistant forest supervisor) pretty well from the 1939 training jumps that they had here. My younger brother was one of them that was hired by the Derrys to do the experimental jumps. Francis (Lufkin) and I also had worked on trails and stuff so I was pretty well hooked up in getting into the smokejumpers.

**George Honey**  
(North Cascades '40)

## Tough Day for the 1943 Rookies

Our day started an hour earlier. I was the last jumper, first flight. The early morning air was still compared to yesterday. I went out right after **Louis Goossen** and we both hit within 50 feet of the target. **Phil Stanley** and **Bryn Hammerstrom** sprained ankles and **Dale Entwhistle** broke an ankle.

**Ray Hudson**  
(Cave Junction '43)

## Peak Experiences of His Life

Lloyd received his Ph.D. from Washington State and was a botany professor at the University of Minnesota. He remembered his time as a smokejumper as one of the peak experiences of his life.

**Jean Hulbert**, wife of **Lloyd Hulbert**  
(Missoula '44) 🍷

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## FEATURED LIFE MEMBER JONATHAN L. SCOTT

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In 1948 SCOTTY REPORTED FOR ROOKIE training at McCall. He jumped for four years, through the 1951 season, serving the last year, 1951, as a squad leader. He had learned about the smokejumpers from **Ray Mansisidor** (MYC '46) and **Kenny Roth** (MYC '46). Both were from Homedale, Idaho, where Scotty grew up. In 1948, after finishing high school, both Ken and Ray recommended him as a jumper.

As with many jumpers in the '40s through the '70s the rest of the year was spent at school. Scotty received his B.A. at the College of Idaho in Caldwell in 1952 and in 1967 his A.M.P. at Harvard.

While at the College of Idaho he was a four-year letterman, student body president, captain of the football team and graduated magna cum laude in three and a half years.

From college he went to work for Western Enterprises and was sent to Taiwan for two years, 1953-54. He then joined the U.S. Air Force and became a pilot, flying F-86s, F-94s and F-89s.

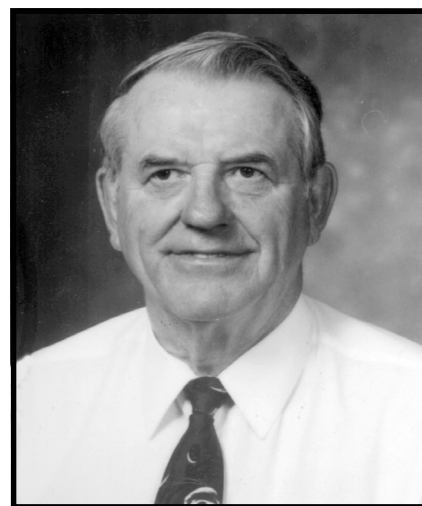
Over the years that followed he was CEO for Albertson's, Inc., Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, Scott Enterprises, Inc. and American Stores, Inc. While CEO of American Stores, Inc., it became the largest combination supermarket drug chain in the world doing over 21 billion dollars a year of business.

At present he manages personal investments and does consulting. One of his more interesting clients was Prince Walid Al Saudi in Saudi Arabia.

Scotty's hobbies include flying his two planes, a Piper 206 and a Super Cub, and scuba diving, skiing, snowmobiling, and trail bike riding. He and wife Pat both ride Harleys and average between 6,000 and 7,000 a year.

Scotty met Pat in McCall. They raised five children: Joe lives in Boise, Richard, in Dallas, Dan, in Seattle, Jerry, also in Boise and Kristine who lives in New York. They are also the proud grandparents of six grandchildren.

His e-mail is "agelessat70..." and that sums his life up. 🍷



*Jonathan Scott*

# “The Black Warrior Creek Gear Roll”

by Steve Lloyd-Davies (McCall '78)

**W**ell, you see, it was actually **Bill Yensen** (MYC '53) who thought it all up. You know how he was always telling stories about how they did things in the old days, when men were men, gear was primitive, parachutes let you down hard, and smokejumpers actually got some respect.

(I digress, but once I was walking along with Yensen and **Clay Morgan** (MYC '74) during my NED year, in 1978. Yensen started into one of his stories, “Back in '55, **Smoky Stover** (MYC '46) and I were jumping the ...” My jaw dropped, I stopped, and said, “Bill, I was born in '55!” Yensen froze and stopped his story (if you can believe that). He was speechless, albeit momentarily. Finally Morgan broke the calm. “Well, Bill, so it's finally come to that.”

Anyway, back to the story ... two years later in 1980, six of us jumped a small fire on a ridge above Black Warrior Creek on the Boise National Forest. **Steve Loomis** (NCSB '76) threw us out of the DC-3 in a howling windstorm with 400 yards of drift that scattered us all over the hillside. I was first in the door and managed to find a soft pile of gravel partway down the hillside. Yensen landed nearby. **Mick Moore** (MYC '77) burned out of a tree near us and miraculously escaped serious injury. **Tom Koyama** (CJ '74) hung up precariously between two big Douglas fir trees but managed to let down without incident. **Lynn Flock** (MYC '68) landed almost on the ridgeline, in a little saddle where we later made camp. The sixth jumper may have been **Mark Acosta** (MYC '79), but I'm not certain.

There were a couple of district helitack types on the fire already. The fire was maybe an acre in size, and we quickly lined it and later that day started mop-up. The summer of 1980 was wet and cool, probably because of the eruption of Mount St. Helens in May. Fires were scarce, and most of them didn't amount to much. This one was no exception. By the following day it was all but dead. In midday we were ordered to demob off the fire and leave the helitack crew to sit on it until it was dead. That's when Yensen came up with his brilliant plan.

“You know, in the old days, we would just pack all the gear in those big elephant bags and kick them off the hill, then follow them down and pick them up at the bottom,” he said.

One side of the ridge overlooked the main valley with a gravel road, but the slope was murderously steep, and most of us had cached our gear partway down the other side where we had landed. This was the Black Warrior Creek side, and a trail ran along it and connected with the gravel road about two miles downstream.

Yensen was convinced that we could pack up all our tools, sleeping bags, and miscellaneous fire gear in the cargo

boxes, strap them securely, then let him kick them off the ridge, follow them down the hill, kick them periodically if they hung up in brush, and meet the truck that was coming to pick us up at the bottom.

“That way,” he assured us confidently, “you boys won't have to pack full loads all the way down the hill and then two miles down the trail. I can still teach you young bulls a few tricks from the old days.”

Bill seemed to be coming into his prime, the sage and respected old warrior devising an ingenious labor saver that the young Turks could never have imagined.

Several of us offered to help him roll the boxes. “Nope,” he replied, “just take my main and reserve down for me, and I'll carry my jump suit, harness, and PG bag in my big blue bag. I can kick these three cargo boxes down this hill no sweat.”

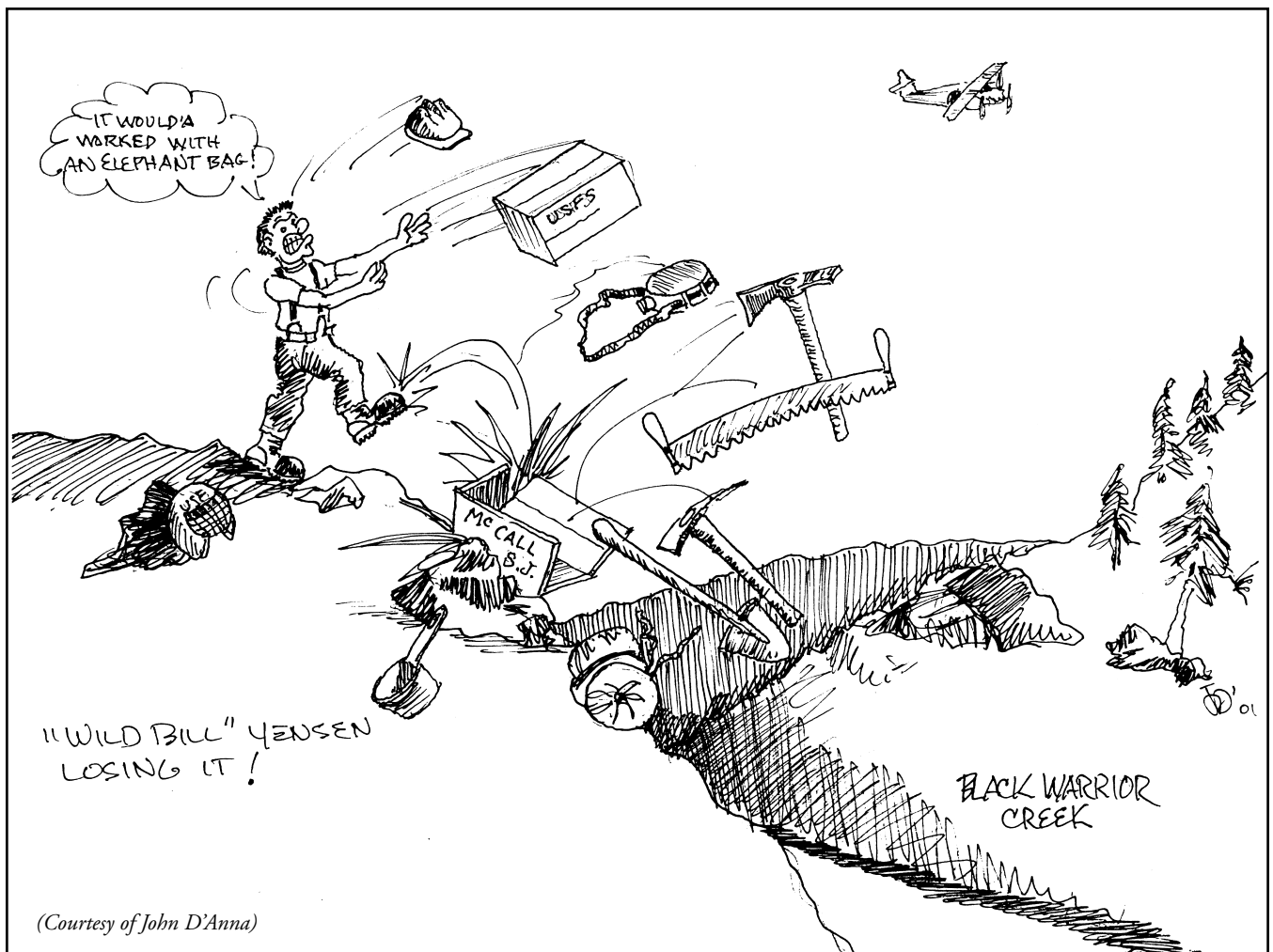
By God, we thought, that old Yensen was pretty damn sharp. Not only did he come up with a major labor saver, but he also volunteered to do the kicking himself. We helped him pack the boxes, carefully stuffing in sleeping bags, plastic tarps, collapsed cubitainers, tools, extra food, and garbage until the boxes bulged at the seams. We started reinforcing them with all the extra straps we had when Bill shooed us down the hill.

“You fellows better get going. I'll be down this hill so fast we'll end up waiting for you at the trailhead. It's going to take you boys a while to hike down to the road.”

So we set off, confident that experienced ol' Bill had scored a major coup in pack-off labor saving. And it was a steep hike for us. Of course, downhill packouts are always easier than uphill, but steep downhill trips mandate careful, slow steps to avoid falls. It took us about 90 minutes to reach the bottom and hike out along the trail to the main road.

We had previously arranged by radio for the truck to pick Bill up first since we had estimated he would easily beat us to the road. We sat down and waited. Flock had given our only radio to Yensen so he would be sure to be picked up first. A half hour passed. Then an hour. We rested on our gear bags for a while, snoozed a little, then grew bored. Koyama and I played cribbage on my small leather crib board (another Yensen innovation), with a miniature deck of cards.

The hour dragged into two. Flock decided to hike up the main road to find Yensen. We fidgeted; worrying that maybe ol' Bill had fallen and hurt himself. Damn! We silently cursed ourselves because we hadn't sent another person with him. He could be lying out there with a broken leg! Poor ol' Bill. Had we failed this humorous, bandy-legged storyteller of the smokejumpers?



Well, it seemed like an eternity (actually it was probably more like two hours), but finally the U.S. Forest Service green six-pack pickup clattered around the bend upstream from us, both Flock and Yensen aboard. However, no smiles lit their faces. Yensen looked positively grim—as if he had lost his best friend. The pickup stopped, and we silently loaded our gear. We all sensed something bad had happened. The cargo boxes in the back were in tatters. We quietly climbed aboard the pickup.

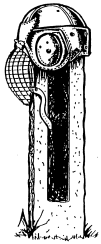
Yensen was silent for a few minutes. "Those boxes just don't hold up as well as the old canvas elephant bags," he finally offered. "After about the fourth bounce, they just sort of exploded, and tools and sleeping bags went flying everywhere. I spent hours trying to pick it all up and tie them back together."

"Did you find it all?" someone asked. Bill's silence was all the answer we needed. It was a long ride back to Boise, less cheery than it might have been. We ate dinner at Manley's, famous for huge meals and homemade pies. That buoyed our spirits a bit.

You see, in 1980 returning gear was being carefully checked and counted to prevent losses. We had to account for every shovel, Pulaski, and sleeping bag, not to mention our chutes and jump gear. Now every jumper protects the

latter to the max, but the everyday fire gear is often left to local crews as needed by local conditions. Of course, we never abandoned gear out on an actual fire, especially in the wilderness, but it was not uncommon to mix tools with other crews and come back a bit short. But in 1980 things had been tightened up quite a bit. When we returned from fires after hours, there was a big plywood box on the south dock of the loft into which we were supposed to stow all our tools so that they could be counted in the morning.

It was a long, quiet drive to McCall that night. The two hours from Boise seemed like four. That nighttime arrival is probably what saved our butts. Had we arrived during daylight, the tools would have been counted and found to be short. We simply pulled up to the back dock and unloaded our equipment into the box. We dragged our parachutes into the loft and hung them in the tower to dry. While we were doing that, persons who will be left unnamed slipped into the basement and brought up enough tools from the dull tool bin to make up for the shortfall and tossed them into the box. We all kept quiet about it, and as far as I know, the overhead never discovered the deception. But among the rank and file jumpers, no one ever again tried to roll gearboxes down the hill. 🍄



## Off The List

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

spread the word to others. Please phone, write or e-mail the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). Include the name, address and phone number of the subject's next of kin. We'll take it from there.

### **Richard M. Bradshaw** (McCall '63)

Richard M. Bradshaw, 59, died Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2002, in Billings following a long battle with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He attended Utah State University and Weber State College with studies in botany and chemistry.

Richard served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Vietnam War, where he began his career as a clinical laboratory scientist. He served with the 542 Medical Field Hospital and the 17th Field Hospital in Vietnam. He spent many summers with the U.S. Forest Service as a firefighter and three seasons as a smokejumper stationed out of McCall, Idaho.

Richard was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed shooting sports, fishing, hiking, camping, and more particularly, his artwork of Montana's prairies, rivers and streams. He was a published author, both in poetry and short stories.

### **Edward ("Nick") Nicholson** (Missoula '60)

Nick, 62, passed away Aug. 2, 2002, at his home in Darby, Mont. Following graduation from high school in Darby, he attended Western Montana College and worked as a logger. He was a smokejumper for 11 years, and then

was employed as a dispatcher on the Bitterroot National Forest before retiring in 1992. His interests included rodeos, horses, hunting and leatherwork. He loved the outdoors and always had a story after each outing. His wife Donna, a daughter, two sons, seven grandchildren, his parents and a sister survive him. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Edward Nicholson, P.O. Box 34, Darby, MT 59829. The family suggests memorials to the Guardian Angels, c/o Judy Schmidt, M.D., 2835 Fort Missoula Road, Building 3, Suite 301, Missoula, MT 59804; New Life Four Square Church, c/o John Yuhas, 303 Cole Ave., Darby, MT 59829; or Marcus Daly Hospice of the Bitterroot, 1200 Westwood Drive, Hamilton, MT 59840.

### **James R. Elms** (Missoula '59)

Jim died of a brain tumor on July 16, 2000, in Hillsboro, Oregon. He was a retired forester for the USFS, and owned his own woodworking business called The Elm Tree. Jim was a graduate of the University of Montana and had been living in Hillsboro for 20 years. Survivors include his wife Bonnie, a son and three daughters. ☹

# Ted Burgon Killed in Ambush in New Guinea!

by Chuck Sheley

What a way to start the day! I had just opened my e-mail and there was one from the Portland, Ore., *Oregonian* asking for information on Ted Burgon (IDC '52) who was killed (Aug. 31, 2002) in Indonesia. After the initial shock, I was trying to guess what had happened.

Ted and his wife Nancy left Bend, Ore., early in the month of August to head for Papua, New Guinea, where Ted would be taking over as principal at an English language school in Timika. Ted had taught overseas in ten different countries throughout his career. Even though he was retired, he continued to be called on to "go in and straighten out" schools that were having administrative problems.

It seems that a group from the school was returning to town after a picnic when their two vans were ambushed by a group with automatic weapons. Ted, who was riding in the front passenger's seat, was killed instantly. Nancy, who dove

to the floor, was the only one of the 14 people in the two vans who was not wounded.

A great thing about the NSA is getting to meet jumpers from all the bases. I first met Ted when he decided to run for the NSA Board of Directors. He wanted to be a board member who was actively involved in helping the NSA and volunteered to write for the magazine. I jumped at his offer as the job was becoming full-time and my writers were dropping out at a regular rate. Ted took over the "Jump List" from Bill Eastman. In addition, he wrote a lot of the Life Member profiles. I later found out that Ted's son lives in my town, Chico, and married one of the former cross-country runners I coached — small world!

My wife and I like to visit Sunriver, Ore., on short vacations. Each trip I would try to meet with Ted for coffee and a good visit. When we got together in July, he was

# Pioneer Smokejumpers Remembered

In the January issue of *Smokejumper* published last year, we had the obituaries of two pioneer smokejumpers. A year later we will run some of the thoughts and stories that came from others at the memorial services for **George Honey** (North Cascades '40) and **Bill Woods** (Missoula '43).

George Honey lived until the age of 95. His family came from Ireland in the late 1500s and it is said that seven of the Honey family were killed in the Revolutionary War. When he was old enough, George joined the Army and served in the Philippines where he learned his boxing skills. After his stint in the service, George fought professionally under the name of "Soldier George Honey." George worked with Francis Lufkin in the early smokejumper program in 1940. Lufkin was the fifth and Honey the sixth person to jump fires.

Bill Wood wanted to be a veterinarian and had completed two years of college when WWII came along. He enlisted but failed his physical because of his poor eyesight and asthmatic condition. Bill wanted to do something relating to public service in lieu of the military so applied for the smokejumper program. He was noted for his ability to train jumpers and provide a learning atmosphere. His instructors were never allowed to harass the students. In addition to his duties as training officer, Bill was active in making rescue jumps. He later was in charge of the Missoula Equipment Development Center, went to the National Office and back to Region 6 where he retired. 🦉



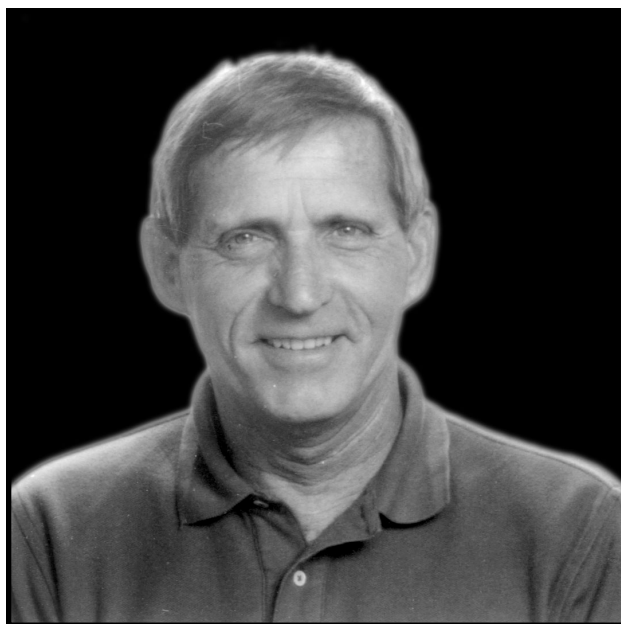
*Bill Woods*

happy to be called for this assignment. I think he enjoyed the challenge of being called to clean up a school that was in an administrative mess. Ted said that he could continue to write the "Jump List" and profiles from New Guinea and send them to me via e-mail.

I clearly remember asking if he was concerned about his safety in an area of Muslim militants. He said he thought the area was fairly safe. I think back to his article on Daniel Pearl in the July 2002 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. Ted had been in some tight situations before. How ironic it is for Ted to be killed just after writing that article.

A 1965 graduate of Idaho State University, Ted moved to the Bend area about nine years ago after working as the business manager for the Anglo-American School sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. He was president of the Oregon Water Wonderland Unit One neighborhood association and formed a group called the "Big River Baggers" which periodically cleaned up neighborhoods in the resort town of Sunriver just south of Bend.

An ex-marine, smokejumper and teacher — what a shame this had to happen. 🦉



*Ted Burgon (NSA File)*

# Blast from the Past

## Skydiving to Ocean Diving Adventure Told

by Don Dwigins

*Los Angeles Mirror News, November 1959*

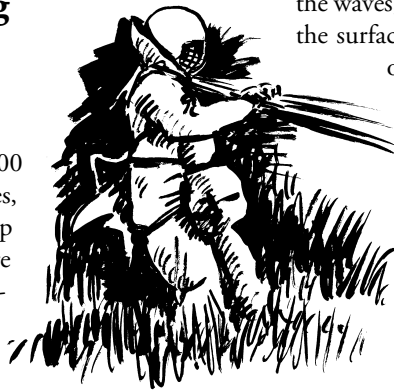
You've just stepped out of an airplane at 3,000 feet over a sunlit ocean wearing two parachutes, a skin diving suit, oxygen tanks and a razor sharp knife. You're trying out something never before attempted — a skydive clear to the ocean bottom, to prove out a new commando technique for the Armed Forces.

Suddenly below you appears a circle of gray shadows sliding through the water. They're killer whales!

That's what skydiver **Dave Burt** (Missoula '47) was yelling about yesterday when he floated down from space, near a waiting black-hulled schooner four miles off Newport Harbor.

Burt drops closer and closer to the water, instinctively bending his knees, drawing up his flippered feet. A 40-foot whale breaks water, surging upward. It half-rolls, then smashes down hard, sending a plume of spray into the air.

At this moment, Burt's buddy, Jim Hall, shoves off from the schooner in an outboard racing for the parachutist. But before he can reach Burt, the skydiver has vanished beneath



the waves, leaving only a collapsed parachute floating on the surface. A few tense moments later Burt reappears, on the other side of the schooner.

Back on deck, Burt, a bit unnerved, grinned about the unexpected brush with the sea monster. "I felt foolish with only a hunting knife," he said. "Nobody told me whether killer whales, rare in these waters, attack people. And I wasn't about to stick around to find out."

However, Burt did find out what he was after. He proved practical something military planners had said could not be done, when he first proposed it to the 101st Airborne

Division. 🦋

*The above article was sent by Starr Jenkins (Cave Jct. '48). Starr says that Dave's jump was the first known parachute jump into the ocean wearing a wet suit, scuba gear and fins to prove that it could be used by our armed forces. After jumping at Missoula, Dave later became an exhibition jumper and started his own company in Hollywood. He produced several pilot films eventually selling one which became the TV series Ripcord. Starr says that Dave later died of the results of an auto accident in the Los Angeles area.*



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# How The West Was Lost — Is That Your Money Burning?

by Chuck Sheley

President Bush toured southern Oregon viewing the state's largest forest fire in a century. Urging change to the system now in place, the president said he was "trying to bring a little common sense to forest policy."

When it comes to solving the current problem, common sense is exactly what's missing. The key to any type of fire fighting is "initial attack," a concept few seem to be considering as the mess around us intensifies.

While politicians and environmentalists argue the pros and cons of thinning forests, an easier and more obvious solution is being overlooked. A complete overhaul of the initial-attack system would make an immediate difference in the number and size of wildfires. As it stands now, fires are not being manned in a prompt time frame, and resources are being ignored.

The Biscuit Complex fire in southern Oregon — the largest in the nation during the 2002 season — burned at over 500,000 acres and has cost taxpayers more than \$150 million. Estimated loss of timber, watershed, land rehabilitation and environmental reports could add another \$100 million, adding to a total that could easily hit a quarter of a billion dollars.

The fire, caused by lightning in a wilderness area, began on July 13. It was not attacked for over three days.

When initial attack is delayed 24–48 hours under extreme burning conditions, wildfires can envelop and destroy thousands of acres. On July 16 — three days after the Biscuit fire began — the U.S. Forest Service was still in the process of building a road into the fire, and no one was on the ground building fire line.

This didn't have to be the case. For more than 60 years, the USFS has had an efficient fire fighting force in its smokejumpers. The Biscuit fire would have been a quarter-page fire report had jumpers been used quickly after its discovery. It was a perfect situation: There were 110 jumpers available the morning of July 13. Ten were an hour away and could have been on the fires by the afternoon. Seventy-nine jumpers were still available July 14, but none were used. When minutes mattered, days were wasted.

Years ago, this wouldn't have happened. For 37

years prior to 1981, the area currently being ravaged by the Biscuit fire was actively protected by smokejumpers. During this period, fires were routinely jumped within a couple hours of being reported. In 1981, however, the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base at Cave Junction, Oregon, was closed to save money. One repercussion of the closure and others like it was the steady deterioration of an efficient system to attack wildfire.

Our new military is implementing smaller and more versatile forces to handle national defense. It's time to apply such a common-sense approach to fire fighting policy. Why not set a goal to man within two hours all wildfires started under high burning condi-

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**"Somewhere along the line we need to add a key ingredient to the wildland fire fighting operation: Accountability."**

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tions? While people argued the merits of thinning versus "let-burn," we could be significantly reducing the number of wildfires in our national forests.

Somewhere along the line we need to add a key ingredient to the wildland fire fighting operation: Accountability. Call me a cynic, but it sometimes seems there's more incentive for inefficiency. One could argue that if fires were put out quickly, the tremendous amounts of money feeding equipment contractors and personnel overtime would be greatly reduced, and contractors would subsequently start applying heat to the politicians and the USFS. Even fire crews would be affected: Without actual fires to fight, crews once able to restock their equipment out of bottomless fire funding would have to do the same out of their limited annual budgets.

I'd like to think I'm wrong about that. I'd like to think that contractors, politicians, environmentalists and fire crews alike have a vested stake in tackling these fires in the most efficient manner possible.

Unless the initial attack system is improved, be prepared for the endless burning of your forests and dollars. Would you want your local fire department to wait three days when your house catches on fire? No.

That's just common sense. 🔥



# Readers Respond to Article

*The following comments were received in response to "How the West Was Lost" published on the previous page of Smokejumper.*

The ol' lead plane stuff is a good job despite the ineptness of the FS mgt. You would have a shit fit if you saw what is going on in the fire community. Storm King Mt. plus the 30 Mile Incident along with govt. hiring practices have virtually taken fire fighting to a near stand still. First, we hired people for reasons other than skill, knowledge, and ability. We then placed or rapidly promoted these persons to supervisory positions throughout the system.

Tommy Albert (CJ '64)

Well said!! I hope this piece gets published and that those shortsighted politicians and environmentalist listen up. Any fool who has worked the line knows that time is crucial in combating wild fires. Get on it while you can stomp it out rather than let it grow to the unmanageable size that the Biscuit Fire has become. Lord only knows we have enough trouble with air in the Sacramento Valley without adding the smoke we have had from the Biscuit Fires.

Don Mathis (MSO '52)

Very well written and right on the mark Chuck. One question I'd have for the "Biscuit" Fire Mgt. Team is how many of the 500,000 acres burned are "burn-out" acres? What ever happened to the direct attack or building line adjacent to the burn at night?

It seems like today is indirect attack 24 hours a day; i.e., back off to the nearest road, river, meadow, rock pile etc and burn out everything in between. I'd be willing to bet that a hefty portion of

the "burn-out" acres — were acres that might otherwise be left unscathed. I am also of the opinion that some of this "burn-out" approach may be the result of thinking that — if we can't get congress to appropriate money for prescription fire, we might as well burn all we can in conjunction with wildfire suppression.

Ken Hessel (MYC '58)

Perhaps if jumpers had been standing by in Cave Junction on July 13 they could have quickly attacked the fires, thus preventing the 500,000-acre destruction. You're on to a very specific part of the larger problem. The larger problem being lousy, unaccountable and unstudied initial attack. The federal agencies do NOT investigate or analyze their initial attack performance. No one asks why a fire escapes initial attack ... there's an overall assumption that fires get big because it's an act of god. ... The agencies do not want to evaluate themselves ... they don't want to know that many big fires could have and should have been stopped during initial attack. There is no process or policy to analyze initial attack .... it is assumed (and believed) that the best initial attack is done every time. *A large part of the initial attack problem is the dispatch system.*

Steve Nemore (RAC '69)

Excellent editorial, very well written. Hope it gets play. I printed it and put it at the ops. box here. Reading it made me realize that if you decided to expand this into an article, the foundation is in place to introduce some basic concepts about smokejumpers, including how fires are lined, how supplies are delivered, the amount of experience we bring to fires small and large, and how economically efficient aggressive IA can be.



*Newsweek/Time/US News&World* are not at all out of your league here, especially after Bush's swaggering speech on "shaking up and shaping up" America's forest mgt. policies. People need to know that big fires are a 'cash cow' to many people. Timely and efficient IA is truly a threat to that cow's bounty of bottomless funds.

**Mike McMillan (FBX '96)**

I absolutely agree. If you investigate the fires near Black Butte ranchland the ones on the Metolius (Oregon), they were not manned in proper time. We used to fly right behind the storms and drop two manners and the fires were caught that night. Now they sit on them for 2-3 days and then the winds come and things go to hell quickly. It's insane. They had to dump 50 loads of retardant in one day to stop the fire from destroying Black Butte Ranch-after screwing with it for days...what a bunch of idiots!

**Dave Wood (RAC '66)**

Yes, I've felt for some time that the FS's response to fires have been affected by other priorities. It is quite a coincidence that large uncontrollable fires became the norm about the time the "fire is good" theory hit the streets. Coincidences don't sell well. I recently had a visit with Milt Knuckles (MSO-61) who spent the last 22 years as a dispatcher on the Helena Forest. I asked him about fire policy and response which made him angry just talking about it. He said the Helena had historically been burning in its entirety every 300 years. At the present rate, it will burn every 150 years. There seems to be two factors that affect the FS response: 1. The decision to man a fire especially in wilderness areas can require days. 2. There is a zero risk mentality in crew exposure to danger on the fire line. I'm glad that you have taken up the gauntlet.

**Dave Bennett (MSO '61)**

Boy you hit the nail on the head with this one. A Vice President/Pilot for one of the heavy lift helicopter outfits really exposed the debacle. Apparently the USFS assigns **one** "bucket dip manager" per helicopter and all he does is take the tac time from start of the day to end of the day. The State will assign 11 helicopters to one "bucket dip manager." The USFS has directed that helicopter crews will stand down for a rest period during the day but this does not apply to fixed wing Air Tankers. Another time the helicopters found a dry pond and had tank trucks replenish it to be used as a dip pond. When the USFS found out about it they put a chain across the road and denied entry because, you guessed it, there was not a bucket dip manager on site.

The Forest Service is bound and determined to close the Medford Air Tanker base and move to Klamath Falls where they now have a base. This is Cave Junction all over again. We all know they say it's to save money but when they move to another location what's the first thing they do? They spend millions on a new facility. Cave Junction and Medford, as you know are right in the heart of our best timber area. Go figure.

**Lee Gossett (RDD '57)**

Chuck, thanks for sending me the article. I agree with you. I'm retired Forest Service. I worked as an entomologist in Regions 1, 3, 4, and 8. My last five years were spent as the Forest Health Coordinator in R-8. Nobody is willing to take on anything. "Analysis Paralysis" controls the Agency and its personnel. Fires are big money for a lot of people.

**Harold Flake (IDC '61)**

I am hearing some talk about the "Contract Crews" that are being heavily used in R-6. Talk like crewmembers saying, let's not

put out the fire, as it is job security. I have also heard talk like this regarding FS crews. Unfortunately, the FS has given slackards multiple tools to not fight fire. Guess the new in word is "disengage." There are MANY conditions that "warrant" disengaging. So many, that if one didn't want to fight fire, they can pull a condition out of the hat and "legally" go to the safety zone and utilize their "leanit."

I understand that the head of OMB is in Oregon looking at fire operations as he is pissed at the expenditures going on in the FS for fire. I am beginning to think (hope) we may be losing our "smokey" veil that hides many of the unnecessary expenditures we have developed for fire fighting. Logistical expenses such as more people "supporting" the fire than there are "line" fire fighters. Bottom line is not much dirt is being thrown on the fire.

**Tom Albert (CJ '64)**

You're preaching to the choir with me Chuck. Just think what kinda jumper program the funds spent on the Biscuit fire could provide. It is ridiculous. Another aspect that really bothers me is all the new fire regulations put upon us by the 30-mile fire. It's not exactly rocket science anchoring at the toe, flanking and pinching it off.

**Brad Hughes (NCSB-86)**

Very well said Chuck; I hope the right ears hear it.

**Melodie Durham Battalion Chief /South Lake County FPD**

Chuck now you're talkin! You are right, there should be no "holds" put on jumpers or any other National Resource—air tankers, hotshot crews, rapellers, and Helitack.

Hoarding of resources is done at all levels of the dispatch system. Of course hoarding is not a recognized official practice, but it is done out of fear of not having forces when the hometown is burning. Check out *Fire On the Mountain*. There is a part in the book about how Mike Lowery, of the NW Coordination Center, was blocked in his attempts to get more crews and airplanes pre-positioned in western Colorado (before Storm King blew up). John Maclean dug deep into the dispatch system and talked to lots of people at all levels.

Dispatch centers can "hide" forces by under-reporting the availability status.

Centers can also flat-out refuse to send forces because there is no "line authority" that orders the Center to do so.

Jumpers are wound up in this phony inefficient system. They are not used correctly. You are absolutely right by saying that an empty base indicates a good use of jumpers. Several times this year we ran out of jumpers in Colorado and the booster jumpers came to Colorado from Redding and Redmond...over flying our own jumpers who were "standing-by" in Nevada (being hoarded by Nevada). McCall used to be the classic example. The Payette Forest would always hold back at least one airplane and a load of jumpers. Alaska does the same thing ... the State of Alaska — who pays the BLM Alaska Fire Service for a certain amount of jumpers each year — will hold onto their load of jumpers well beyond any realistic potential for new jumper fires. This is known as the "hostage load" and these jumpers are kept out of any national use.

**Steve Nemore (RAC '69)**

Excellent letter. The only Senator that understood what you are saying was Sen. Humphrey. The first Interior and Related Agency budget meeting I attended allowed me to understand the driving principle of Gov. programs-not much common sense involved. Humphrey worked hard to get the Resources Planning Act of 1979 passed. He wanted some solid information to base his decisions on.

The Assessment part of the Act would have provided information on the points you are making. The first RPA year in 1979 resulted in budget increase for all USFS and BLM resources including fire. There are more votes in doing fire protection for urban interfaced property that there are for putting them out fast. If you remember the Fire Report of 2000, they pointed out that the cause of our current problems was because of our early fire control efforts. They did not state in the report that we ran away from as many fire in the '50s as they are today. Keep up your good work. Nothing is accomplished without action.

**Tom Uphill (MSO '56)**

Whenever we have a fire with high value timber in it that is salvageable, we have to do an EIS if we want to save/get something out of the forest, however, most are appealed and it's very frustrating. I don't know what they're going to do with the Biscuit fire — but it will need millions in restoration work alone. I guesstimate that the final cost of this fire will approach a quarter billion when all things add.

**Mike Apicello (CJ '78)**

Somewhere in my past travels I came across some figures that roughly stated that only approximately 4% of the FS expenditures are on Initial Attack. The balance is on escaped fires/project fires. It would not take a large investment to double, triple, or even quadruple the IA forces. The moneys that are NOW tied up in administrative/logistical types that have absolutely no place or value in the IA system have eaten up a lot of the available budget. This needs to change.

**Chuck Mansfield (CJ '59)**

I agree with 99% of your article and passed it along. If, in fact the big fire near CJ is going to cost \$150 million, the question really is, how many jump years could that fund?

**Dan Tinnel (Calif. Office of Emergency Services)**

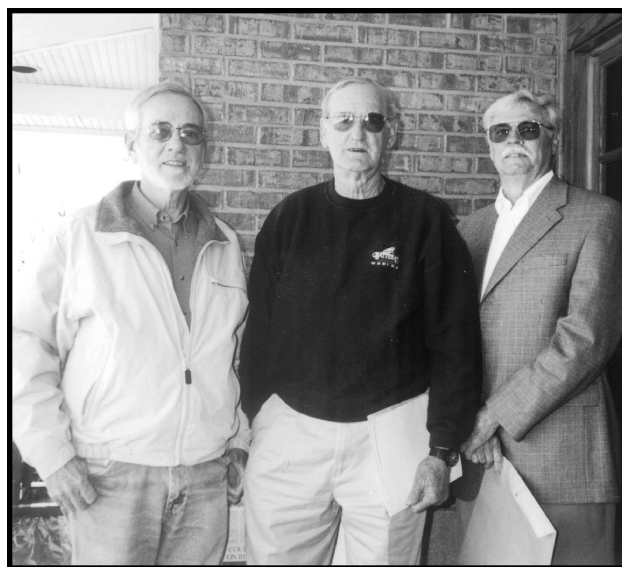
Chuck, initial attack has and always will be the best way to fight fire. I believe management is the key and the utilization of all the "tools available". There is no one magic formula. Back in the early '50s I was a forester for the ACM in Montana. We were cutting timber on a sustained yield basis and disposing of all slash. This was intensive management. This changed in the '60s and '70s, first in the federal sector, to clear cutting in blocks and planting, brought about by the demands of the market place. Bad decision. Until we can get back to intensive management we will continue to lose our resources while we bicker about the cost of management and the environmental concerns.

**Bob Dusenbury (MSO '46)**

Since the Biscuit Fire is still active let us assume that the suppression costs will go to 125 million. (Note: we met people at the Cerro Grande heliport that had been on the Silver Fire for 90 days.) All in all I feel that a fair estimate will be losses to timber resources to be 200 million. Most of the Chetco drainage is basically destroyed and 20 miles of the Illinois has been destroyed. My guess is that at least a half a cubic mile of mountains will end up in the above drainages by next spring. The Cerro Grande restoration (New Mexico) probably spent 100 million. I would not be surprised if the total costs of the Biscuit fire went over 0.5 billion.

**Chuck Mansfield (CJ '59)**

Absolutely outstanding! Just sent a similar if not so eloquent e-mail to a Talk Radio Show. I might add that the Storm King Fire was also unmanned for over two days.



*L-R: Cave Junction jumpers Jim Ferrell ('54), Bob Berry ('55) and Bob Moore ('54) recently get together in Durham, N.C. where they were all students 40+ years ago. (Courtesy Jim Ferrell)*

Possibility of compromise with the nutcase fringe — go ahead and jump the SOB's promptly THEN decide — on the ground — whether or not to extinguish them or not.

**Herb Fischer (MSO '57)**

I'm glad you emphasized "extreme burning conditions" because, in my opinion, that is a very critical difference in how we should be responding to fires. You did an excellent job of emphasizing the under use of jumpers. I think there is an equally important aspect which is retardant dispatch. Under extreme burning conditions retardant should be dispatched when a fire is reported. Under extreme conditions (perhaps Haines index 6 or 5), retardant needs to hit the fire before or at the same time a crew arrives, whether jumpers, helitack or pounders.

The issue of fire and forests is far more complex than some of us used to think. While we need to stop these unnatural high intensity gobblers, we also desperately need to get fire back into some of these systems!

One of my concerns is that in the current fear, really stupid actions will take place that will cause more problems. A NM Forest (Carson NF) is proposing, under the name of "Urban Interface" fire risk reduction, to cut trees up to 2 feet in diameter. In this system, these are the fire resistant trees, if there isn't a fuel ladder. Part of what caused the current problem is cutting the big trees. With this type of approach to the problem, the Forest Service and the politicians are losing all credibility. I agree. Initial attack improvement, especially proper use of jumpers and immediate retardant dispatch, is the immediate key to dealing with these gobblers.

**Jon Klingel (CJ '65)**

Good article. I just got back from flying as a helicopter coordinator on the Biscuit Fire.

My bed each night was a sleeping bag on the Cave Junction smokejumper base lawn. Sure brought back many memories. It reinforced exactly what you are saying and it was a sad day when they closed the base for whatever political reasons. I talked with many of the local forest service people who also agree that the IA

capabilities have gone downhill since the closure. Keep up the good work and maybe things will turn around eventually.

**Doug Houston (RAC '73)**

Just a note to let you know that Chuck Baker (Denver) read your entire op-ed on his radio talk show today. He devoted an hour comparing the initial situation on the Biscuit Fire to similar circumstances that allowed the Hayman Fire to explode. Your piece and his comments generated a lot of calls.

**Bill Ruskin (CJ '58)**

Nice work! When I worked on fires the local Ranger had jurisdiction rather than the smokejumper crew. We had some real dips who hadn't a clue what to do in fighting a fire and had they let the jumpers run the show they wouldn't have had blow-ups. We have a federal system for defense and the military units come under the federal command. That's the way it should work with fire fighting — let the experts run the show and the local districts supply what resources they can.

**Jim Clatworthy (MSO '56)**

I think there is a lot of sense to what you are saying. There have been a number of similar stories back here (Colorado) about the Hayman Fire. When the fire was reported the only fire department called was the local volunteer department. Between them and the Forest Service they battled the fire alone. No one ever called the many other departments in the area. There were over 200 firefighters waiting to be called. Some of them even called the Forest Service and volunteered to respond and were told no. Who knows what might have happened had they responded?

**A Colorado Magazine Reporter (on assignment in Calif.)**

Well done Chuck — If they won't listen, maybe it is time for gyo-jumpers to come to life.

**Larry Welch (CJ '61)**

I am compelled to respond to Chuck Sheley's editorial because he makes an excellent point. I have learned that the Forest Service does not have Fire Engine Dispatch and Tracking Systems for the Fire Engines operating in extreme fire zones such as Southern California, Southwest or Rocky Mountains. Last fall three fire engines had to back out several miles during a fire blow out because they had driven past the last turn around.

The company I work for is currently working (at our cost) on a solution where there is a computer and map on-board in the fire engine linked to GPS to provide the driver real time information on location, routes, hazards, bridge loadings, turn-arounds, water fill ups, etc. We hope that we can convince the Forest Service to do something before an accident happens.

**Tim Rogan (Titan Systems Geospatial)**

It is hard to believe that Smokejumpers were in striking range of the Biscuit fire but not used. What a travesty. I think most of us appreciate the role of wildfire as a natural element in plant succession but this was not the one to let burn and that of course is

not the issue. Your well-presented point deserves policy level attention.

**Pat Scheid (MSO '58)**

You hit the nail on the head on many of your points. This summer was a banner year for fire mismanagement. In their efforts to protect the firefighters on the ground, the fire managers have shifted the risk to other places. Remember the Grayback Crew that was killed (5 persons) on the highways of Colorado? Maybe if the Hayman fire had been fought more aggressively, fewer firefighters would have been needed lessening the exposure to travel and highway accidents. Did you know that a group of smokejumpers were in the air and told they were not needed when that fire was only 20 acres? It grew to 138,000 acres making it the largest wildfire in Colorado history.

The Mission Ridge fire started out of Durango while a group of smokejumpers were at the airport. Jumpers were never used and 78,000 acres burned along with 33 houses. The fire would burn too hot during the day to do anything and then there would be no night crews when it was approachable. The lack of aggressive fire fighting caused this fire to get very large exposing many more people in the long run. One faller was killed on this fire.

A four-person Helitack crew turned down airtankers and jumpers just outside of Grand Junction. The fire got away and grew to 15,000 acres.

We dropped four jumpers on a fire outside Carson City and did not man a smaller fire just below the four jumpers. It was a single tree burning in a draw. Even though the jumpers repeatedly requested help that night and through the next morning, jumpers just sat at the Carson City airport. Finally the jumpers were given the order to respond but at noon it was too late. The single tree that I had personally noted the night before took out the entire drainage and the four jumpers were evacuated.

The biggest tragedy is the lack of accountability. The sad thing is all of these incidents will occur again and again because no one is made responsible. Colorado, Oregon, and Arizona set new records for the largest fires ever in their states. The lack of aggressive fire fighting will cause fires to get bigger and expose more people to hazards. God, I miss the old days of working hard and catching fires.

**Walt Wasser (MYC '79)**

Great essay! 13 of us jumped a two-acre fire out of West Yellowstone back in August. It cost \$6,000 for us to suppress. About a week later, a two-acre fire was reported on Sheep Creek. Dispatch told us it wasn't "doing much" and they were hiking two available crews in so we would not be jumping it. But you know what happened ... the time it took for the crews to get to it was too long, and the fire blew. I forget the acres, but the cost on the last Incident Report was 2.2 million.

**Billy Bennett (WYS '98)**

Chuck— From a retired 42-year wildland firefighter veteran, I want to compliment you on your article. Very astute observation! I was a member of the Rainbow Type I Team (R-5 Team # 3) and I watched some real "hum dinger decisions." In one case while on fires in R-6, we were dispatched to a series of fires on the Wallowa-Whitman NF. On arrival we found 93 active lightning caused fires burning (most unattended) and no jumpers on scene or on order. The local were critical of the inaction by the USFS personnel and no one appeared to be in a decision making position. All decisions were coming from LaGrande. What started out as a manageable situation deteriorated quickly due to inaction. I hope this will catch someone's attention.

**Norman J. Silver (State Forest Ranger /Retired) 🦋**

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# Observations from a Long-Time Firefighter

by William E. Selby  
(North Cascades '61)

I SPENT 40 YEARS in the Forest Service. I started in '58 and retired in '98, and I'm still fighting fires as an AD every summer.

Each year, since I retired, the fires have become larger and more intense, mainly because of delays in initial attack and fuel build-ups. When I jumped at NCSB in the early '60s, smokejumpers had the upper hand on most new starts. Rangers, dispatchers and firefighters knew their areas of responsibility and the resources available to them. Gradually, Congress and the Service eroded the program by cutting funds, reducing personnel and closing bases. A lot of this happened on the heels of low fire occurrence years, but the government never increased the budgets as the trend toward high fire danger years and fuel loading increased.

Think what we could do with a timely, flexible, proactive budget, earmarked annually for operating and maintaining the bases, equipment, aircraft and personnel we need to have. Now, there is a trend to phase out more of the jumper program in favor of rappelling crews. I'm not knocking that program. It has its purpose, but I believe there is still a dire need to have jumpers as well as rappellers.

Budgets have been shifted toward environmental concerns as pressures from special interest groups make themselves heard. The NEPA program has a valid purpose but the environmentalists have used it as a tool to virtually close down forest management. The use of a form letter and a stamp can stymie a timber management program for years. Without adequate, timely management, (thinning from below, selective harvesting, clear cutting in special cases, prescribed fire, and livestock grazing) to maintain healthy stands, the build-up of undergrowth and down timber will exponentially increase, creating conditions for catastrophic fires. There are still many, many, acres that are inaccessible

by ground vehicles.

Lots of fire access roads are being closed for various reasons, good and bad. Now, the Sierra Club, et al., wants the Forest Service to fireproof "Community Protection Zones" in the urban interface. Meanwhile, planners, developers and home builders continue to promote housing construction in forested areas with little, or no regard, of the hazardous conditions around them. The fire proofing of communities should be the responsibility of the local planning commissions, developers, homeowners and private landowners, NOT the number one priority of the Forest Service.

A lot of folks in upper management have been, and are, accelerating through the chairs without the opportunity to get adequate field experience. In addition, people in high levels of management are from urban areas and only know what they were taught in classrooms. They are more "business management" oriented instead of resource managers who have had good, solid, field training and experience.

Many specialized dispatchers are unfamiliar with the areas within their span of control; some of them are summer hires unfamiliar with agency terminology. We cannot afford to take each one out for a season, or two, of field orientation. The GIS system has a wealth of information in it but it is rarely used during the initial dispatch period. The Incident Command System has helped to reduce agency jargon and to standardize terminology between federal, state and local organizations. The development and use of Task Books to qualify firefighters is a step in the right direction. We have

good, professional people in the field at the lower levels of the fire organization, but it will be a while before these folks get into positions of power and influence, and there is still "many a slip 'twix the cup and the lip."

It's a fact — management personnel who should be out in the field monitoring and managing the resources and learning their areas of responsibility spend entirely too much time in meetings and in the office. I believe the agencies will continue to suffer as more "specialized protagonists" and "ungrounded" folks are hired and promoted by the agencies. I saw it coming on the districts and the forests where I worked; sometimes we were our worst enemies when we had to develop a timber management program. We'd spend weeks haggling with specialists, well schooled in their particular fields, but lacking abilities to accept compromise and that was before the environmentalists had a crack at the program.

I applaud you for speaking up on behalf of the smokejumpers. I'm sorry people at all levels of the government sometimes devalue its importance. 🦅

*Bill started as a forester/range con. with the Forest Service in 1958; worked on the Okanogan, Malheur and Fremont Forests. He was director on the Ape Cave, Skyhook, Lost and White River fires and has worked on over 220 large fires and countless ABC fires. Bill is retired from the R-6 Regional Office in 1998 with 40 years of continuous service. He still works as an AD firefighter, red carded as a Type I operations section chief, an air tactical group supervisor, and a division/group supervisor.*

## Upcoming Reunions

McCall \_\_\_\_\_ June 20–22, '03

NSA \_\_\_\_\_ June 18–20, '04, Missoula

# Thoughts on the Biscuit Fire

by Don Bisson (Cave Junction '78)

Greg Gilpin, Grants Pass Unit forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry, in "Land of Fire" (Aug. 3, Extra), gave some statistics on acres burned by wildfire on the Siskiyou National Forest over the years. He said that between 1910 and 1940, the Siskiyou averaged 20,000 acres burned per year. Since then, the annual average has plunged to 3,000 acres. Thanks to Gilpin for these numbers, and to the *Daily Courier* for allowing me to tell "the rest of the story."

Subtract the 150,000 acres burned in the last 20 years, and you see an oddity, 41 years (1940 to 1981), when a total of 33,000 acres burned on the Siskiyou. In the other 52 years (1910 to 1940 plus 1982 to present), well over one million acres — and counting — burned.

Let me explain. From 1943 to 1981, Siskiyou smokejumpers in Cave Junction protected this land of fire from fire, so well, in fact, northwest firefighters nicknamed it the "Asbestos Forest." It was a part-time job, as they also protected the Umpqua, Rogue River, Winema, Fremont, Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests. I'm sure their acres burned will reflect the contrast.

I was a smokejumper then, but have the statistics for only one year, 1979, courtesy of our pilot. A total of 28 Siskiyou jumpers landed on 68 fires throughout the West that year. Our best customers were the Rogue River and Siskiyou National Forests, which had four fires each. We caught most of the fires in their infancy.

Some will blame this suppression for our current fire problems, on a buildup of fuels. Which fire should we have let get away? Building up fuels, or growing, is quite simply what a healthy forest does. Nothing short of paving the place will make it safe from fire. When forests are opened up, brush takes over. The immediate beneficiaries are the annuals, plants and grasses that die in the summer. These flash fuels are enemy number one to initial attack firefighters.

I first saw the entire Silver Creek drainage from Bald Mountain in the early 1970s. It was impressive then, thick old-growth Douglas fir everywhere, except for a large slide on the Silver Peak side. Some of it burned in 1987, and now the rest. The U.S. Forest Service removed a key initial attack tool from this area in 1982 by closing the smokejumper base. Soon we may lose another, the air tanker base in Medford. What's next, Forest Service? Outlaw the Pulaski!

"Fight fire aggressively, and provide for safety," is the first rule of fire fighting, as written by the Forest Service. It was how it was done for those 40 years. Something could be going on here, between the lines. I hope the Forest Service proves me wrong.

Bring in jumpers from Alaska now. Their fire season is over. Return a jump base to Cave Junction next season, and keep the air tankers in Medford. If not, it seems to me there is a secret wish to create a land of fire here and salvage what they can. 🌲

*Donald Bisson worked as a forestry technician and contract employee in the woods from 1974 to 1986. He now is a plumbing contractor in Grants Pass.*

## BOOK REVIEW

### A Short Review of a Worthy Book

by Starr Jenkins (Cave Junction '48)

*The Smoke Jumper* by Nicholas Evans.

Most smokejumpers will be lured by this title to read this hardcover bestseller from the author of *The Horse Whisperer*. And Nicholas Evans again in *The Smoke Jumper* will not disappoint. Evans effortlessly creates numerous live, breathing characters and spins you a story that will move your heart and hold you to the end. Yet be prepared for a novel and love story that is only about a third in the smokejumping realm and two thirds in other well-wrought locales and conflicts elsewhere — such as New York, Bosnia, Kentucky and several countries and wars in Africa.

Evans is a master of creating people by presenting their life-like thoughts, dialog and action; and then you just follow these people as they live out their struggles in searching for love and acceptance. In the smokejumping scenes, there are a few technical flaws. He succeeds in presenting the attitudes, torments and humor of this bantering brotherhood and their bizarre lives. And he gives you authentic scenes of Montana and all the other places with an absolutely lifelike ring to all the individuals.

The story itself is a moving one, of two jumping buddies in the nineties — one a musician from New York, the other a cowboy from Montana — who both fall in love with the same woman, and all three characters go through three separate hells before finding an ultimate resolution. I won't give you the plot because he tells it so well in the book. Suffice to say that the struggles of the three protagonists require the skills and courage of the smokejumpers at several crucial points in the story.

🌲

## 2002 Fire Season Smokejumper Contribution

by **Doug Houston** (RAC '73)

During the fire season of 2002, I had the opportunity to work in the Pueblo, Colorado, interagency dispatch center as an "aircraft coordinator." I was there for the month of June and during that time worked with seven Type I teams, a Boise BLM smokejumper spike base operation at Canon City, and with various single resource individuals who were current smokejumpers or retired smokejumpers working the AD route. I tried to take note of all of those individuals who were in the Colorado or New Mexico area assisting with the fire suppression efforts.

Listed below are those individuals and the capacity that they were in during that month. The list does not include all of the current smokejumpers who worked out of Canon City, although the operation

was a huge success and assisted in numerous initial attacks preventing many new starts from going big/bigger. I know that I missed many other individuals and apologize for that. You can kick my butt the next time you see me. I do want to recognize those that I did keep track of, though.

They were: **Bob Hurley**, **Terry McCabe**, **Joel Curley**, **Dave Custer**, **Bill Moody**, **Ken Perry**, **Gary Baumgartner**, **John Gould**, **Dave Pettis**, **Todd Onken**, **Randy Nelson**, **Jack Firestone** and **Diane Pryce** (air attack); **Kent Harper** (Type I air operations branch); **Ted Moore** (FMO); **Willis Curdy** (air attack pilot); **Bill Allred**, **Nels Jensen** and **Jamie Tackman** (lead plane pilots); **Bob Madden** (Type I structure protection); **Jack Kirkendall** (Type I operations); **Mike Waldron** (air attack trainee); **Paige Houston** (strike team

leader); **Barry Hicks** and **Bob Cunningham** (area command); **Jim Clairmont** (extended dispatch); **Gary Murphy** and **Bob Miller** (dispatch coordinator); **Bert Mitman**, **Steve Nemore**, **Dave Hade**, **Buck Nelson** and **Jim Veitch** (division group supervisors); **John Gale** (LaGrande IHC supervisor); **Andy Mitchell** and **Phil Perkins** (Type I operations); **Gary Johnson** (air support) and **Steve Reynaud** (faller).

I know there were many more who were out there enjoying retirement and helping out where they could. Maybe it would be good to track in the future identifying all positions filled by smokejumpers other than the daily "going out the door of a perfectly good airplane" kind of people. They do make a difference and the experience just can't be replaced. Keep up the good work. You are needed. 🙏

## The Biscuit Fire — How Would You Handle It?

by **Jerry E. Schmidt** (Cave Junction '62)

Forest Supervisor (Retired)  
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest  
and Thunderbasin National Grassland

Here is a short chronology of the Biscuit fire situation along with some of my thoughts about our fire management program and the 2002 fire season. I am doing this because I was concerned about some of the things I had heard pertaining to a lack of initial attack, the costs of suppression, and management on the part of the FS. I obtained this chronology from talking to some of the people involved and I believe it is pretty accurate. I wanted to imagine being in their situation and see if there was something I would have done differently that would have made a difference.

### Chronology of the Biscuit Fire Complex

- The Biscuit fire started on July 13. On that day the BI (burning index) was 47 (the average for that day was 38). As most of us know precipitation during the weeks before July 13<sup>th</sup> was low and the potential for extreme fire behavior was high.
- From July 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> there were 12,000 strikes of lightning that occurred within Oregon. From that there were 375 fires started on Oregon NFs; 240 of the fires were in SW Oregon. On the Tiller Ranger District of the Umpqua NF a total of 116 fires were ignited by lightning on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.
- On July 13<sup>th</sup> the preparedness level nationally was Level 5 (the highest meaning that all suppression



resources are likely to be exhausted). There were 34 project fires already staffed within the western U.S.. Many of these included heavy involvement by resources from Oregon. For example on A.M. of July 13<sup>th</sup> the following was the IA Resource situation within Oregon and R6:

- o Two of the four rappel crews were already on other fires. (*The Siskiyou rappellers were in Colorado*)
- o Five of the 10 air tankers stationed within R6 were available.
- o Seven of the 12 Hot Shot crews were out of region on large fires.
- o Fifty percent of the R6 Type II crews (20 person) were out of the region on large fires. (*103 crews available*)
- o All of the initial attack crews from the Two Rivers Zone (Illinois Valley/Galice combined) were already on fire.
- o Twenty-one SJ at Redmond were available in A.M. There were more available from other bases but there were still not enough to go around.

By 5 P.M. of the 13<sup>th</sup> all of the available resources listed above had been dispatched and of the 375 Oregon fires only 16 exceeded 100 acres due to the effectiveness of the initial attack.

Two fires were discovered on the Siskiyou NF. One was within a wilderness area (Carter fire) and the other (Biscuit fire) was within a roadless area difficult to access. The Forest requested both SJ and rappel crew IA on both fires. However, due to the remoteness of these fires and the values threatened from other fires these two fires were low priority on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The Siskiyou NF was told that all aerial delivered IA forces are committed and that none would be available for 48 hours. In other words, with all the new fire activity and the values in jeopardy the Biscuit and Carter fires were initially low priority for aerial delivered IA forces.

- On the 14<sup>th</sup> a Type II crew was dispatched to the Carter fire within the wilderness, and a third fire called Biscuit fire #2 was discovered in the area. Air tankers were ordered to support ground crew, but the request couldn't be filled. A Type 2 OH team was requested for the Biscuit fires with two dozers to start opening the old closed roads into the area. The Carter and Biscuit fires were about 12 miles apart.

- On the 15<sup>th</sup> a 2nd Type II crew was dispatched to the Carter fire. Two Type I and two Type II helicopters are ordered for the Biscuit fires, with the Types IIs arriving on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and a single Type I on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- At 12:30 on the 15<sup>th</sup> the Florence fire was discovered about 12 miles north of the Carter fire. The Florence fire was burning within the wilderness in an area burned during the 1987 Silver fire and it was 5–7 acres and spotting (grass, brush, and a lot of windfall tree boles and tops). Also, the Sour-dough fire was discovered SW of Biscuit fires. Total within the complex is now five fires. The whole five-fire complex is now called the Biscuit Complex. *Note: There is not an approved "fire use" plan for the area where the Biscuit Complex fires occurred and at no time did the Siskiyou NF leadership try to manage this as a fire use prescribed fire. Even if the backcountry had an approved plan for implementing fire use the prescription criteria for doing this would not have allowed it under the extreme burning conditions that existed July 13<sup>th</sup>.*
- On the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup> a Type II crew was dispatched to the Florence fire. At 6:30 P.M. this fire was 15–20 acres spotting. The crew gets to within 1-mile of the fire by late night and camps for safety reasons.
- Early A.M. of the 16<sup>th</sup> the crew boss walks to the Florence fire. It takes one hour to travel one mile due to downfall and heavy fuel on ground left from 1988 burn. Crew boss decides not to engage fire due to 11 safety reasons, (reasons derived from "10 standard orders" and "situations that shout watch out"). The Florence fire is now 50 acres. The crew does, however, start clearing an access route (escape route) to the fire. Last year (2001) another fire started in this same area was immediately attacked with several smokejumpers, helitack and air tankers, but due to the resistance to control (fuel load with fuel continuity and fire behavior) the fire grew to over 300 acres and cost over \$3 million to suppress.
- By 5:30 P.M. on the 16<sup>th</sup> the Carter fire is contained and the Florence fire is 250 acres. (Sounds like a good crew boss decision earlier in the day).
- On the 17<sup>th</sup> a MAC (Multi Agency Coordinating) Group is set up to manage multiple fire situation within Oregon, several of which are threatening homes and communities. The Biscuit Fire Complex (with its five fires) is 14<sup>th</sup> priority out of 15 large fires or fire complexes due to its remoteness. The

Biscuit Fire Complex now has 1950 acres total burning with two crews working on Florence fire access route, two dozers working on Biscuit access and two Type II crews are walking out from Carter fire to attack another fire.

- To shorten a long story, it was not until July 24 that the area command determined the Biscuit Fire Complex was 2nd priority. On that day the Florence fire blew from 8,080 acres A.M. to over 11,000 acres by 6 P.M. overrunning the residential area that suppression forces were trying to protect. After this point, the fire spread and became the largest of the 2002 season.

As I have already said, I wanted to document this so I could imagine being in the situation and see if there was something I would have done differently that would have made a difference. **There wasn't.**

There are some other things I am trying to imagine. They are the fuel load and fuel continuity; assessing what needs to be done to be most cost efficient without losing valuable resources or jeopardizing safety; and estimating the rate of line construction capabilities within this forested area and how these capabilities match the expected fire behavior and rate of spread.

It is easy for me to imagine the fuel continuity and fuel load due to 90 years of effective fire suppression without any compensating management action to break up the fuel continuity. In all my 42 years of fire suppression activity I can think of very few wildfires that, at the time, should not have been suppressed. However, I can remember many instances where I could see that within the forested areas we were getting tremendous "fill in" in canopy cover and build up of continuity within forest fuel ladders. Because of this, the wildfires we often see today burn more intensely than most of the fires most of us saw 40 years ago.

Some of the fires we have seen in recent years build up such momentum and heat intensity that it takes thousands of yards of reduced fuel loads or significant humidity increases to get the fire back down on the ground where we can do something with it. The need is to continue with the aggressive initial attack, as Chuck Sheley points out, but also be aggressive with the fuels management accomplishments to include human ignited prescribed fire as is already being done (every year the federal and state agencies across the nation implement many thousands of prescribed fires with less than 1 percent escaping). We must perfect our ability to use wildfire under prescribed and controlled conditions to accomplish fuel treatment and forest health objectives. We must continue with and

expand mechanical treatment as the current administration is advocating. Commercial logging, if done right, should be part of this where it's feasible.

Most of us know that, for eons, the most powerful natural influence in our forested landscapes throughout the nation, particularly in the West, is fire. It is a major force for initiating forest renewal. Insect infestations, blow downs and other things do this but not to the extent that wildfire does. If none of us were around and wildfire was doing its thing this natural disturbance would be recreating a mosaic across the landscapes that differs between ecosystems. In some areas, such as where ponderosa pine or Douglas fir were dominant, fires would burn in the same area fairly regularly like every 15 to 30 years and they would be primarily surface fires and under burns leaving some burned out thickets and minimum forest debris on the forest floor. There would be more openings and wider spacing between larger trees. Once in a while one of these fires would burn intensely causing more mortality and covering larger acreages.

In the spruce fir, lodgepole, and some of the other higher cooler ecosystems fire occurrence would be very infrequent; maybe 100 to 300 years within the same area. The fires would burn intensely and kill practically all the trees causing a complete stand replacement, but because of other stand replacement fires occurring at other times in adjacent areas each burn would be relatively small in size like maybe 100 acres to 10,000 acres. This is small when compared to 500,000 acres, right? Once in a while a fire would rage all summer and grow to a huge size but within the fire area there would be a mosaic caused by low intensity burning adjacent to high intensity burning. By the way, I am

### **Smokejumper History (Yearbook) Status:**

The Turner Publishing Company promises to send the history books to those who have ordered them during January 2003. 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.

told that within the Biscuit Complex area there is a mosaic due to the wide variation of burning intensity.

I am concerned about costs but I do not know the solution so long as many of us in the American West want to have our “home in the forest.” Also, within the forests we have other high value resources like many domestic watersheds critical for reservoirs and

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## **We do not size our churches based on Easter Sunday attendance and we do not size our fire organization based on the worst conditions on record.**

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community water supplies. Everyone knows we have many whole communities intertwined with forested areas. Fire protection costs are going to remain high.

How much initial attack should we have? This is another big cost item. Today, in R6 alone there are 35 SJ at Redmond and about the same at NCSB. In addition there are six rappel crews and numerous helitack crews that we did not have 40 years ago. We have a much more extensive road system and numerous engines, contract crews and organized crews available. We have interagency central dispatch to insure the best coordination and priority setting. All of the NF and BLM units have undergone a comprehensive fire analysis, which incorporates 20–30 years of history documenting our actual experience with every single fire and what it took to suppress it. Information pertaining to IA time and rate of spread etc are all included. In addition a net resource value change due to each fire is incorporated. This whole assessment is modeled and the most efficient level for each unit is determined. This process determines today’s manning and this determination is updated every five years. **My point is that we do not size our churches based on Easter Sunday attendance and we do not size our fire organization based on the worst conditions on record.** If we were to add more SJ and/or IA how many would you add and where would you add them and how would you justify your proposal to Congress?

One other consideration for 2002 is recognizing the limits to human capabilities including smokejumpers. Firefighters have to work at a sustainable pace and maintain their safety at all times. Fire season in 2002 began in May and continued late into the fall. Many fires were relatively understaffed due to the unavailability of resources requested for all the fires. The leadership and overhead must be realistic when deploying initial attack personnel to insure that the fire smokejumpers, rap crews and helitack are being dispatched to is a fire that they can handle and not one

that they will be wasted on because when it is first discovered it is already a fire that is spreading, spotting and burning with an intensity that 2, 4, 6, 8, 20 or 50 people are not going to control on initial attack. During a multiple fire situation when burning conditions are extreme these are often tough calls, but they have to be made. *Note: Through tree ring analysis, scientist this year has determined that most western areas are experiencing their most severe drought since 1725.*

I am not sure how much of all circumstances of this kind of fire season I completely understand. I am not sure anyone ever does, but I do know that there is always more than what I have heard and there are usually many “right” ways to do things. Also, I know, like 40 years ago, there is some confusion and there are misunderstandings, people make mistakes and that hindsight is almost always 20:20. I am satisfied from what I understand that our fire organization today is as good or better than it has ever been. They use a lot more technology than we did 40 years ago and they are doing their best. We ought to be proud of them. I hope this helps with some of your concerns. 🍄

*Note from Chuck Sheley: Like Jerry says there are misunderstandings and different perceptions about what happened. There were 110 smoke jumpers available from all bases on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 79 available by the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> with more returning. There were 76 available the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> which shows the continual return of jumper even though they were being heavily used. Earlier that day a load of 10 jumpers from Redmond stopped at Medford to fuel after a dry run. Dispatch said, “can’t use you — needed you two days ago.” When I asked why the Type II crew didn’t continue to the fire-stopping a mile short on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Biscuit information officer said, “The crew had to get rest so the proper ratio of work to rest hours could be maintained.” According to the information officer, the ground crew sized up the Florence fire by 11:30 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. They determined the fire activity was too great and “disengaged” and returned to Pine Flat to set up camp.*

*To me the differences between the control of the Carter fire and the escape of the Florence fire indicates the difference in the quick initial attack on the Carter fire where a crew walked in versus the lack of the same on the Florence fire.*

*To justify adding IA forces to the agencies (for Congress) I would point out the number of small fires that have become large due to lack of IA forces. Those stats could come from the FS/BLM but might be better obtained from outside audit. With acres burned and costs rising on a steady rate since 1977 it is reasonable to conclude that this will continue until enough of the U.S. is burned and we have natural fire breaks.*

*I would hit it where the government seems to be concerned the most: loss of life! We haven't been losing more people on the fire line than in the past, we've been killing more people in the activities associated with fighting these mega-fires. The government reaction to losing four firefighters (30 Mile) has been to change our fire fighting procedures resulting in larger fires. This means more people on the fire line. The fact that anytime you put thousands of people into the field, you will have fatalities via vehicle and aircraft accidents. The crew that stopped walking at midnight one mile from the Florence fire did so because of new safety guidelines. Then they arrived at that fire at 0930 the next morning. I have a tough time buying this as effective fire fighting.*

*I think we ought to take a look at the money involved in mega-fires. Maybe it's time we start staffing our IA for the worst possible scenario. I still have trouble with the lack of jumper use when there were 70+ available. Are they being saved for some reason? In my opinion, the best use of jumpers would be to have none available.*

*We need to man fires when they can be handled by a few firefighters instead of waiting until the fire is out of control. The 40 years the Siskiyou was under the protection of the jumpers, the average burn was less than 800 acres a season. Look at what has happened since. The Siskiyou has only used jumpers on 22 fires in 22 years. Is this efficient and effective fire fighting?*

## SMOKEJUMPER

Special 2002 Fire Season Feature

# Your View Counts — So Share It

by Chuck Mansfield (Cave Junction '59)

*Smokejumper* readers are about as diverse a group as you can find. We're opinionated too — particularly when it comes to fire control. But what's the best way to get an opinion heard? Read on to learn effective ways of propelling your ideas into the public venue.

I recently came across a book by Mark Mathis titled *Feeding the Media Beast: An Easy Recipe for Great Publicity* (Purdue University Press, 2002). After reading the book, I can understand why some of my own communications have aroused interest and others have inspired loud yawns. Mathis concentrates on generating publicity for small organizations, but his points can also apply to individuals. He has 12 rules for effectively getting ideas out there. Chief among them are the first three: **The Rule of Difference**, **The Rule of Emotion** and **The Rule of Simplicity**.

Mathis argues that most people you'll want to target (e.g., journalists, politicians) will give you only a few seconds to state your main point. That's where his first Rule kicks in: **Be different**. The best way to capture a reader's attention is to distill your thoughts into a unique point of view — and then state it forcefully and clearly. For example, rather than say that the fire fighting community has a lot of problems, say that it needs to become more aggressive. Lead with a catchy title like, "Over-Aggressive Fire Control: A Foolhardy Myth?" or "Bambi Dies as a Result of Timid Fire Response." The latter might piss off a few people, but it will inspire many more to read on.

The second Rule is **emotional involvement**. Don't be afraid to show genuine (albeit controlled) passion for your subject. The line, "I put my life on the line to protect that forest, and now it's gone" may seem a little strong, but the statement does pack the kind of emotional punch that can resonate. An appropriate metaphor can also underscore the deep-seatedness of

an ideal, as in the line, "Being passive during times of high fire danger is like giving the opposing team three runs and sending your pitching staff to the showers." That kind of prose can really, um, hit a point home.

The third Rule is to **simplify**. Keep it short and to the point, and don't forget that ten-page "memos" will typically end up in the circular file. This particularly applies if you want to get published: Newspapers and magazines have limited space, so if you submit too much extraneous information, your central point may get lost in the editing process.

Once you get these rules down, the rest is easy. Looking for addresses and phone numbers? No problem. Start with the Internet. Media outlets and politicians alike have Web sites, which usually include mailing and e-mail addresses, as well as phone and fax numbers. Check out the government section in your local phone book, as well as the "submission info" box found on most op-ed pages. When writing a politician, remember that a staff member will probably see it first, so you might want to address your missive to a particular staffer or department (e.g., "the staff member in charge of forest fire affairs") to help streamline the process.

Wondering if you should handwrite your letter, snail-mail your essay, or fire off an e-mail? It's been my experience that the more trouble you take to communicate, the better the response will be. On Capitol Hill, a letter will arguably receive more attention, simply because you had to sit down and put your words in writing. E-mail may be quick, but most of us dash off a few lines without thinking, so when sending a letter, e-mail might not be as readily noticed. When sending an essay to a media outlet, however, e-mail is your best bet.

Whichever method you choose, though, be sure to include your contact information; the odds that an editor or a senator will get back to you may be slim, but it's a phenomenon that's been known to happen.

Two more things: When you speak with some authority about a given issue — say so. If you're a former smokejumper writing about fire-control issues, mentioning this fact will lend credibility to your argument and enhance its chances of getting noticed. And though it's important to keep your letter or essay short and to the point, don't be afraid to include auxiliary material. If you have other writings on the subject, send them along too. If nothing else, the staffer who intercepts the packet will be better educated and may be moved to make certain that your words are passed along.

A crapsheet? You bet. But don't be surprised when it works. My congressman used to send out constituent questionnaires,

which I'd fill out with checkmarks, as well as a few sentences explaining the point behind each of my responses. When I later had a chance meeting with the representative, his staffer noted that I was the one who wrote the extensive responses. Even though our views differed, the congressman was very cordial in our meeting, and I received quick responses to my letters thereafter.

It gets better. A few years ago, I received word that a short letter I wrote to Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) helped encourage him to push the Character Counts program in the schools. That, my friends, is what it's all about: Impact. With a good idea and just a little know-how, each of us can have it.



L-R: John Rinard, Wayne Webb, Cliff Wise, Bus Bertram, Chuck Blanton, Dick Wilcomb, Jerry Sparkman and John Hennessey.

## Can a Cargo Chute Stop a Bus?

by Bus Bertram (McCall '47)

Early in September of 1947 a Tri-Motor load of eight jumpers jumped a fire on Big Fiddler Creek on the Boise N.F. We worked the fire for two days before being relieved by a ground crew. After loading up our gear we started a five-mile hike to the airstrip at Smith's Prairie where we were to be picked up by the Ford. Instead of the Ford, there was a 1930s school bus that took us to Boise and up the road to McCall.

We asked the driver if he would mind stopping at the General Store in Banks so we could buy some beer. It was a slow, hot trip and we needed something to drink. He said that it was against the rules and wouldn't make the stop. After a quick huddle, we decided that when we got close to the General Store, we would anchor a cargo chute to the metal seat anchor and stuff it out the rear side window. This should facilitate a stop. It worked perfectly as the chute swaying back and forth really slowed down the bus almost in front of the store. While two of us were working on the cargo chute, the others went into the store and came back with enough beer to make a very

refreshing two-hour trip to McCall.

Entering McCall we decided to help the driver on the downgrade toward Payette Lake and threw out another cargo chute. This was the last straw for the driver but he did get us to the loft before reporting us to the overhead. Since this was the last jump of the season for us, it worked out OK.

Of the eight jumpers, to my knowledge, four are still with us: **John Hennessey** (McCall '46), **Bus Bertram** (McCall '47), **Chuck Blanton** (McCall '47) and **Dick Wilcomb** (McCall '47). We have lost **Jerry Sparkman** (McCall '46), **Wayne Webb** (McCall '46), **John Rinard** (McCall '47) and **Cliff Wise** (McCall '47). One has to remember that the WWII vets hadn't settled down yet and that McCall was a very lively town with the gambling and resort atmosphere. Add to that hanging around with "**Paperlegs**" **Peterson** (McCall '47), **George Schreiber** (McCall '47), **Bruce Paris** (McCall '47), **Rod "Toad" Davidson** (McCall '47) anything could happen. A local took the photo after we retrieved the second chute. 📷

# LETTERS

Dear Editor:

While recovering from a bicycle accident, waiting for a broken rib, collapsed lung and torn shoulder to recover, I read the October issue of *Smokejumper*.

Herman "Jack" Heikkinen's (IDC '51) account of how we used to stencil smokejumper images on the backs of our J.C. Penny work shirts caught my attention. Jack wondered aloud if any of us might still have one of those shirts? I went to my locker and found the remains of an old shirt with a parachute and jumper stenciled in black ink.

In McCall, one of the guys had the stencil and a felt tip pen. For the price of a couple beers he'd stencil the image on our shirts. It was a good investment because the wearing of the shirt in one of McCall's tourist bars generally entitled a jumper to a few free beers from the tourists.

The stenciled back of my shirt is now a pretty lame old rage but I'd be pleased to donate it and a check to help with an exhibit. If you don't want the shirt, I'll just send the check.

**John L. Blackwell** (MYC '64)  
Portland Ore.

Dear Editor:

In the July issue of *Smokejumper* there was a brief mention of research on the incidence of Parkinson's disease (PD) among loggers that might be relevant to jumpers. Typically, PD manifests as a degenerative, incurable, neurological disorder characterized by tremor, profound slowing, "freezing," loss of coordination, and violent uncontrollable shaking. It is very disabling and ultimately fatal.

I would like to investigate the incidence of PD among jumpers. If there is some connection, it would be very important to know both to help protect current and future jumpers and to provide new data that might be helpful in the broader investigation. Towards that end I would invite jumpers who have PD or who know jumpers who have or had PD to send me an e-mail or a letter.

**Dave Engels** (IDC '66)  
daveide26@yahoo.com, 503-678-6238  
21264 Liberty Street, Aurora, OR 97002

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed greatly your article on women smokejumpers in the April issue. It reminds me in a general way of the time when we conscientious objectors kept smokejumping alive during the war years, 1943-45. We volunteered in the forties; so did women in the eighties.

Forest Service officials welcomed us CO's with open arms, since without us smokejumping could not have survived during the war years. Women did not find so generous a welcome, since many in the Forest Service and elsewhere saw smokejumping as not appropriate for women. But why not? They are doing almost everything else these days. Serving as governors and in some future day, running

for president!

When I joined our College of the Pacific track team in 1936, COP sponsored no parallel for women. But now women compete in all track events including the pole vault, play softball, soccer volleyball. You name it; will football be next?

Here at Florida State University I watch women play soccer and volley while the men enjoy no parallel competition. How times change!

**Gregg Phifer** (Missoula '44)  
Tallahassee, Florida 🐼

## A (Ray) Morrow Jump

by **Dirk Chandler** (Redding '64)

*The following poem was sent to Ray Morrow (Redding '64) upon his retirement from the Forest Service in February of 1987.*

In the door of the plane, stood a short, squat frame  
Shaking from his head to his knees.  
His job at hand, was to try and land  
Somewhere other than the trees.

His heart did pump, as he started his jump  
And into his mind came an awful flash  
"That I am on my way and I hope and pray,  
That I won't die on Bohemotash".

All twisted in thread from his toes to his head,  
Came something down from the sky.  
It didn't have motion and we all took notion  
That it was something that just couldn't fly.

He came plummeting down, straight to the ground  
And we thought his days were through.  
But much to our surprise we heard his cries  
Of, "What in the hell should I do?"

And in a moment of time, things went fine  
And he finally got untangled at last.  
He would take a hard knock, as he fell like a rock  
But the eminent danger had past.

He hit the ground with a terrible sound  
And we knew he was surely dead.  
But in the hush of the breeze, he let out a wheeze,  
For he had only landed on his head.

But up got Ray and what can one say  
To a man who did his best?  
He took a flight from an extreme height  
And finally weathered the test.

When we got to the pub and our elbows we'd rub,  
With Morrow who couldn't get any higher.  
He'd pour down a glass and fall on his ass  
And sleep to the "Ring of Fire".

And that very night as we all got tight  
And thought of our friend's near fall,  
It came to mind, that he was one of a kind,  
Probably the worst jumper of all!