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National Smokejumper Association

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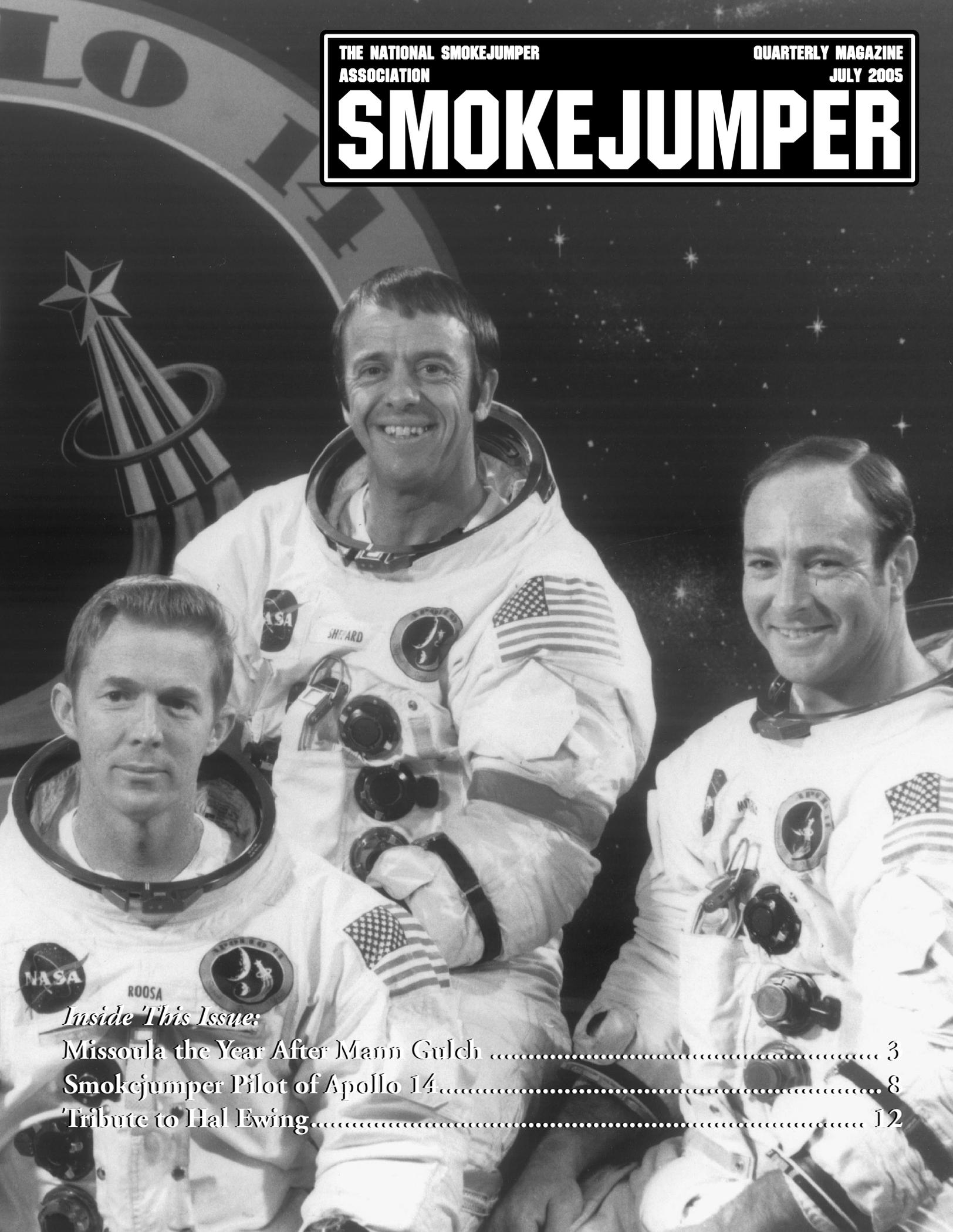
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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JULY 2005

SMOKEJUMPER



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Message from the President



by Doug Houston
(Redmond '73)
PRESIDENT

SINCE “RETIREMENT,” I have worked as an instructor for a company out of Franktown, Colorado, that developed leadership classes for wildland firefighters. One class, Fireline

Leadership, presents the common values and character of good leaders. This discussion always makes me reflect on the values that all smokejumpers hold near and dear: Duty, Respect, Integrity, and Trust in One Another. Character is how those values are worn each and every day. Smokejumping has had many “characters,” but I don’t believe the core values of who we were in 1939 and who we are in 2005 have changed. We still are those people that value one another and that is a huge part of the smokejumper experience. It makes me feel good to be a part of such a great organization that continues to work with very dedicated people.

Until next time, as Francis Lufkin used to tell me, “Keep the Sunnyside Up.” Hook up and hang on for the ride. 🪂

Record Our History – Write!

by Denis Symes (McCall '63)

The National Air and Space Museum (NASM), an arm of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, is the world’s premier aviation museum and research facility. It maintains the world’s largest collection of historic air and spacecraft and is also a vital center for research into the history of aviation.

The pioneering role of the USFS in the development of aviation, mountain flying and parachute operations is widely known by smokejumpers, but is frequently overlooked by researchers and writers of aviation history. In fact, the smokejumper program aided the parallel development of the U.S. military’s parachute operations. In June 1940, Major William Lee observed training at the Seeley Lake, Montana, jumper-training camp and included his observations into the U.S. Army Airborne. Later, the Forest Service trained the military’s first Para-rescue personnel.

The NSA has arranged for Smokejumper Magazine to be included in the NASM’s Research Library, a major facility for aviation researchers. This Library contains documentary materials spanning the history of flight and includes about 1.7 million photographs, 700,000 feet of motion picture film, and 2 million technical drawings, plus countless written sources. With the addition of Smokejumper Magazine, researchers now have access to first-hand sources of smokejumper and Forest Service history and the contributions *you* have made.

Unless your experiences are recorded, they will be lost to future researchers. To ensure that our history is accurately preserved, it is important that you record your experiences and knowledge. Smokejumper Magazine represents an ideal way to document the history of smokejumping and the valuable contributions made to aviation by the Forest Service (and BLM). Some valuable topics include: aircraft operated and experiences, mountain flying, smokejumper operations and training, and daily life as a jumper. It is also important to document jumper-related activities outside USFS operations, such as the recent stories of jumpers working in Southeast Asia for Air America and the Air Force Raven’s program. As always, photographs add greatly to the story.

History is made through experiences and is recorded by individuals. Unless it is documented, it will be lost to future generations. 🪂

The Year After Mann Gulch-Missoula 1950

by Ed Johnson (Missoula '48)

On a sun-drenched morning in 1950, a group of young smokejumpers made their first parachute jump at Nine Mile camp outside of Missoula, Montana. They were part of the first group to train as smokejumpers after the deadly Mann Gulch Fire where 12 jumpers tragically perished in the Helena National Forest in 1949.

U.S. Forest Service program supervisors feared that after that tragic event they would have great difficulty attracting recruits for the smokejumper program the next year. However, there were over 1,450 applications for the 56 positions to be filled for the 1950 fire season.

A large number of these recruits were college undergraduates who went through the rigorous physical and mental training, including seven training jumps at the small camp and landing strip near Frenchtown, Montana. Lessons learned at Mann Gulch were incorporated into all of the training sessions.

During training several members of the group had a narrow escape when a newly hired pilot for the Johnson Flying Service took over the plane's controls one morning with a severe hangover from too much partying at the famous Florence Hotel in Missoula the night before. When he attempted to take off in the old Tri-motor loaded with jumpers, he veered off the runway and into a ditch, taking out the landing gear and part of a wing. One of the wing's bracing struts knifed through the corrugated metal side of the plane, completely slashing the shoelaces and leather tongue on the boots of a jumper, before it exited through the floor of the fuselage of the plane. This pilot, of course, lost his job and was later seen back at his old haunts at the Florence Hotel in Missoula.

Bob Johnson, owner of the flying service, had to hunt around for several weeks before finding the necessary spare parts to rebuild the seriously damaged Tri-motor. It was very fortunate that the plane didn't catch fire and that no one was killed or seriously injured in the accident.

The rigorous training activities were completed on schedule for the 1950 fire season, which turned out to be cool and wet with little forest fire action. With the exception of a flurry of lightning strikes, which caused numerous fires toward the end of the season, most of the jumpers made only two or three fire jumps. After their training period, many of the recruits of the 1950 group were farmed out on the various forest areas in Region 1 to do project work.

Interestingly, in 1949 *Life* magazine had planned a feature article on the smokejumpers to be published in the spring of 1950 with numerous photographs of the smokejumper training program. They had taken all of the necessary photographs regarding the extensive training a smokejumper goes through. After the Mann Gulch tragedy they pushed their release to the 1949 fall issue of the magazine. They used only one or two of the photos taken earlier and did a several page spread on the smokejumpers lost at Mann Gulch, which told the rest of the world what had happened.

Shortly thereafter, 20th Century Fox, sensing the human interest and story value of the tragedy, initiated production at Missoula on a motion picture called *Red Skies of Montana* which depicted the entire smokejumper story. Many jumpers from the 1950 group of recruits took part in the training and

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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	West Yellowstone	WYS
				Winthrop	NCSB



Rookie Training Jump Missoula 1950 (Courtesy Ed Johnson). Top L-R: Calvin Floyd, Art Henderson, Larry Howard, Ed Johnson, Richard Kielhorn, Ron Lindh, Jack Demmons, Don Wells, Joe Gutkoski, Harry Southard (Sql). Bottom L-R: William Brennan, Otho Black, Lee Brown, Del Cumley, Ken Jensen, James Dewey, Wally Donaldson, "Hoot Gibson" Hanahan, LeRoy Haines.

jump segments and also served as extras for the movie. All of their salaries and expenses were reimbursed to the Forest Service by the movie company. The movie starred Richard Widmark, Jeff Hunter and Constance Smith. The movie was released in 1952 to good reviews.

An interesting side note to the movie, *Red Skies of Montana*, was that Victor Mature, a lead actor at 20th Century Fox at the time, had signed to play the Widmark role in the film, but in a training session with the jumpers he severely injured his knee and had to be replaced by Richard Widmark, who answered only to the name Richard, never "Dick," which he detested. Mature had to be flown back to Hollywood for an operation on his knee.

Another interesting aside was that before the close-ups were shot all the scenery, including the grass and shrubs, had to be appropriately spray painted to bring out the brilliance and color special effects for the Technicolor production. The film is available for rental at Blockbusters.

Shortly after Ed left the jumpers in the fall of 1951, he returned to school at the Univ. of Missouri and got his degree in fisheries management. After a couple of state conservation jobs he went to work in the US Senate in Washington, D.C., followed by an assignment with the Secretary of Interior's western field office in Portland, Oregon. Ed finished his 30-year government career with the Corps of Engineers in Portland. In retirement he has been working for Oregon Public Broadcasting doing a show called "Profiles" that involves interviewing visiting dignitaries, celebrities, and authors. Ed would like to hear from any of the jumpers he worked

with in 1950-1952. He can be reached at 2629 SW Ridge Drive, Portland, Oregon 97219, or by e-mail at edwardbj@jps.net 📧

Trip of a Lifetime

Mark January 2007 on your calendar and start making plans now for the NSA sponsored 10-day trip to Vietnam. **Fred Rohrbach** (MSO-65) will be planning the trip and everything will be five-star and first-class. Fred owns businesses in Vietnam and knows the ins and outs of travel and arrangements. Look for details in the October and January issues of *Smokeyjumpers*.

Return to Rainy Pass

by Jerry S. Dixon (McCall '71)

As we approached Rainy Pass in the Alaska Range in March 2004, the weather was terrible; the wind was blowing at 70 mph and the wind chill was a bone-numbing -35 F. I could barely stand up during the gusts and visibility was zero. The “What am I doing here?” feeling was pronounced. I had previously crossed over Rainy Pass in 1967 and then, in July 1973 as a smokejumper wearing parachutes.

I first flew over Rainy Pass to McGrath in 1967 as an Emergency Fire Fighter to a fire near the historic mining towns of Iditarod and Flat. Then, McGrath was a smokejumper satellite base and I met **Bruce Yergenson** (MYC-54) with whom I fought my first fire that same summer near Salana. The 1967 fire was memorable because after 17 hours of hard work, it started to rain. It rained continuously for 10 days, eventually causing catastrophic floods on the Chena River in Fairbanks with all helicopter support suspended. Like Russian smokejumpers today, we were left to our own devices. So the fireboss shot a moose, the crews devoured it, and we built a log cabin that might just still stand. They did pick us up when the Fairbanks floodwaters receded.

This time, I was skiing 160 miles with a friend across the Alaska Range from Skwetna to Farewell Lake near McGrath. It was a grand passage of mountain script and frozen river lore that I was privileged to live. Dick Griffith, the 76 year old Alaska mountaineering legend, and I were finally able to fly into Skwetna after waiting four days for storms to clear. We started skiing on March 3. It started as a magnificent journey as we experienced incredible country and wonderful people. We arrived at Puntilla Lake just as the first Iditarod mushers were rolling in (a description of the Iditarod Race follows story). Between there and Rohn, 80 mushers passed us. As Martin Buser, four-time Iditarod champion, rolled past he yelled, “Way to go Dick, you are an inspiration to all of us.” Three photographers stopped to take Dick’s photo. Word had gotten out we were on the trail!

That day we skied into a 25 mph headwind and felt the -20 F wind-chill on our faces. The next day, we traversed Rainy Pass in a blizzard with wind gusts of 70 mph. It was a white-out on the pass and reminded me of a previous trip through Denali Pass. Dick wasn’t worried; he has spent many nights in Arctic blizzards while skiing the 3000 mile NW Passage solo across Canada. He finally finished the NW Passage at age 73.

Dick and I skied down Dalzell Gorge on the north side of the Alaska Range, this time into wind gusts up to 60 mph; Doug Swingley, three-time Iditarod champion, froze his corneas on the same day. In the whiteout, I was coming back down the trail to help Dick when another musher appeared, having lost the trail. He said to me, “What are you doing here?”

“Traversing the Alaska Range,” I replied. I held his dogs until he got on his sled and then directed him to the pass since many of the markers had blown down. Waving, he dis-

appeared into the swirling snow.

At a recent Mayday party, I told this story about Rainy Pass. I was talking with Rick Casillo, a musher. He asked, “Did I hear you say that you held the lead dogs of a team during the blizzard so the driver could get back on the sled and continue?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“That was me!”

Rick trained that year with Mitch Seavey, this year’s Iditarod winner, and ran one of his teams. It was Rick I had met on Rainy Pass in the white out. He told me that in traveling down Dalzell Gorge, he nearly went into the river. “One musher did go in,” he added. Fortunately her team pulled her out and she was able to make it to the Rohn checkpoint. Her clothes were frozen and they had to cut them off,” he said.

“That was an incredible place. I was skiing downhill carrying 75 pounds of gear and was hit by a gust of wind that accelerated me into a whiteout, right between a cliff and open water,” I replied. “Just after we crossed the pass, a musher was pinned down and spent the night there—her dogs wouldn’t go any further.”

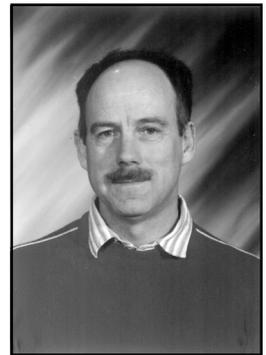
I have traversed the Alaska Range through three different passes. In 1967 I hiked through Broad Pass (I was working on a cabin), in 2000 through Denali Pass and now, Rainy Pass. This time, I was skiing the Iditarod Trail that starts in Seward, 340 miles south.

In 1973, I flew over Rainy Pass in a Caribou jump ship returning to Anchorage from a jumper fire near McGrath. The crew danced in our jump boots and fire shirts at Ron Don’s and the Green Dragon until an early morning call sent us back to the Campbell airstrip. We loaded into a DC-3 and jumped a fire near Lake Mininchumina. We were young and couldn’t wait to get back to fires in Alaska’s wild country.

Dick and I got our light ski boots wet in an overflow on the SF Kuskokwim River. We pulled our sleds across three miles of snow-less ‘buffalo wallows’ finally seeing a fresh moose kill that had been partially eaten by wolves.

Having crossed the Alaska Range, I flew out at Farewell Lake leaving Dick to continue on to Nikoli and McGrath. When he finally reaches McGrath, Dick will have skied 5000 miles across Alaska and Canada, solo for all but the 250-mile segment on which I accompanied him.

Editor’s Note: *The Iditarod Trail Dog Sled Race internet site describes the Iditarod as a “race over 1150 miles of the roughest, most beautiful terrain Mother Nature has to offer. She throws jagged mountain ranges, frozen river, dense forest, desolate tundra and miles of windswept coast at the mushers and their dog teams. Add to that*



Jerry Dixon (NSA file)

temperatures far below zero, winds that can cause a complete loss of visibility, the hazards of overflow, long hours of darkness and treacherous climbs and side hills, and you have the Iditarod. A RACE EXTRAORDINAIRE, a race only possible in Alaska. From Anchorage, in south central Alaska, to Nome on the western Bering Sea coast, each team of 12 to 16 dogs and their musher cover over 1150 miles in 10 to 17 days." D. Symes

Added Note: After reading Jerry's story, I realized this was another of those "small world" items. I was on the same fire! A group of us (Fairbanks jumpers) were flown into some aban-

doned mining camp/town (Flat) and were to be choppered to the fire. The rain and fog grounded everything. We "had" to sit in an abandoned house and play "Hearts" for 16 hours a day until we maxed out for the pay period. After about a week the weather changed and we flew back to Fairbanks and took the midnight Pan-Am to Seattle and another flight to Missoula. I jumped there a week or more before having to get back to teaching. If my memory is accurate, I remember Larry Welch, Gary Dunning, Mike Clarkson, Larry Peters and Don Havel as being in that group. C. Sheley 🐾

Dave Liebersbach Takes Top Post At NEMA

David E. Liebersbach (FBX-70) is the newly appointed president and director of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving national readiness for emergencies, disasters, and threats to national security. Dave will retain his already extensive duties both as director of the Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management and as chairman and president of the Western States Seismic Policy Council.

Dave was born in 1946 in Red Bluff, California, where he was raised and graduated from high school. He entered the University of California at Berkeley in September 1964, on the heels of his second summer as a wildland firefighter with the California Department of Forestry.

A year later, he enlisted in the army, serving on a long-range patrol team with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam. Dave earned the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Air Medal with Oak Leaf, Purple Heart, and Army Commendation Medal with "V" device. After duty in Vietnam, he served with the military police in Oakland, California. He was discharged in 1968.

Dave first came to Alaska the summer of 1965 to do construction work in the wake of a devastating earthquake. After fulfilling his military duties, and following a short return to college in 1969, he returned to Alaska in April of 1970 as a smokejumper for the BLM in Fairbanks. He has worked in Alaska ever since.

During his career with the BLM, Dave served in numerous positions, from smokejumper to fire-management officer to supervisory natural-resource specialist. (As a rookie jumper, he suffered a near-fatal accident—an incident recounted in this issue by Tom Albert [CJ-64].) Dave was stationed in locations throughout Alaska, including Bettles, Anchorage, McGrath, Kenai, Galena, Lake Minchumina, Kotzebue, and Dahl Creek.

He also served as incident commander of Alaska's National Type 1 Interagency Incident Management Team, holding this job for 12 years. He led firefighting efforts in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming, as well as in the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Ontario, and the Yukon. He also served as incident commander on the Kenai Peninsula following the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. Dave helped with storm floods in Koyukuk (1994) and South Central Alaska (1995), and played a role in

managing the Miller's Reach Fire at Big Lake, Alaska (1996). These three incidents were all declared federal disasters and helped steer Dave toward his current career in emergency management.

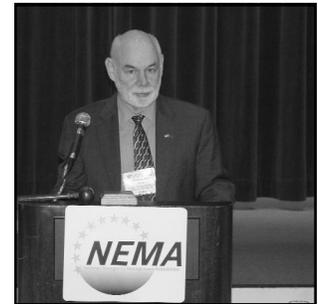
Dave retired from the federal government in September 1996 after more than 29 years of service. But he wasn't stopping, just shifting gears; that same year he began work for the office now known as the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. He was appointed director in February 1999, a post that helped further prepare him for his new job at NEMA.

NEMA traces its origins back to 1974, when state directors of emergency services first united to exchange information on common emergency-management issues threatening their constituencies. Since that time, NEMA has grown into an influential association that has worked with a variety of individuals and groups, including the White House and Congress, state governors, federal agencies, major corporations, and the military. Core membership includes emergency-management directors from each U.S. state, as well as eight territories and the District of Columbia. Other members include homeland-security advisors, state staff, and concerned citizens.

On his own time, Dave has taught fire-management courses at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. He's also instructed incident-management courses at the Advanced Resources Technology Center in Arizona. He has traveled extensively, visiting Western Europe, Turkey, North Africa, South America, Japan, the Cook Islands, Mexico, and Canada. In 1977, he sailed his 32-foot sailboat, the *Tanada* (the name means "great wind over the water"), to French Polynesia and back.

Today he lives in Chugiak, Alaska, with his wife, Lora Harbo, and their two children, Tamiah and Sam. 🐾

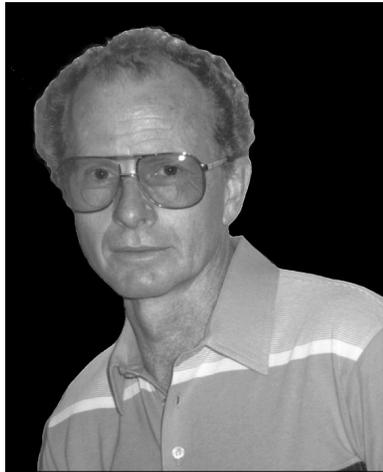
—Some of this material was taken from an online biography of Dave at www.ak-prepared.com/director.htm. Thanks also to Terry Egan (CJ-65) who coordinated information with Dave.



Dave Liebersbach (Courtesy D. Liebersbach)



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

SPRING BREAK, FORMERLY known in the schools as Easter Vacation, provided me with an unusual and uplifting experience this year. I usually use that week to work with my hurdlers on the track team and see what can be done to improve their technique. This year the hurdlers had the week off, and I went to Mexico.

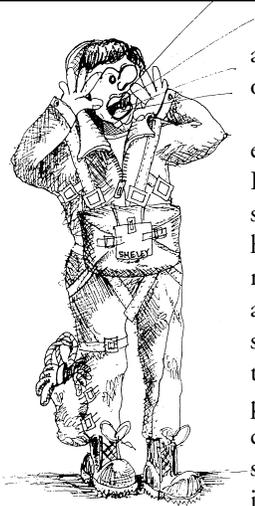
But this wasn't the kind of Spring Break that inspires x-rated videos of our university-educated youth as they drink themselves into oblivion. This break was different.

The church my wife and I attend in Chico, formerly pastored by **Lee Hotchkiss** (NCSB-63), has for 15 years been sending high school students to Mexico over the break. They partner with the Amor Ministries program and build small houses for Mexican families who have little or nothing in the way of homes or personal possessions. In 2004, the group going south had

grown to more than 135 and was traveling in private cars and vans. As I have expressed in past editorials, I feel van transportation is bad for any group, including groups of school kids, firefighters and students going to Mexico. I pressed for bus transportation with professional drivers behind the wheel. This year, 140 people headed south in Greyhound busses.

I was asked to go along to work on the cook crew and found it to be better organized than any I had ever seen on the fireline. They certainly didn't need my help. But that allowed me to see the whole operation and return with an appreciation for the United States and what we have.

I've been retired from the fireline



and my deaf ear to the outside world.

Where did the uplifting experience enter the picture? I saw 140 high school students give up cell phones, headphones and digital-recording devices for a week and turn their focus on someone other than themselves. With little or no prior experience, they mixed concrete and framed and stuccoed nine small houses in three and a half days. The homes weren't fancy, but

they were dry and an improvement for people living in camper shells and wooden shacks.

We often gripe about the taxes we pay. When I got back to Chico, I wondered how much I would pay just to have clean water, a sewage

system, garbage collection, roads and electricity. All that was lacking for the people with whom we had been working for the past week. I think

“... I saw 140 high school students give up cell phones, headphones and digital recording devices for a week, and turn their focus on someone other than themselves.”

for ten years now and was taking crews on fire right up to the end. I thought I was long past the time when I would be sleeping on the dirt and mud in a tent; I'm more in the Best Western mode at this stage of life. But I was mistaken. There was one night when the rain was coming down and the wind was blowing so hard that I had thoughts of becoming a second Mary Poppins as I sailed over Baja in my REI dome tent. As the wind collapsed their tents, the screams of the kids were making it hard for me to sleep until I turned my good ear to the pillow

most of the kids also have a new outlook on their life as citizens in the U.S. of A.

There were problems with the bus transportation, but they are fixable. Maybe I can handle that end of the project and become a bit more useful than just being the sixth cook. Now if there are any of you who work for U.S. Customs or have connections there, I could use some advice and help in reentering the states with three busses of students. If the drug traffickers had as much trouble as we did, there would not be any drug trade. 🗨️

To The Moon! Former Jumper Made History Aboard Apollo 14

by Jill Léger (Associate Editor)

They once numbered 24. Two dozen men, who by the grace of science, and some say by God, journeyed to the moon and back. The number is a little lower now, but an entire planet will never forget what they achieved.

The ranks of the departed include **Stuart A. Roosa** (CJ-53), who in 1971 rocketed to space aboard Apollo 14. December 2004 marked the tenth anniversary of his passing.

Even as a rookie smokejumper, Roosa showed promise—the kind of mettle he'd demonstrate at NASA 13 years later. Thin with red hair and a studious demeanor, he was smart, level-headed and virtually fearless, “with a little fire in his eyes,” recalled **Phil Clarke** (CJ-51).

Roosa had visited the Cave Junction base in 1952, staying in the bunkhouse and getting to know a few of the jumpers. That's when he “became infected with what would later be his trademark, the ‘can do’ spirit of the Gobi,” noted fellow jumper and friend **Jimmie Dollard** (CJ-52).

Roosa joined the program the following summer. Nicknamed “Red Rooster,” he trained at Cave Junction, adeptly tackling each new challenge and even overcoming a fear of heights.

“Stuart went through rookie training fine and handled everything better than most except for tree-climbing classes,” remembered Dollard. “Strange as it might seem for someone who later became a jet pilot and an astronaut, he was afraid of heights. He finally passed the tree-climbing by sheer determination.”

Roosa made his first fire jump out of a Noorduyn Norseman, accompanied by Dollard and **Bob Wood** (CJ-53). “[I was] in the door,” Wood recalled. “[Roosa] was next. I remember looking up at him and thinking his eyes were big.”

That particular jump turned out to be somewhat of an infamous episode, involving a novice lookout named Shorty and orders to jump a nonexistent blaze. But Roosa managed to impress his colleagues, especially on the pack out, an arduous hike straight uphill some 3,000 feet. “He kept up with me and

Wood even though we outweighed him by 15 pounds,” Dollard recalled.

It was a busy season, and Roosa continued to prove himself with his enthusiasm and leadership qualities. He was “outstanding...the ideal jumper,” **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) told a local newspaper in 1971. Roosa would jump a total of four fires, two in the Umpqua National Forest and two in Northern California, working primarily out of Medford, Oregon, due to the paving of the Cave Junction runway that summer.

He joined the Air Force that same year and after the 1953 fire season entered flight school, joining the Aviation Cadet Program at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona. His smokejumping experience gave him an edge, especially during the application process.

“He was concerned about a particularly tough psychologist who had [rejected] several [candidates] as unsuitable,” Dollard recalled. “When he asked Stuart what he had been doing, Stuart said that he had been a smokejumper and was asked to explain. When Stuart told him what smokejumpers did, the shrink stared in disbelief and said, ‘Okay, you shouldn't have any trouble with flight training,’ and the planned two-hour interview was over in 10 minutes.”

Roosa was working as a test pilot in California when NASA selected him and only 18 others for its astronaut-training program in 1966.

His jumper buddies were behind him all the way. **Al**

Boucher (CJ-49) and Jim Allen sent Roosa a letter offering their congratulations. “It is quite an honor to have an ex-Forest Service smokejumper assigned to...the nation's space team,” they wrote. “We are mighty proud of you.”

For Roosa, NASA training wasn't too far removed from what he'd experienced as a jumper. He and his fellow recruits spent time on some of the same Oregon terrain he knew in his jumping days, probing the canyons and caves of the state's volcanic Deschutes region and touring the prodigious



Astronaut Stuart Roosa, command module pilot Apollo 14 lunar landing mission. (Courtesy NASA)

Newberry Crater.

If he was hoping for excitement at NASA, his timing couldn't have been better. Since 1961, when President Kennedy had set the then-audacious goal of a lunar landing by the end of the decade, a moon landing seemed imminent. In July 1969, of course, it happened, and then again the following November. In the winter of 1971, it was Roosa's turn. He was 47 years old.

For the Apollo 14 mission (the first attempt to land on the moon since the near-disastrous Apollo 13 endeavor), Roosa's job was to pilot the command module Kitty Hawk around the moon as crewmembers Allen B. Shepard and Edgar D. Mitchell explored the lunar surface. He was also assigned to photograph potential landing sites, as well as cosmic activity transpiring behind the dark side of the moon.

Shepard and Mitchell would spend 33 hours on the moon, exploring an impossibly desolate, hilly region known as the Fra Mauro. It remains the longest "lunar surface stay time" of any Apollo mission, but just as noteworthy is the fact that during all those hours, Roosa was alone, piloting the Kitty Hawk in solo orbit around the moon. By the end of the mission, he had logged more than 216 hours in space. A fan of country-and-western music, Roosa brought along a few tapes for the ride. (A favorite song was Frankie Laine's "Cry of the Wild Goose.")

But Roosa is perhaps best known for taking along some 450 tree seeds, as part of a deal forged between NASA and the Forest Service. After the mission, the seeds were germinated and planted across the United States. The resultant loblolly pine, sycamore, sweetgum, redwood and Douglas fir are known today as "moon trees" and are living monuments to the Apollo program.

For Roosa, the moon voyage was an awesome experience, but he'd later say it didn't change him fundamentally. "Space changes nobody," he said. "You bring back from space what you bring into space."

Still, upon his father's death, Roosa's son Christopher told the *Washington Post* that his father had been humbled as he'd looked out at Earth shimmering in space like a "jewel in the sky," a tiny orb he could cover with the palm of his hand. Some 200,000 miles from home, Roosa told his son, he'd felt very alone.

Roosa became one of the space program's most respected members, going on to serve as a backup pilot for the Apollo 16 and Apollo 17 missions and later working on the space-shuttle program. He retired in 1976.

Married with three sons and a daughter, Roosa was a devoted family man as well. He taught his daughter to fly, and taught all his children the value of dreams, and of persistence.

"One of the things he always taught us was to be adventurous," his daughter, Rosemary, told a reporter in 1994, "to pick your goals and strive for them."

He went into business after retirement and in 1981 assumed ownership of a beer-distribution company in Mississippi, where he lived with his family.

He was 61 when he fell ill during a Thanksgiving-weekend visit to a son in Arlington, Virginia. He died two weeks later, reportedly from complications due to pancreatitis.

When he died, mankind again remembered the miracle of

the Apollo landings, feats that seemed perhaps even more remarkable in light of the fact that no one had been to the moon since 1972.

It was a standstill that had long disappointed Roosa. "Apollo was our unfinished obelisk," he told author Andrew Chaikin. "It's like we started building this beautiful thing, and then we quit."

In Roosa's case, such beauty grew in part out of the hard lessons learned that summer at the Gobi. Recalled Dollard, "Several times later in his career he referred to the 'can do' spirit and confidence he had gained at the Gobi as one of his greatest assets."

It was also perhaps his greatest legacy.

"Stuart Roosa was one of the 'can do' space-farers that helped take America and all humankind to the moon," said then-NASA chief Daniel S. Goldin at the time of Roosa's death. "He exemplified the talents that all of NASA strives for: service to our nation, technical know-how and an unbridled creative spirit." 🦉

Gray Skies

The dark gray sky charted our course
As I spurred along my spirited horse.

Old Pete, head held high,
Forged the Sawtooth keeping his belly dry.

At time, the trail would disappear
Making us backtrack with all our gear.

Hornets and wasps quickened our pace
As we invaded their living space.

Other obstacles along the trail
Were windfalls, wash-a-ways, a howling gale.

Through the overcast appeared Snowy Peak
Majestically looking down on Cataract Creek.

The gray skies transported rain and snow
Turning the thermostat extremely low.

Heavy clouds intensified the sound
As elk bugled from higher ground.

It rained that day in Fritz's Hole
When we harvested our sixpoints,
fulfilling our goal.

The Greek and I cherish gray skies;
We've lived under them all our lives.

The countless memories they provide
Reflect 50 years of hunting side by side.

If the choice was mine to paint the day,
No doubt I'd color the sky all gray.

... Hal Meili (Cave Junction '52)

Can Do !

by Tom Albert (Cave Junction '64)

In 1968 and 1969, the BLM experienced devastating back-to-back fire seasons in Alaska. For the 1970 season, they were going to be prepared. That year, the BLM greatly expanded its firefighting capabilities and restructured the fire organization by placing heavy emphasis on initial attack. To beef up its expanded operations in Alaska, the BLM assembled jumpers from many of the Forest Service bases in the lower 48 states.

I reported for duty on April 6, 1970. That first month, we engaged in a sort of quiet mating dance as we tried to develop a cohesive unit. The jumpers in the organization reported to **Bob Webber** (MSO-62), the Initial Attack Fire Control Officer in Fairbanks. Bob was very aggressive, and we responded well to this approach.

In an early squadleader meeting, Bob announced that helicopter rappelling would be included in our basket of initial-attack tools and that **Bob McDonald** (MSO-52), who had headed up the Region 5 rappel experiment in 1965, was coming up to Alaska with rappel gear. Puzzled, we looked at one another. All of Alaska was a jump spot; we couldn't see the need for rappelling. But the boss wanted it, so that was that. We were to rotate from the jump list to the helitack list to the rappel list. With few exceptions on the crew, we proceeded. "What the hay," we figured. "Overtime is overtime!"

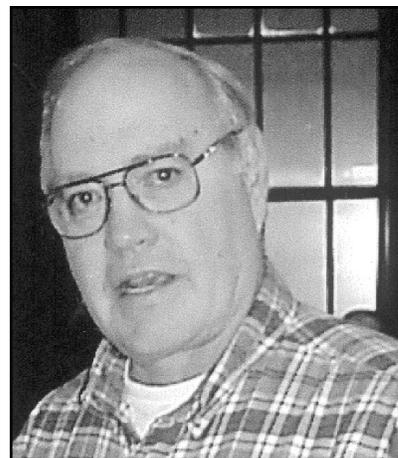
I became involved in the operation, either through bad luck or bad timing; I can't remember which. My experience as a squadleader from the gung-ho Gobi probably landed me the job. Another squadleader, **Bob Betts** (RDD-64), had been on the Redding crew in 1965 during the rappelling experiments. He and I walked to the helipad, where the initial-attack Bell 205 helicopter sat.

Bob McDonald had brought five Sky Genies and three Sky Slides from California. The Redding crew used the Sky Genies in their program, but I don't believe they ever used the Sky Slides. Bob Webber wanted us to be capable of rappelling eight men from the Bell 205, so we needed all eight of the devices.

Standing by the helicopter, Bob McDonald explained how you exited. You stepped out onto the skid, dropped your rope inside the skid, and then slid down using a Sky Genie. (The Sky Genie is a descent-control device through which a rope is fed around the center section; friction controls the descent.) No big deal, he said. While that might have been the case in Region 5, I wasn't so sure about our situation. Our Alaska helicopters were equipped with tundra boards mounted on the skids (so they wouldn't sink into the soft tundra). These boards prevented us from exiting inside the skid.

We constructed a mock-up of the skid/tundra board on

the shock tower to devise exit procedures for use in "outside-the-skid" exits. The Sky Genie proved to be an excellent device and was well-suited for this type of exit. The Sky Slide, on the other hand, presented problems. We devised an exit procedure in which we stood



Tom Albert (NSA file)

on the skid facing the "spotter" in the helicopter. When he gave the "go" signal, the rappeller jumped backward off the skid. To clear the skid, you had to freefall until clear of the skid, and then regulate the descent from there. The Sky Genie allowed this nicely; the Sky Slide didn't.

One end of the Sky Slide had a handle that controlled rope tension. The farther down you pulled, the more rapid the descent. By raising the handle, you could slow descent. At the full-up position, all descent was stopped. This may have been a good design for its intended use, but not for ours. We attempted to jump from the skid with the handle held fully down (to allow us to clear the skid). This method failed. There was just not enough leverage on the handle to hold it down when jumping off the skid. We'd abruptly stop and smash into the skid mock-up.

Being the "brilliant" (I use the word loosely) jumpers that we were, we overcame the obstacle by "accordion folding" about ten feet of letdown-type rope and wrapping rubber bands over the folds. When exiting, we'd jump backward off the skid and easily clear it. At the end of the ten feet of line, we'd abruptly stop. Though it looked like a "goat rope," it worked.

Eight of us trained for this. The old guys included Bob Betts, **Jimmie Pearce** (FBX-69), **Ron Berkey** (MYC-65), **Dick Hughes** (MSO-64), **Len Palatino** (RDD-69), **Pat Shearer** (MSO-67), and yours truly. **Dave Liebersbach** (FBX -70) was the only rookie in the group. Dave, a recent Army veteran, had rappelling experience from Vietnam. Some of his Vietnam experiences included the first combat jump in 'Nam and being banged-up during a helicopter extraction on a long line; the pilot dragged him through the trees!

Once we were trained, the BLM planned a big press day

for early May. The management wanted to show off the firefighting “machine” it had developed and invited the press from Fairbanks and Anchorage. There were jumpers, helitack, roadside, and, of course, rappellers. Eight of us were to rappel. I explained that using the Sky Slides made the operation look like a goat rope, but BLM management insisted. Reluctantly, we walked to the Peaty Road jump spot for the big dog-and-pony show.

Before the press arrived, I instructed Wade Green, our Evergreen Air pilot, to hover at 100 feet, so we could refine our technique (this was the only thing we did right that day). Bob Betts was the spotter. The first stick included Ron, Dave, Len, and me. Members of the second stick were seated in the side-facing rear seats and would climb forward, hook up, and rappel after the first stick jumped. Ron, Dave, and I had the Sky Slides. All the others had the Genies. Dave wanted to go without a helmet (you know those rookies—anything to get their faces in the newspaper). Eventually, he went with his helmet on, thank God.

Wade hovered the helicopter at 100 feet. Bob Betts gave the command to mount the skid and then gave the “go” signal. In unison, the first four dropped. Ron and I almost tangled up under the helicopter when the goat rope jerked us to a harsh stop. The handle on my Sky Slide broke off; I was stuck, just hanging there. I finally was able to lower the slide’s body to start my descent. I reached the ground

laughing, knowing what this gaggle must have looked like from below. Everyone else had landed well before me.

When I reached the ground, Len came running up to me and said, “Dave freefall and is dead!” I looked over and saw Dave facedown in the tundra; it was an awful sight. He was busted up from stem to stern. We were afraid to touch him; we thought he was dead. I got down and dug some of the tundra away from his mask. There was a tiny blood bubble expanding and retracting with his almost unperceivable breathing. The helicopter landed close by. We cut Dave out of his harness, affixed a backboard, and loaded him in the Bell 205. He was whisked directly to Bassett Army Hospital at Ft. Wainwright.

We thought he might die, but that tough SOB proved us wrong. He was in the hospital for six months but eventually recovered to the point of being able to run 5- and 10-Ks. About the only thing he can’t do now is make it through airport metal detectors, thanks to the metal “patches” he accumulated in Vietnam, and in this rappelling accident.

We later figured out that Dave’s “accordion-folded” line had tangled around the Sky Slide on the exit, leaving him suspended at the upper-chest level. He aggressively tried to clear the tangle, and the rope broke at the harness connection. In other words, *Newton* took over. It is this “can do” attitude that separates jumpers from the rest of the lot, but this time, we pushed the envelope too far. 🦋

Purple Plums

by Jim Dawson (Missoula '53)

I clearly remember the one jump I made without a moment’s hesitation. It was the fifth practice jump, and I found myself in the last load of jumpers for that day. Mid-day was approaching, and the weather was becoming increasingly warmer and rougher by the minute. As we waited to be picked up by the Ford, there was talk about scrubbing this last jump. However when the plane did arrive, a short consultation between the pilot and the jumpmaster resulted in a decision to go ahead and try to squeeze in this remaining planeload of rookies.

Once airborne we quickly discovered why there had been some concern about continuing with the practice jumps. As we flew over the ridges approaching the jump zone,

we began to bounce as though we were riding a bucking horse. Each time the plane hit a down draft, we would be shoved upward about six inches from the floor, only to be slammed back down with a loud thud when the plane recovered. This, combined with the smell of gasoline and oil that came wafting in from the open plane windows, created an atmosphere that was quick to turn a strong stomach queasy.

Fortunately, I am blessed with a strong stomach that has always served me well in rough air or on rough water. This, however, was not the case with the jumper who was sitting directly across from me. On the final approach we hit a particularly bad air pocket and he began to lose it. For breakfast we had canned purple

plums, and it soon became evident that he had eaten his fill. Very quickly the space between the facemask on his helmet and the face itself became filled with partially digested plums. I was only seconds away from losing my own breakfast when I got the call to move to the door and resume the jump position. My last vision of this unfortunate jumper was of him struggling feverishly with the buckles on his facemask as his eyes went slowly out of sight behind a rising mass of purple plums.

When the shoulder tap came for me to jump, I propelled myself into the slipstream with extra zeal, elated to be away from the aircraft and into fresh air again. Incidentally, I do not think I have eaten purple plums since. 🦋

The Little Big Man, Hal Ewing

by Tom "Gravity" Albert (Cave Junction '64), Terry Mewhinney (Cave Junction '64) & Garry Peters (Cave Junction '63)

The Gobi always had its share of interesting individuals. Well, maybe more than its share, and not all were jumpers. In May of 1966, we were performing the routine jumper springtime tasks to get ready for the upcoming season. Looking up, we saw a school bus drive into the loft area. Humm, could this be another school-class tour? Not this time. Some little guy drove the bus up to the office and went in. No one suspected that this was the beginning of an era on the Gobi.

Our pilot, **John Cowan**, was seeking a seasonal jumper pilot and heard that the little school bus driver, Hal Ewing, was a retired naval aviator. John invited him to the base for an interview. Hal's interview must have really impressed John because soon we saw Hal, seat cushion in hand, and John climbing into the Twin Beech.

The Navy operated Twin Beeches, and Hal must have had some time in a Twin Beech during his naval career, so it wasn't surprising for him to have a check ride. Later, we learned that he started flying PBY's in WWII and was later involved in the development and carrier qualification of the famous F4 Phantom. Thereafter, he skippered an A6 Intruder squadron. Hal retired shortly before the Vietnam conflict got into full swing. How he ended up in Cave Junction escapes us, but it was our good fortune!

He passed the check ride with flying colors and was a quick study in flying jumpers. His first actual fire was on a steep,



Hal Ewing (Courtesy Douglas Beck)

brushy mountainside, not far from the base. We asked him to drop the cargo on the ridge top and on his first pass, he rang the bell too soon and it came out 100 feet early (remember, 100 feet horizontally translates into twice that vertically). We had to trudge down the steep hill to retrieve the fire packs.

Hal felt terrible about that. You see, he was a pilot that operated on the premise "he was here because we were here," not the other way around. Because he cared, Hal rapidly became one of the best jumper pilots around. Thanks to his skill (and the old "bomb" chutes), we rarely had to climb for our cargo. And, as you remember back in those days, we jumped whether there was an open jump spot or not. But guys, this was only part of what made Hal so endearing to us on the Gobi.

You know a lot of the pilots were just that - pilots. Not Hal, he was a real participator and became involved in every aspect of the base - he just couldn't sit still. He repaired cargo chutes and rigged cargo. During the winter, he worked with us in the loft doing the worst job jumpers had - repetitive sewing - you know, 500 of these, 1000 of those, etc. When we formed the Gobi Trap Club, Hal reloaded shells during standby. We never saw it, but it wouldn't have surprised us to see him in the tool shed sharpening tools.

This little guy had real spunk and soon earned the nickname "Banty Rooster." His spunk was most evident during the "discussions" that we had. We jumpers didn't always agree with Hal but respected what he had to say. He always had the base and crew's best interest in mind.

When the Forest Service, in its infamous wisdom, decided to deactivate the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in 1980, Hal was at the forefront in the fight to keep it open. Partly through his efforts, the base did get a year stay, but closed the next year. The publicly stated reason was economics, although the subsequent jumper-preventable Silver and Biscuit Fires demonstrated the importance of hitting a fire fast and hard. If jumpers had been used on either fire, the base could have been funded for the next century and had money left over!

Hal could have thrown up his hands and walked away, but he wasn't a quitter. Previously, he'd gotten into the Leadplane business as a sideline during the time the Forest Service was still using T-34's and Cessna 310's. After the base closed, he moved over to the Leadplane community full time and was one of its finest till he retired in 1986.

Retired? Well, not really. He continued flying as a corporate pilot for the nearby Rough and Ready Lumber Mill. He recently retired and is deeply involved in the community. In stature he was small, but that is where it ended; one fine man, a contributor and deservedly high on the list as one of the Gobi's interesting individuals. 🦉

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

THERE HAVE BEEN some successful programs that have come out of the Clinton Administration's National Fire Plan. The "Fuels for Schools" program is technical and financial assistance for the purchase of high efficiency boilers by rural school districts in the West. The program provides financial incentives for treating hazardous fuels by creating a market for chips, thus meeting an objective of the National Fire Plan. The program enables cash-strapped rural school districts in timber dependent communities to save large amounts of money on heating that can be reinvested in educational programs. Jobs related to forestry management are being created in areas of high unemployment. Our dependency on foreign oil and non-renewable fossil fuels is being reduced at the same time reductions are being made in air pollution from slash burning. The boilers are fueled by slash, wood chips and small diameter underutilized trees. Virtually no air pollution is emitted and very little ash is produced. The Darby Montana School District's heating bill for the month of January was thirty-five dollars. The previous January, before installing the new

boiler, their heating bill was nearly eight thousand dollars.

A new \$900,000,000, 5000 square-foot public library has been built in Darby, Montana, replacing the former library that was located in a log cabin. The Bitterroot N.F. provided grant money for engineering and design of the library's beams and trusses. The library has the look of a Western lodge complete with a rock fireplace and furniture built locally from dead trees.

In celebration of the Forest Service's 100th anniversary this year, the photos of Harvard-educated Forester Kenneth D. Swan are touring museums in the West. Entitled "Splendid Was the Trail," the breathtaking photos were taken in remote areas of Montana, Idaho and the Dakotas between 1911 and 1950. Swan's photographs reside in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. I would encourage all of you to see this exhibit along with the documentary "The Greatest Good," which is a history of the first 100 years of the Forest Service.

In March, Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer asked the Pentagon to return 1400 Montana Army National Guard soldiers and helicopters from Iraq so they will be available for fire duty. Republicans criticized the Governor for being against the war. At a Local Emergency Planning Committee meeting this week, I was advised that we could only count on the Air National Guard for assistance with wildland fires this year, and I am hearing reports that the 120 members of the 219th RED HORSE Flight, a rapidly deployable heavy construction unit, will be going back to Iraq for its second tour in two years.

As this issue goes to press in April, eight heavy air tankers have been approved for duty this year.

Seven of those aircraft are owned by Aero Union of Chico, California, and are already on duty. Neptune Aviation of Missoula received devastating news this week from the Forest Service that their P2V aircraft are ineligible for service. According to Rose Davis, a Public Affairs Officer for the Forest Service, the problem for Neptune remains a lack of data on the "service life" on their P2V tankers. To get that information, the Forest Service has contracted to research the life and structure of the planes. Last August, the Forest Service allowed one of Neptune's tankers to take part in a test program. That plane carried equipment that monitored aircraft structure and stress in the firefighting environment. For the third round of research, the Forest Service has contracted with a third engineering company to complete another inspection of the P2Vs by early June. It would seem that Forest Service bureaucrats didn't like the data from the first two studies, so they are now fishing for data that suits their agenda to eliminate the heavy tankers and replace them with expensive, high-maintenance helicopters. I have long maintained that it takes everyone to get the job done. You can't win the war without heavy air support. 🦋

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“It’s Only A Trail Jump”

by J.R. McDaniel (Cave Junction '57)

Ipulled to the right shoulder of Route 99 overlooking the Illinois Valley in southwest Oregon. There in the distance, about twenty miles to the north, I detected the gray-white wisp of smoke rising from the sawmill just south of Cave Junction. Off to the left of the sawmill, I could just make out a dry stretch of desert-like country that marked the old lakebed that defined the area where I was headed. Yes, sure enough, I could just make out a portion of asphalt runway that marked the location of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, Illinois Valley Airport, Siskiyou National Forest. The GOBI!

I was thrilled to be back. Down there were many of my friends from my rookie year. For sure **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) and **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) would be there and the indomitable **Orv Looper** (CJ-49), together with Squadleaders **Jack Harter** (CJ-51) and **Rod Newton** (CJ-51).

Yep—I felt right at home once again. It had been a long fall and winter at school at WVU (West Virginia University), where I had just completed my third year in forestry school. All of the theory was fine, but I was glad to return to the real action. With a brief look around, I savored the familiar odor of the dense stands of ponderosa pines and the very faint smell of smoke rising from the valley below. For sure the long months at school had paid off—I was home!

Driving on I could see the surrounding mountain peaks and observed them to be covered in snow. They were really not that high, and the thought crossed my mind that the Siskiyou had had a hard winter. This might portend a very slow start to fire season.

It wasn't long until I could make out the buildings next to the airstrip. Sure enough, there was the faded red and black twin Beech (N 045) parked on the tarmac. That meant that **Ed Schultz** was in residence. It would be good to see him again. He was a superb jumper pilot with tons of experience. I trusted him to a fault. He was responsible for carrying me on many a jump and he never failed and neither did N 045.

A left turn off of Route 99 and I was there. Sure enough Jim Allen greeted me with a smile, a warm handshake and a quiet, calm welcome back. Much the same was offered by the rest of the crew I knew so well. I set myself up in the bunk house and stopped by the mess hall to say hello to the ladies that took such good care of us three times a day. I got into my jeans and boots and checked into the loft to draw my gear and sign some payroll stuff. Then it was off for a run with the rookies through the rocks and scrub brush of the Gobi. Damn, it felt good to be back in the saddle!

In the ten days that followed, four or five of us returnees went through refresher training lead by Jack Harter or Rod Newton. Then it was jump time. So one bright, cool and windless morning, we loaded aboard the Beech and hit the silk. To my surprise we landed, rolled the chutes and headed back to the airport to do it again. Jim said he wanted us ready, just in case.

Well, the next ten days were filled with morning “calla hoopies,” work about the base (I painted two sides of the loft) and other menial tasks. We may have had another jump sometime during that period, I don't remember. I also had time for less demanding endeavors at Oregon Caves National Monument visiting my girlfriend.

Fire season sure was getting off to a slow start. My initial thoughts back on the mountain were coming true. All the storms that passed through the region were “wet” or had no lightning in them. Then, one evening, Jim Allen gathered four of us in the mess hall and related a conversation he had had with a District Ranger on the Umpqua Forest. The subject of the call was to see if the SJ Project would be interested in a jump on his district to clear three miles of frequently used trail that was used by deer and elk hunters with pack animals. Now, the trail portion in question was located in a very remote section of the forest and positioned high up on a ridge, some distance from water, so it would be a dry camp. It was estimated that the job would take seven to ten days because the trail area would have to be “swamped” out wider than normal, due to the use of pack animals. Further, it was in an area of very tall Douglas fir and Sugar Pines. The only “safe” drop zone would be into the trees because the ridgeline, though open, was very rocky.

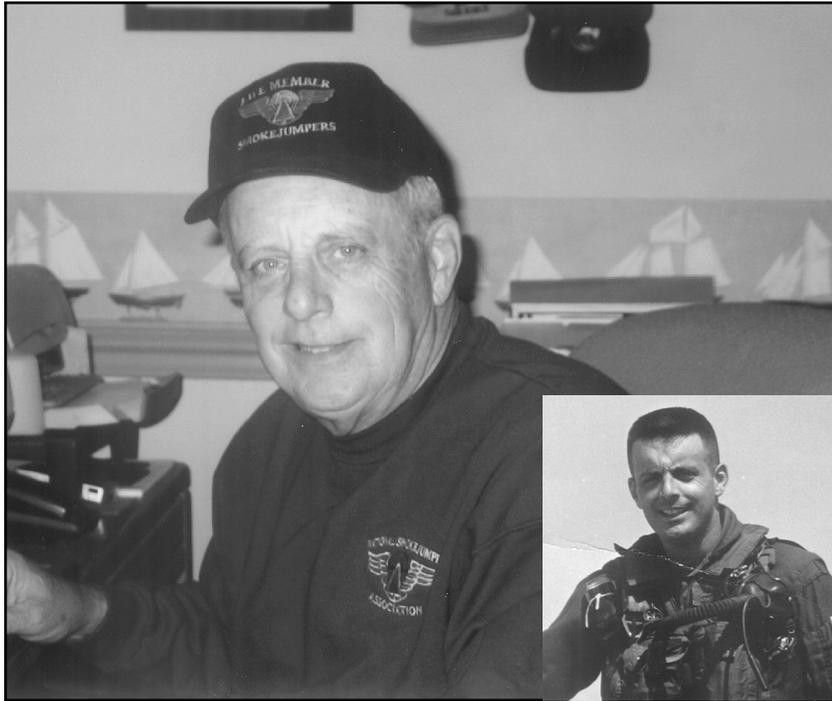
I always knew that the 200-foot letdown ropes were good for something!!

OK, let's go for it. Painting buildings was never my forte. The jump was set for the next morning, so we busied ourselves with preparations. We packed food and water (lots of water), got our tools together and other essentials to last us for up to ten days. Four jumpers working a trail for that length of time can consume lots of food and water.

In the morning we loaded the Beech with our cargo and quickly found out from Ed Schultz that with four jumpers we would be overloaded. (Where was the DC-3 when we needed it?) Well now, two runs to the Umpqua was not on the tally sheet. If we wanted more of this activity during slow fire periods, we would have to keep the cost down. Therefore, we could take four jumpers and whatever we could, so as not to overgross the aircraft. If memory serves me right, we kept all of the water and off-loaded a lot of food. Boy, this is going to be some picnic. Maybe, just maybe, the Beech would swing by our camp on the way to another destination and drop off some of our food (it never happened).

We loaded up and taxied to the runway end. Ed was driving and Al Boucher was in the right seat and acting as spotter. We were really jammed in tight, and I could tell that N 045 was at or near gross. Ed checked out the engines and taxied to the very end of the runway. Thankfully, there was a breeze blowing, and it was a relatively cool morning.

Ed poured the coal to the twin Wasp engines, and we be-



John McDaniel (Courtesy John McDaniel)

gan to roll —and roll—and roll. Finally, the tail came up and we lifted off in a very flat climb. Ed kept the power up for longer than usual as we eased out of the Illinois Valley and turned on course with the Beech purring like a kitten. God, I loved that airplane.

It was about a one-hour hop to the jump area, and we had some time to enjoy the cool air at altitude. Once over the intended jump area, we got a chance to view the trail and surrounding area. Big trees for sure!! Al climbed out of the right seat and wiggled his way through water cans, tools, food packs and jumpers to the open door. Ed lined up on a run for a streamer drop to check the wind. I remember Al saying, "Make sure you have your 200 foot ropes." Then it was time to go. I was number three, so I would be in the second stick. First two were away and Ed gunned the Beech to regain some altitude. It was my turn and Al put me as number two. I have often wondered why he put me in that position for I was the bigger of the two of us. At six feet one inch and near 200 pounds, I had a hard time as number two and an even harder time getting a good exiting position out of the small Beech door. Thus, I had become accustomed to sliding out the door legs still folded under me and trying to make the best of it.

(As an aside I talked to Al at the 2004 Reunion in Missoula this year and he still couldn't give me a good reason for putting me number two). The last words from Al were, "Hang up, that's your only option."

I got out the door with some effort and got a decent position and opening. I checked the orange and white 32 foot canopy and turned towards the trail area. Yep, Al was right, no landing spot here. I picked out what looked to be a very tall Sugar Pine and set up for it. A couple of relatively quick 360's and I had the tree bore sighted right where I wanted it.

No forward drift—tree between my boots—I'm set. I went through the upper branches and looked up to see my canopy cover the top of the tree. Not bad, so far, as I crashed through the limbs. Canopy is hanging and I can see the ground. There were some of the biggest boulders down there that I have ever seen. It was really good to be "hung up."

There was a resounding "crack" and a rush of green limbs as I passed through them. Damn, the canopy broke free and I was headed for those boulders below. All I could think of was to keep my feet together, head up and hands on the risers, stay loose and don't reach with my feet. I landed between two huge rocks in a perfect vertical position, but with a tremendous jarring thud. How I managed to wind up between those two rocks, wedged in like a wooden shim, I will never know. Nevertheless, I had the wind knocked out of me and I couldn't speak. Here I was jammed between two huge boulders, holding onto my chute risers, not touching the ground and unable to speak. My jump partner, not seeing me hanging in a tree, came looking for me. On sight he

must have thought I was dead or seriously hurt for he called to the other guys to inform them I was hurt and to inform the plane.

I really wasn't hurt, just stunned by the impact and couldn't speak. After a time, I regained my breath and was able to communicate that I was alright. All I needed was help getting out of this wedge situation I found myself in.

Later in the day, after we had collected our gear and made camp, I had time to reflect on my experience. The good part of this event was that I was unhurt, and I didn't have to retrieve my chute from that monster Sugar Pine. The bad part was that I came close to serious injury and the chute would have lots of patches decorating the canopy.

It has been 46 years since this event and some of the facts are foggy, but I vividly remember someone saying at the brief in the mess hall the night before the jump: "OK GUYS, JUST REMEMBER ITS ONLY A TRAIL JUMP." 🍄

John graduated from West Virginia University majoring in Forestry. After graduation, he was employed on the Siskiyou N.F. as a professional forester. He left the Forest Service to join the U.S. Navy where he completed Flight School and received his wings as a carrier pilot. Numerous assignments followed including Flight Instructor, Squadron Pilot and Executive Officer and Commanding Officer of a jet squadron. He saw combat in Vietnam (4 tours), graduated from the Naval War College with a masters degree in International Relations and a two year tour in the Pentagon before retiring to Virginia where he and his wife of 44 years reside today.

Currently he is working on NSA membership projects and is also working at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) as a member of the Commandants Staff. He is a Life Member of NSA and truly misses his days on the "Gobi."

Detained In Uganda

by Mike Hill (West Yellowstone '95)

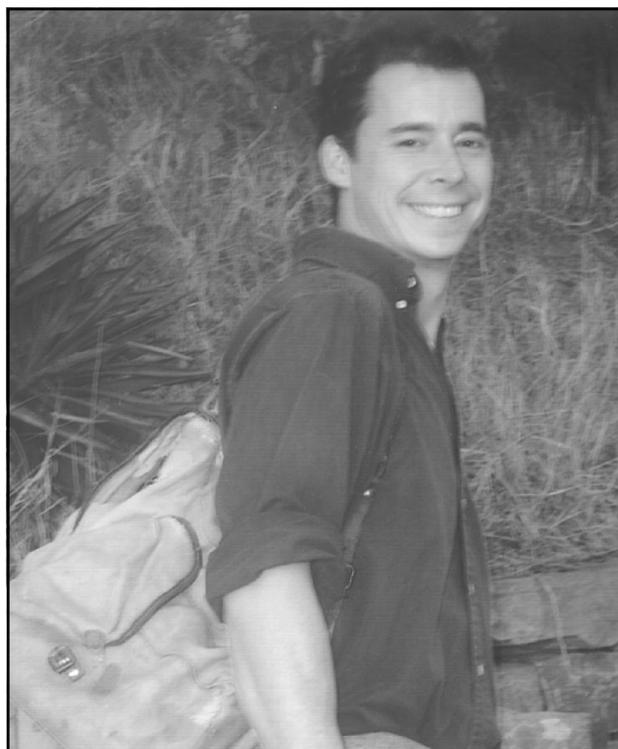
I have been officially detained by the Ugandan government. Sitting in this plush office chair, I'm bored out of my brain waiting. The only distraction I have is a monotonous stream of CNN's latest broadcast coming at me from a color TV set positioned right in front of me. There is a gray-haired Ugandan government official seated behind me watching both this TV broadcast and myself. As I turn around he catches my look, and I offer him a weak thin smile. He answers with his own big, sly smile and then ducks back into the messy piles of paperwork that are overflowing from his desk. I hope this doesn't last too long as I'm still only part way through my journey alone crossing Africa and the Middle East.

My entry into this situation of official detainment comes after weeks of travel through the bush of remote Africa. I've traveled from South Africa up across so many countries, just getting here has been an adventure. This leg of my long journey had been an unplanned side trip that I had taken up only a few weeks back after having my nerve tested in Tanzania by that country's many aggressive safari selling tour operators and money oriented culture. I had gotten sick of them and, in response, I had changed my trip's route by buying a one-way plane ticket that had carried me into Rwanda.

Rwanda is far different than the tourist centers of Tanzania. Rwanda was recently deeply scarred by a terrible genocide and still, like its large neighbor Uganda, can become dangerous due to rebel military actions. Rwanda, however, had proved to be a welcome side trip on this long journey. I had been guided by a government army patrol up into the beautiful remote mountains to visit a silverback gorilla and its wonderful family. To come face to face and look in the eyes of such a magnificent creature was awesome. I had also gotten the chance to travel all around that small country and met, first hand, the Hutus and Tutsis, who had been involved in the genocide, and to learn why 800,000 people had recently been slaughtered there.

Uganda has proven so much more interesting to me than the over- prepackaged Tanzania. Here in Uganda, I have had the opportunity to visit a National Park where the chimps still appear to rule the rainforest as they swing through the treetops. Then, only days ago, on Uganda's border with the very dangerous Democratic Republic of Congo, I had been able to learn how to craft arrowheads from the remnants of the stone aged Pygmy people as well.

This morning I also had my chance, if only briefly, to tour the bullet-scarred remains of the Entebbe airport's old



Mike Hill (NSA file)

terminal, where the Israelis long ago had conducted their famous counter-terrorist strike. That actually is why I'm now detained with this Ugandan government official in his office watching CNN.

The pretty CNN commentator has been talking about the Israelis and another of their morning helicopter attacks on a Palestine refuge camp, but here in the true heart of Africa, I couldn't care less. I do care about being detained in this office for the five hours that have already passed. To entertain myself, I begin to think back on this morning and everything that had happened. I have wanted to see where the Entebbe raid had occurred ever since being a small child and watching it happen at home on American TV. Being this close, I had felt that I couldn't pass up the opportunity. I had spent last night in Uganda's nearby capital city. Early this morning I caught the bus out to the airport and got off near the old terminal's decaying remains.

As I climbed off the bus, I noticed that the buildings where the raid had taken place years ago are mostly now standing roofless. I recall there had been a rutted out road leading from the bus stop over to the old terminal's rusty gate. I had followed that worn road over to the gate and then smiled at the Ugandan soldier guarding it. He smiled

back. A good sign! I had noticed then that he had a last name of Hill, the same as mine, embroidered on his chest nametag sewn on his military fatigues.

What where the odds of that? To show him the coincidence, I pulled my passport out and pointed to my name. With this action I had become instant friends with the Ugandan soldier. The old terminal of Entebbe was almost abandoned behind him and no one else was around the gated fence line he was guarding. I asked him if I could come inside and look around. He looked around, then shrugged. Neither of us, I guess, could see what harm that could have caused, so after slinging his AK-47 assault rifle up onto his shoulder, Hill undid the chain lock of the gate and let me in. I slipped inside and he locked the gate behind me before turning to lead me up the rutted road. This road took us between small fields of abandoned aircraft wings, engines, and fuselages and from there over to the broken cluttered remains of the old terminal's buildings.

The terminal's tower still dominated those ruins. It was just as I had remembered from watching the news footage at the time. The road led us over to the wide asphalt tarmac out in front of the terminal's building. That was where my hero of the raid, its leader Yoni, had been shot: The only Israeli military casualty of the raid. We walked over to the spot where it had happened and the whole world vanished as I had taken in the magic of visiting that spot. Unfortunately neither one of us had paid any attention to the crew loading crates onto an aging Russian cargo plane behind us, or the two men approaching us.

Even though us Hills hadn't noticed them, they had

certainly noticed us.

"Who are you?"

An angry voice from behind surprised us. Only then did we turn to see the two African males, a heavy set one and a skinny, tall one, each wearing a pair of shiny sunglasses, approaching us from the direction of the aircraft. They were both dressed in normal street clothes. Reaching us, the heavy set one tore into my new friend, Hill.

"You should have known better than this. Why did you bring him out here? You know that we are loading these weapons to send to the rebels over in the DRC!"

He began on me then.

"Are you Israeli?"

"Nope, I'm an American."

"Only Israelis come out to see this place. You must be a terrorist. Are you a terrorist like John Walker?"

Those two sunglassed Africans then escorted me across the airport and up to an office where I sit now. I guess in the near future I'll be able to laugh at the chaos of that moment, but as for now, I remain detained in this office. I hadn't known it then, but on that dusty tarmac we had unknowingly walked up on a load of weapons being packed for shipment to the Tutsi rebels battling Robert Mugaby forces. I had stumbled into another war and hadn't even realized it. And until those weapons have safely reached those rebel forces, I'll be detained in this office.

So, there is a strange satisfaction I have with my detainment. Even though I'm currently bored, for all of the craziness of my experiences here in Rwanda and Uganda, I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world! 🦋

VIDEO REVIEW

The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film

Review by Chris Sorensen

"...where conflicting interests must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Gifford Pinchot Chief Forester, 1905

With the breathtaking high definition camera work of NSA video guru **Stevan Smith**, the film takes the viewer on a two-hour ride from the tall timber of the West to the controversies and political battles of today. The movie begins with the wood economy before the invention of the internal combustion engine and proceeds chronologically through the Big Burn of 1910, the Great Depression, the massive building boom after World War II and the evolution and controversies of the past fifty years. The late Charles Osgood narrates the film. Interspersed between historical footage and spectacular camera work are inter-

views with Academics, Politicians, Corporate interests and historical figures, including retired Missoula Base Manger Bud Moore, the Father of Modern Fire Control, and **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41). The film suggests that the era of intense logging has ended and Chief of the Forest Service Dale Bosworth states that the next era of the Forest Service will be one of forest restoration. The Forest Service spent one million dollars producing this film. It makes an excellent companion to "Smoke-jumpers: Firefighters From the Sky." In the end we are asked to contemplate, "What is the greatest good?" The official web site for the film is: <http://www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood/index.shtml>. Ordering information for the three DVD set, soundtrack and book are available on the web site. 🦋

Lee Gossett On Raven 12-Gene Hamner

by Lee Gossett (Redding '57)

What great articles Gene Hamner wrote in the last two issues of the *Smokejumper*. The Ravens were a very special breed, and many of them paid the ultimate price for their involvement in the war in Laos during the 60s and early 70s. As a pilot for Air America and later a Pilatus Porter pilot for Continental Air Service in Laos during this time period, I had a special appreciation for them and saw first hand what they had to endure on a daily basis.

I was recounting a Raven story to Gene and wondered what had become of John Fuller (Raven 28), whom I had first met in southern Laos in early 1970. Gene was able to track down John, and we have been in email contact recently and I was able to get "the rest of the story."

I was flying re-supply missions out of a dirt airstrip on what we called the plateau in southern Laos, when an Air Force OV-10 landed and off-loaded an Air Force pilot and took off again. I thought this was a bit strange as Air Force aircraft seldom used this dirt strip. I taxied over to refuel and asked the pilot what the story was. He explained the OV-10 was going to work with fighters on targets near the "trail" and he would return after the mission, pick him up, and take him to Udorn, Thailand, where he would be assigned to the Raven program. I asked the Air Force pilot, John Fuller, if he would like to ride with me around the plateau for the next hour on my re-supply mission and he jumped at the chance. John was able to land at the strips he had only seen from the air. I was thinking to myself, we were probably breaking a ton of Air Force regulations but, what the hell, war is hell.

Later I would see John up country at the famous "secret base" LS-20A, or alternate as we called it. After a while I didn't see John and asked another Raven about him and was told he was the Raven shot down over the Plain de Jars in a T-28. I knew about the shoot down but didn't know if John survived after the bail out from his burns and broken back. This was the last I heard of John until March 2005, when Gene put us in touch with each other. John survived his injuries and went on to fly AC-130s out of Hurlburt Air Force Base and retired as a Colonel.

In 1968 while I was flying in southern Laos, a request came in to see if I could locate a Raven that was thought to have gone down to the east, which was in real bad-guy country. It didn't take long to locate Raven "Hoss McBride." Hoss had crashed into the river after being shot down, killing Hoss and his back seater, a Lao soldier. Hoss was something of a legend in the Raven program as he was older than the other Ravens and a Major in rank. I would see Hoss in the American Club in the evenings and being an Alabama farm boy,

he wore bib overalls.

All of our aircraft would monitor VHF frequency 119.1 throughout the country and when a distress call would come over the air, it was like a covey of quail converging on the aircraft in distress. Ravens also monitored 119.1 and they would drop their current mission and proceed to the emergency area to offer whatever assistance they could, which usually involved bringing a couple of Lao T-28 aircraft to fly cover should a helicopter rescue be required. Air America helicopters were credited with saving a number of both military and Air America aircrews from certain capture, due to their rapid response.

One day I was re-supplying Lao troops with airdrops of ammo in a real enemy infested part of the country. I happened to look over my shoulder just in time to see a mortar hit the outpost, and it appeared the NVA were lobbing mortars in just when I was over the drop zone on the off chance they would hit me with a lucky shot. I immediately made a call for a Raven on 119.1 and within just a matter of minutes a Raven arrived up with two Lao T-28 aircraft. This did the trick and the mortars ceased. This is just one isolated case of a Raven getting another pilot's chestnuts out of the fire.

Ravens had forward operating bases at all the same locations as we did. The Raven "house" was a great place to hang out in the evenings as they had MOVIES, and this was a real drawing card. The Ravens always welcomed the Air America pilots to their house and, I will say, the Ravens knew how to live up-country.

I remember that two Ravens disappeared during my tour, and we launched a massive air search for them to no avail. Fast forward about 20+ years. I was talking to Karen Weisenback, wife of Ed Weisenback (CJ-64) who went down without a trace in an Air America C-123 in northwest Laos in December 1971. Karen had been contacted by the Joint Task Force Full Accounting in Hawaii and informed that Ed's crash site had probably been located and would be excavated in the future, but no date had been set. Karen gave me the name of a Mr. Foresyth in Hawaii, whom she had been talking to. I called Mr. Foresyth and we discussed other crash sites in the area. I asked Mr. Foresyth if they had located the two missing Ravens and he confirmed their finding, within the last few years. One was found in an area we had been searching and thought to be friendly, but the aircraft was found to have bullet holes in it. The other was found south of our search area.

In closing, I would just like to say thanks to Raven Gene and all the other Ravens for a great job in Laos and for always being there for the STOL and helicopter pilots. 🙏

The Smokejumpers

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77) Forest Ranger

It seems to me each one of us is made up from our past
Both friends and enemies alike contribute to the fast
Experience, hard training; in school and on the field
Build up the man you are today – *“and that’s the truth be known”*

But still a single outfit weaves so tightly through my bones
For all who jump bound by the brand – none of us alone
Smokejumpers of Montana and others far spread out
From Gila in New Mexico up Alaska’s northern route

Jump wings are burned down in my heart by men who built the faith
From Godwin, Lufkin, Derry and the great experiment (1)
To jumping fire number 1 on Martin Creek, Nez Perce
With Robinson and Cooley - the year of 1940 – historic parachutes

A full 4 weeks the foremen work in pottery and clay
To mold the *“Ned”* (2) from head to heel; a washout rate to pay
When clay won’t stand the furnace fire a district gets the call
“Your rangers heading home today, apply again next fall”

You’ve earned your wings through fire and trial; of character you’re short
Until the top boss *“rings”* in spring; *“to refresher camp report”*
Sure every outfit has its share of scallywags and fiends
In Smokejumping they’re awful short – few and far between

The newspapers report the fires and parachuting jumps
– And close with a one hundred twenty pound; 10 mile pack out hump
But still they all have missed the point
– Though work it binds us strong
It’s more the way of *“brotherhood”* to keep you from all wrong

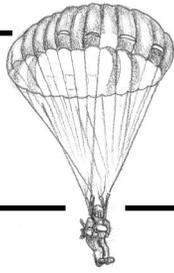
To help each other all succeed, the crew is number one
Stand up for truth that’s hard to find and take it like a man
To look and find a better way; improve it if you can
But never throw away what works and honor those who stand
For honesty, integrity; *“to live life by the land”* (3)

Work hard play hard *“No sh#t guys there I was”* (4)
Another salty jumper tale is told around the keg (5)
Remember; *“drinking beer in Montana don’t count as drinking... not at all”* (6)
So let’s all toast *“Young Men and Fire”* (7) and all who took the fall;
With 100 proof Old Forester; a whiskey that’s my call

Tradition is a strength you know; we build by blood and sweat
That’s why those jump wings burn so hot way deep down in my chest
If ‘er an outfit lived today our fathers *“Cowboy Creed”*
The Smokejumpers they kept the faith - GOD Bless ‘em and their seed

Dedicated to all the Smokejumpers past and present and in particular Larry Eisenman (Missoula '58), my jump Superintendent at Missoula, Del Hessel (McCall '59), my college track coach and Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59), and those who keep the torch burning through “Smokejumper.”

- (1) In 1939 the U.S. Forest Service Parachute Project was established at Winthrop, Washington, where the first “Aerial Smokechaser” trials took place.
- (2) “Ned” the new man. A smokejumper rookie candidate.
- (3) A conservation ethic from a *Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold.
- (4) Most jump stories start with this traditional phrase.
- (5) Smokejumpers receive their silver rookie wings celebrated around several kegs of beer and a roasted pig. At each 50 jump increment, the smokejumper receives gold wings with the jump number engraved. The jumper is required to buy his “brothers” the beer keg to celebrate.
- (6) Paraphrased from *A River Runs Through It* by Norman Maclean.
- (7) *Young Men and Fire*, a book about the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire by Norman Maclean.



Odds and Ends



by **Chuck Sheley**

In the April issue of *Smokejumper* magazine, we mentioned the loss of NCSB jumper pilot **Loren "Butch" Hammer** in the "Off the List" section.

Art Mindlin forwarded more information from the January issue of *Air International* magazine: "A Presidential Airways CASA-212 under contract to the USAF to transport troops and supplies around Afghanistan was reported missing in the Hindu Kush area in poor weather. Wreckage of the aircraft was finally found on November 30, (2004) on the snow-covered 16,600-foot summit of Baba Mountain. It was confirmed that all three civilian and three military passengers had been killed. A military spokesman said that indications were that the aircraft appeared to have been flying up a valley when the pilot realized he could not gain height quickly enough. He attempted to make a turn to escape but struck the ground.

Got an email announcing the retirement from the Forest Service of **Mike Evans** (RDD-70). Congratulations Mike.

From **Kent Harper** (RDD-75): "Right now I'm a Capt. with the Kern County Fire Dept. and an Air Operations Branch Director on one of the Calif. Type 1 teams, so I disappear for about 2 1/2 months most summers.

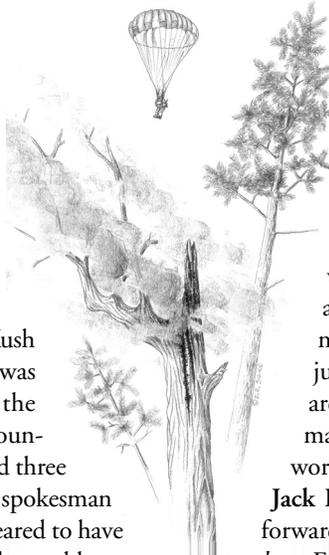
Thanks for everything you and your wife do for all of us. I really didn't have ANY idea what it takes to put out the publication. It was a real eye opener for me."

I'm trying to do some research into the circumstances behind the death of **Ed Mayrand** (MSO-50) who died in SE Asia in 1952. Would appreciate any help or details. Please contact me.

From the *Oregonian*: **Ray Rubio** (RAC-95) outlasted six other contestants as he finished 23 Great Balls of Fire at a local restaurant to win the "toughest tongue in town" contest. "Rubio was decked out in 90 pounds of firefighting equipment as he sweated away, popping the searing habanero-and-cheese fritters like they were candy."

An update on **Charlie Roos** (RAC-97): "I got picked up by an airline a few months ago. I've been learning to fly a Canadair Regional Jet the last few months and it seems to be going very well. I guess if I'm meant to do anything in this life, this is it. I'm based out of Washington DC and living near Orlando."

Shep Johnson (MYC-56) emailed: "Want to take a moment and thank you for the feature article that you did on me (Oct.-2004). I have received emails, letters and phone calls from smokejumpers commenting on the article. Just to mention a couple: **Billy Buck** (CJ-53) and **Doug Barkley** (MYC). The list is long.



"From 1956 until 1990, I was blessed by God to work with the best group of people that was ever put together. WWII, Korean War, Viet Nam, even some (vets) from the early part of the Gulf War. From 1952 through the present, we have former smokejumpers serving our country. I want to say special thanks to a former smokejumper **Mat Loe** (RDD-97) who is serving in Iraq as a contract soldier. I received an email from him, thanking me for my accomplishments. I want to thank all of the former smokejumpers who have served our country and those who are serving now. Also the men and women who are making sacrifices in Iraq and those serving around the world."

Jack Dunne (MSO-46) and **Carl Gidlund** (MSO-58) forwarded an excellent article from the *Missoula Independent*, Feb. 3-Feb. 10 edition, titled "The Pacifists." History and background of the CPS-103 Smokejumpers program constituted a large part of the article.

A while back we listed high schools that jumpers attended. Darby High School (Montana) was in the lead. **Robin Twogood** (MSO-56) has added another jumper to that list with **Kermit Cole** (MSO-48).

Bob Scofield (CJ-49) wrote: "I saw three old Gobiites (at Reunion 2004) that I hadn't seen in better than fifty years. While I think almost every smokejumper from whatever base has a good deal of pride in their outfit, it seems that the Cave Junction crew stands near the top. If you doubt it, remember the noise at the reunion when the speaker asked the Cave Junction crew to stand up!"

Had a great visit with **John Culbertson** (FBX-69) as he was passing through Chico headed north. John is thinking about retirement and could be out of the firefighting business in the next 14 months. He is presently working on a book. Hope that he gets a publisher as many of us look forward to reading what he writes.

Stuart A. Roosa (CJ-53), the astronaut and smokejumper who carried tree seeds to the moon and back aboard Apollo 14, was remembered along with other astronauts with the planting of a 6-foot descendant of his Moon Trees at Arlington National Cemetery Wednesday, February 9. The tree is intended to honor all NASA deceased astronauts.

From **Mike Apicello** (CJ-78), NIFC Public Affairs Officer: "We have a Sycamore planted here at the Wildland Firefighter Memorial at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise. It was donated by **Charlotte Larson**. Charlotte's career with the Forest Service included lead plane pilot, smokejumper pilot, and large fixed-wing (airtankers) program coordinator. There is also a Moon Tree marker that notes the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base where Astronaut

Roosa got his "Forest Service" wings. The Siskiyou Smoke-jumper base, now closed, was noted for its coverage area of some of the steepest and most rugged terrain in the western U.S. and for the tall redwood and ancient virgin Douglas Fir forests."

From **Steve Smith** (NSA video producer): "Just to update you on the documentary, 'The Greatest Good.' It is the 100-year history of the US FS. Some of the NSA video is used in the section on smokejumpers. It will show in many places around the country, including Missoula, later this spring. It's received excellent reviews and there's been talk of putting it up for an Academy Award in the documentary category."

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): "Chuck, I wanted to share an award I received with you and the smokejumpers. It means a lot to me as it is the Paul Gleason "Lead By Example Award" from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

The award is for teaching and pushing to re-instate our original 10 Standard Fire Orders. If you remember, the October 2001 *Smokejumper* issue first published my write up on The Original Intent Fire Orders. Other jumpers then helped use the paper to get us back on track. The idea spread and was a true grass roots common sense push to get back to a workable 10 Standard Orders. In short, I wanted all of our smokejumpers to know they share a piece of this award through our brotherhood. Thank you, Chuck, for first publishing the piece back in 2001."

I'm working on a reprint of a profile on **Danny On** (CJ-46) and asked **Dick Courson** (CJ-46) for a picture of Danny which he supplied. He also added, "Danny was a great archer and made excellent bows. He made one that I still have. Danny and I hunted deer with bow and arrow on several occasions." Thanks to (Judge) Dick Courson for the picture which should be run in the January issue.

My wife and I were visiting the Evergreen Aviation Museum checking out the Smokejumper exhibit last week (Feb. 22) when someone grabbed me from behind. Knew it was a pretty big person with strong arms. Had a great chance meeting with **Dick Wessell** (CJ-56) whom I had not seen in years. Dick lives nearby and was showing his grandson the Smokejumper display at the museum.

The Evergreen Aviation Museum, home of the NSA Smoke-jumper exhibit, is planning a \$6.9 million expansion. The museum is adding a giant screen IMAX theater this fall and hopes to add another 121,000-square foot exhibit hall in the future. You should visit this place on your next vacation trip.

The value of the NSA web site was shown again as we picked up two new members ((**Dirk Blackdeer**-RAC-84 and **Scott Holliday**-RAC-88) for whom we had "no known address." Welcome to the NSA, gentlemen.

Dirk said: "I was talking to my friends the other day and somehow we got on the subject about fighting wildland fires and I mentioned the smokejumper crews. I decided to see what information was available and found the NSA site through Google. I got a big kick out of the jump list search and enjoyed your imagery galleries. I've got a few decent pictures from my old days and I'll submit some in

the near future.

"After my second fire season in 1984, I entered the Army and served in various assignments, first as an infantry officer, and then as an intelligence staff officer. It's been a good career and I retire next year. I'm currently serving as a tactics instructor at the Command and General Staff College."

Lee Gossett (RDD-57) in an email to **Gene Hamner** (MSO-67) concerning the "Ravens" articles in the past two issues of this magazine: "I have really enjoyed both your articles in the *Smokejumper* magazine and I remember the NBC filming crew well. I was assigned to fly them around Laos in a CASI Porter and remember when Dick Johnson gathered all Continental and Air America pilots and wives at the Continental compound in Vientiane and showed us the movie that NBC had sent over. Great footage as I remember."

George Steele (NCSB-72): I liked your editorial about coffee. It reminded me of having coffee shooters on breaks on all night digs. That is take a packet of C-rat instant coffee and empty it on your tongue, wash it down with water, take some ibuprofen and a couple of tums, and get back to work. Smokejumper espresso. Yup, we always used coffee in moderation and when we got back to town and hit the bars, we always drank beer responsibly."

George Straw (CJ-63) comments on the April issue of *Smokejumper*: "Caffeine-you are so very right on. I put myself through undergraduate and law school on No Doz, and I have read articles stating it will increase your IQ by five points (and I need all the help I can get). I can assure you all that cops and firefighters use lots of caffeine, particularly when on duty; you have to be awake, stay sharp and stay on top of your game when on duty as "catastrophes" come when you least expect them and often in the late hours when sleep is not on the menu.

"Jim Allen-I would add Jim to my list of great men I have met. I have been asked many times where I got my energy and ability to "go" and I always tell them 'smoke-jumping.' The endeavor teaches every successful jumper how to pull up that adrenalin and keep on trucking until the job is done - that same skill carries over for the rest of our lives. Thanks again for three years of great jumping and friendships.

"Smokejumping was the first of one or two major turning points in my life, and what I learned as a smokejumper has made every task ever after faced with far less of a challenge and always followed by successful completions."

We are saddened to hear of the passing away of **Bob Webster's** (MSO-55) wife March 7, 2005, after a short four-month bout with cancer. Bob will be moving to Georgia soon.

Jim Duzak (MYC-84): "Just out of curiosity, as I head towards my 22nd season and my 51st birthday, any idea how many active jumpers out there over 50?"

Pioneer smokejumper **Jim "Smockey" Alexander** (MSO-40) and his wife, Dorothy, have sold their home in North Carolina and moved to Ketchum, Idaho. Smockey plans to visit the jumper bases at Boise, McCall and Missoula before too long. "I'm very glad to be back out West."

A good example of how the NSA works with jumper connections world-wide just showed itself recently. World-traveler **Mike Hill** (WYS-95) is currently traveling Laos and was told about some potential MIA remains and dogtags. The individual named was Ralph W. Magee USAF. Since there are so many MIA scams going on, Mike, via email to me from Laos, wanted to know if this might be legitimate. I contacted **Denis Symes** (MYC-63) in D.C. and asked him to do some research.

Here is what he found: On 23 March, 1961, a specially modified intelligence-gathering C-47, piloted by 1st Lt. Ralph W. Magee, was shot down by anti-aircraft artillery on the eastern edge of the Plain of Jars. Seven Air Force personnel were killed. There was a survivor. Maj. Lawrence R. Bailey, who always wore a parachute when he flew, bailed out of the damaged aircraft and was captured by Pathet Lao forces. He remained a POW in the massive cave complex, which also served as the Pathet Lao headquarters, at Sam Neua. On 15 August 1962, after the Geneva Agreements on Laos were signed, Lawrence Bailey was released to American control. This same cave complex at Sam Neua where Maj. Bailey was held is the same extensive complex where scores of American prisoners were known or believed to be held both during and after the Vietnam War. In July 1991, a joint US/Lao recovery team excavated seven previously exhumed graves at the C-47 crash site and recovered partial remains believed to belong to the missing crewmen.

In the "Twilight Zone" side of this story, Denis said, "The name Ralph Magee has been bugging me since you sent it to me. I just remembered that a high school friend's name was Ralph Magee and his father was an Air Force pilot and intelligence officer. His father was transferred to Hawaii in the spring of '59 and I lost contact with him.

How many Ralph Magee's would have an Air Force pilot and intelligence officer father?"

Wallace "Pic" Littell (MSO-44): "Congratulations on a good issue of *Smokejumper*. I especially enjoyed the tributes to Roy Wenger and to Jim Allen, with whom I jumped in 1947-48 at NCSB."

Leo Cromwell (IDC-66): "Things got off to a great start for the first meeting with a lot of new ideas about the 2007 National Smokejumper Reunion. **Cliff Dalzell** (MSO-61) agreed to be the Treasurer. Cliff has a wealth of experience in accounting and we are very lucky to have him. **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69) will be a co-chairman and, with his years with the BLM, should help get the BLM jumpers fired up. We will be recruiting another co-chairman and hope to announce him in the near future."

David Bruhn (Associate-USN Ret): "Your article about coffee was on the mark. Not only is caffeine needed during wartime operations but also during routine operations at sea, as the crews of ships are always sleep deprived during deployments."

Murry Taylor (RDD-65): "We are in the final stages of signing a contract with a major film company to do a full-length motion picture of "Jumping Fire." As you can imagine, I'm really stoked about it. I'll be meeting with the director and producer. I hope to convince them of the value of doing a really accurate portrayal of this great adventure. This should, hopefully, lead to some good things for smokejumping and the Association as well."

Bob Mutch (MSO-54) is the subject of a feature article in the Spring 2005 edition of the Albion College newsletter. Bob has had an extensive career in fire management with the Forest Service and, even though retired, still continues to work as an expert advisor for many organizations at home and on the international scene. 🐼

The Fitness Test- A Quantum Leap Forward for Smokejumping

by "Wild Bill" Yensen (McCall '52)

When I was a rookie back in '53, you didn't have to be in shape. The first two weeks were spent on a ten-day project. This was supposed to get you in shape and teach you the skills necessary to be a jumper. Climbing, crosscut sawing, swinging an axe or Pulaski safely, and plenty of hard work.

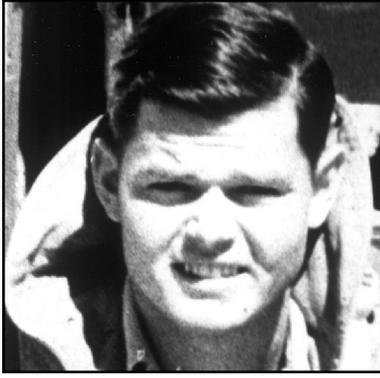
I went out to Chamberlain with **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) and six other guys. We hiked up to

Tumbledown Bridge, on the west fork of Chamberlain Creek, and camped. We cut down and rolled up several miles of old telephone line towards Heida Point. When the snow got so deep we couldn't pull the wire out, we went back to the Chamberlain Ranger Station and worked clearing the new east-west landing strip. We did work hard.

In 1964, my first year as a squadleader, we had a very large crop of rookies which, by then, were

called Neds. There was one individual in this group who physically was not really up to the job of smokejumper. We had an obstacle course, and he never once made it over the wall, or jump over all the hurdles, or even get across the overhead ladder. He was a very nice guy, and I guess they just didn't have the heart to wash him out because he tried so hard.

1964 was a very slow fire year, and we all got only one fire jump.



Bill Yensen (NSA file)

This guy got his out in the sagebrush, so he had no problems on his lone fire jump. In 1965 he comes back, and I got him for a jump partner for a two-man'er on Wapiti Creek. This is very steep, rough country near where Chamberlain Creek runs into the main Salmon River. **Del Catlin** (MYC-47) spotted us and I went out first. There was no real jump spot, but I managed to get through the lodgepole and get to the ground. My jump partner (JP) landed in a school-marmed lodgepole right over the top. He managed his letdown and we went to the fire.

The fire was in the top of a four-foot diameter Ponderosa. Therefore we had to cut the tree down. My partner couldn't even pull the saw back! I had to push as well as pull on that crosscut, but we did get the tree down. My JP did put the fire out with a shovel full of dirt.

With the fire out, we ate some supper and then I said, "Go up and get your chute out." He said, "Bill I can't climb!" I said, "Every smoke-jumper has to be able to climb, so get those spurs on and go get your chute!" He grumbled and put them on. About the third step up the tree, he missed a spur and rammed a stob into his family jewels. He rolled around in agony for five minutes. Fifteen minutes later I told him to try again, and he started up, but missed the second spur. I could see it was hopeless and told him to get them off before he killed himself. Then I put on the spurs and went up and got his chute out with

considerable difficulty.

The next morning we were packing up our E-bags and the copter flew over and dropped us a note. It said to be in the meadow by ten. That gave us two hours to hike up the ridge, about two miles through downed logs and brush.

I took the cargo chute, climbers, crosscut and his Pulaski and put them on my pack. We took off. When I had gone a hundred yards, I looked back. My JP had gone about twenty-five yards. I told him to hustle up, and he said he was coming as fast as he could. I said to follow my tracks and headed for the meadow as fast as I could.

When I got to me meadow, I found about fifty little Christmas trees growing up just right to catch the tail rotor of the copter. I got out a pulaski, cut them all down, and got them out of the way. I was just catching my breath when the copter came in and landed. We lashed my

gear on the side basket and lo and behold, here came my JP out of the brush, completely out of gas. I went over and carried his pack across the meadow to the copter. We were demobed to Chamberlain and then flown back to McCall.

My point is this. Suppose I had been hurt on that fire jump? I shudder to think what my JP could have done. My ass would have been grass!

The really good thing about the fitness test is that it finally allowed older men like Wayne Webb to jump a few more years. He had laid out for seven years, came back and jumped three more seasons before retiring. That ruling hit me just right. At the end of the season in 1972, I had to retire and resign. I was done. That winter Del Catlin called and said I could come back as a temporary if I could pass the fitness test. That allowed me to jump for fourteen more summers. 🦅

An Ode To The '40's Jumpers

by "Chuck" Blanton (McCall '47)

Life is indeed a journey
And we have traveled far,
From the depths of the depression
Through the trials of a world at war.

We've met life's many struggles
And somehow we came through,
To realize what really matters
Are the friendships that we knew.

Remember when we were jumpers
When life was still quite new,
We gave little thought to the future
But time – my, how it flew.

Now, the Golden Years have come to pass
I never thought they'd come so fast,
I cannot see, I cannot pee
I cannot chew, I cannot screw.

My memory sinks, my hearing shrinks
No sense of smell, I look like hell,
My body's drooping, have trouble pooping
The Golden Years are here at last,
The Golden Years can kiss my ass!

Reflectively
The Hawk

Birthday on the Middle Fork of the Salmon

by Bernie Nielsen (McCall '47)

The Ford Tri-motor lifted off from McCall for a fire call on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. It was my birthday, July 13, 1949. Four Smokejumpers were on board: **Ralph Wilde** (MYC '46), **Ed Kyle** (MYC '48), **Lavon Scott** (MYC '48), and myself. I recall that **Bob Fogg** piloted the Ford and **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43) was our Spotter.

Cresting a ridgeline near the Middle Fork, we spotted smoke on a distant ridge between Tumble and Rattlesnake Creeks. From the plane, we observed that there appeared to be more smoke than fire. It was a two-man fire. After estimating the wind direction and picking a spot, Ralph and I jumped on the fire. Kyle and Scott were to take the next fire.

Ralph landed on one side of the ridge and I landed on the other, just below the crest. As I got out of my gear, our equipment was dropped and I expected to see the Ford depart. Instead it circled several times and then came in low and dropped a note telling me to check on Ralph. I stopped retrieving my chute and ran over to Ralph's side of the ridge. I found him lying on his back in obvious pain, his head angled downhill.

I laid out a streamer to signal a back injury. Scott and Kyle were then dropped; a stretcher followed. They said that a helicopter was being dispatched from Missoula to pick up Ralph and transport him to the hospital. We struggled to load Ralph onto the stretcher and then moved him to the top of the ridge to await the helicopter. While waiting for the chopper, we returned to the fire and extinguished it. Finally the chopper arrived, but it was very small. There was no stretcher-basket for Ralph to lie in, so he had to squat on his knees looking out over the tail of the helicopter; it

must have been painful. Later we visited him in the Salmon City Hospital and learned that he had a fractured coccyx (tailbone).

The three of us remaining on the ground were to be picked up by a boat. Scott and Kyle hiked to the mouth of Tumble Creek to meet the boat. I stayed with the fire to ensure that it was totally out. Later, I decided there

was no reason for me to stay on the ridge overnight, so I started my trek to the Middle Fork to meet up with the other guys. This was a poor decision because night fell when I was only half way to the river – but that's a story for another time.

We left quite a bit of gear on the ridge, and I've often wondered if any one ever found it. 🦋



Historical Photo: Lloyd Johnson in front of original smokejumper base at McCall 1946. (Courtesy Del Catlin)



Blast from the Past

The Illinois Valley Airport

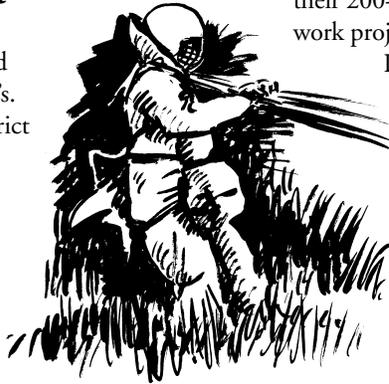
by M. M. "Red" Nelson

In 1938, the Siskiyou forest had a really bad "fire bust" which was not unusual in the 1930's. I was district ranger on the Illinois Valley District (called the Page Creek District at that time).

Some of us began to think that the proper use of aircraft might lessen our problems of firefighting in that isolated country. We thought that we should have an airstrip in the Illinois Valley, but the thought of the Forest Service getting funding was unthinkable. It was hard enough to get funds to maintain the few roads and trails. But, where there is a will there is a way and we went to work finding a way.

I picked out an area that seemed like it might make a suitable airstrip. There were not many large trees, but it did have lots of rocks (Gobi Stones-ed). Some of the land was owned by the BLM and some by private owners. I went to a fellow named Elwood Hussey, who was the owner of the much-needed land. He was a one-man chamber of commerce for the new town of Cave Junction. He agreed that an airport would be desirable and donated a part of his land. Other private landowners wouldn't donate any of their land, but we worked out a land exchange between Hussey. I got a permit for use of the BLM land.

Now it seemed like we had the land available for the airstrip. How do we get it started? I had a unique situation in that the Oregon Caves National Monument was within my district, and they had a CCC camp assigned for work on Crater Lake National Park. In the winter they would move



their 200-man camp to my district and I furnished their work projects. Since the CCC personnel belonged to the

Park Service, their work program did not have to be approved by the Regional Office or even the Forest Supervisor. It was purely my projects, although I kept the SO informed.

A young engineer named John Ulrich was head of the CCC camp and we developed a work plan for the projects. John and I had an excellent rapport. When I included building the airport in the work plan, John agreed that it would be an excellent project. Together we surveyed and designed the airstrip and his CCC crew

started to clear the brush and the mammoth job of removing the rock. We started in the winter of 1938-39.

I left the district at the end of 1939, so did not get to see the work completed. I think the CCC's got the strip to a state where planes could use it, but perhaps the enterprising ranger, Harold Bowerman, who followed me, may have gotten some other help. I do know that when the jumper base was established, Region 5 furnished some funds as they (jumpers) were on call for fires in Northern California.

After I became fire chief in R-5, it was decided to pave the airstrip, and I budgeted R-5 fire funds to help pay for it. It was then that I learned that I had not done too careful a job when I originally checked the deeds. A title check prior to the paving showed a cloudy title that delayed the job. 🦉

Forest Service Memories edited by Gilbert W. Davies and Florice M. Frank

Snake Bite

by Ben Mitchell (Missoula '60)

I was based at Grangeville in 1960. Due to heavy August rains, four of us were sent to the Fenn R.S. on the Selway District for project work. Good news as we had heard they had a good-looking cook.

Ron Reintsma (MSO-58) and I were assigned the job of rolling up the abandoned telephone wire that ran from Fog Mt. Lookout to the Selway Falls Guard Station. The country was all thick brush from the 1934 burn.

Ron was a soft-spoken guy, but we suspected there was more to him than he let on. The second day out Ron reached down and picked up a rattlesnake, which I had not seen and had just stepped over. Holding it expertly behind the head he began milking it. He said the snake would probably be harmless for a few days, but I recommended killing it and removing all doubt as we had to continue

working the area. He replied that if we kill it we should eat it. Thus, the idea was hatched to butcher it and ask the good-looking cook, Donna, to fix it for dinner. It might add to our "macho" image? When she opened the sack with the ready-for-the-pan snake meat, her expression left us wondering if we might have made a mistake. However, at dinner there was a platter of mystery meat that tasted like chicken, and we all had to have a taste.

After 45 years of marriage Donna Tinker and I continue to have fond memories of Fenn R.S. and the people who were there so long ago. We haven't seen or heard from Ron since that year, although I have searched. I was told he was sailing solo around the world in a 30-foot boat he built. If anyone knows of his whereabouts, please contact me at 103 Darrin Dr., Sitka, AK, 99835. 🦉



Touching All Bases



Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks '96)

Refresher training is finished for half of our 68 smokejumpers. Our fastest time in the 1.5 mile run belonged to **Ben Dobrovolny** (FBK-04) at 7:42. Our second refresher class began this week in stormy weather. Alaska's spring thaw is slow to arrive after a heavy winter.

In April we sent six jumpers to Dillon, Mont., to conduct multiple burn plans under the watch of **Paul Lenmark**, (FBK-96), now a fuel specialist in Dillon. Four hundred acres burned and success was declared. Paul misses the bros already and has invited them back next year. Thanks Paul.

Dalan Romero (FBK-83) and **Doug Carroll** (FBK-94) traveled to North Carolina recently to evaluate the Casa 235 Jumpship. The 235 is a Short Take-Off and Landing aircraft operationally comparable to a DC-3, pressurized, with a payload of 13,200 pounds and a maximum cruising speed of 245 knots. The Alaskans liked what they saw after making two jumps from the ship, participating at the request of the Forest Service. More evaluations are being planned.

Bill Cramer (NIFC-90) and **Robert Yeager** (RDD-92) joined members of the Boise BLM jump base to make a total of 60 evaluation jumps using a static-line deployed Ram-Air system. The continuing project is part of BLM's evaluation of potential parachute deployment systems. The verdict on the static-line Ram-Air? For now let's all just imagine the possibilities.

Back in Alaska's loft, **Gary Baumgartner** (FBK-88) reported "a record winter" for the making and fixing of all things smokejumping. Gary would like to thank his tireless crew.

Promoted recently: **Branden Petersen** (FBK-01) is our new operations specialist, **Mitch Decoteau** (GAC-78) is our new paracargo supervisor.

Upon accepting the position, **Decoteau's** first order of business was to demand unflinching obedience from his crew. Seeing this had little effect on the PC ranks, **Mitch** declared their jobs safe after all. "It's really the GS-8's that run PC," said **Mitch**. "I just support them while they run the show." Alaska's Paracargo Section dropped 298,000 pounds of supplies to fires and projects in 2004.

Officially not returning in 2005 are **Dorsey Lightner** (RDD-89), **Bruce Nelson** (FBK-81), **Sean Phillips** (FBK-01), **Ryan Ringe** (FBK-02), **Pete Stephenson** (RDD-98), and **Quint Gidley** (FBK-03). **Quint** returned to his



stomping grounds to jump from West Yellowstone this fire season. Each of these colorful characters will be missed on and off the fireline.

To them all good fortune.

Returning from a prolonged departure from the jump list is **Scott Hocklander** (FBK-99), who has served in various disaster relief campaigns of late.

Bruce Ford (MSO-75) and **Bob Schober** (MSO-95) spent a month touring five Russian Smokejumper Bases last winter. Among their many adventures - the pair visited Red Square, the Kremlin, Peter the Great's palace, and then parachuted 3600 feet from a helicopter.

In "Smokejumpers and Hollywood" news, **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65) reports his negotiations are close to final with Warner

Brothers concerning movie rights to "*Jumping Fire*." By phone I gathered that **Murry** is containing his excitement as well as can be expected for the moment. Filming *may* begin within two years.

Several grass-roots, cinematographic think-tanks of Alaska bros have already solved casting issues for the upcoming feature, worked out most stunt work challenges, and settled on filming locations, but we'll call you. One question - who will play **Murry's** part?

On the small screen, is **Joe Don Morton** (RDD-95) really headed for reality TV? Stay tuned, we'll be right back with the answer in just about three months.

Back in smokejumping news, April 25 marks the arrival of Alaska's 11 rookie candidates. I spoke to **Ty Humphrey** (FBK-97), our lead rookie instructor, as he made final preparations for his large rookie class. "How will you keep track of so many rookie candidates at once?" I asked Ty as he shuffled a stack of papers on his desk. Ty stopped suddenly. He looked at me puzzled, then quickly drew an enormous Bowie knife from a sheath on his hip, carefully inspecting its blade with his fingertips.

"They look like a strong group from the 100 applications we had," he admitted quietly, eyeing his reflection in the 17-inch steel blade. "But our rookie trainers are a lot gnarlier," Ty continued brightly, returning his knife to its sheath. "Plus, there's two feet of snow on the ground." Ty looked out his office window at several frozen pull-up bars, grinning. He began describing a particular samurai sword he was considering buying, and I caught a glimpse of what a long winter in Fairbanks can do to a Texan.

Best of luck to the rookies of 2005.

Boise Base Report

by Grant Beebe (NIFC '90)

As of this writing, four rookie candidates are toughing it out in their first week of training up on the Boise National Forest. If these four make it through two more days in the field, they'll begin units and jump training next week. Those who complete that part of training should graduate around May 18, when the bulk of the crew goes on the board for the fire season.

The northern portions of the Great Basin, such as the Northern Rockies, remain in severe drought. Down south, the fear is that big rains and heavy grass fuel loads will spell a big fire season. We've sent a few jumpers to Arizona to help them prepare.

We have prescribed fire crews out now prepping and burning units, with individual jumpers working on the prescribed fire qualifications critical to anyone who wants to move into fire management.

Part of our workload consists of staffing large incident management teams; nine jumpers will be doing this work intermittently over the course of the summer.

On our jumper loads, we're still putting a Type 3 IC on every plane. And this year we're keeping our planes staffed with fire monitoring specialists, also, to help out those FMOs with "fire use" as part of their management strategy.

Funding an expensive program such as the smoke-jumpers during lean budget times like these, is an ongoing challenge. Providing not only outstanding initial attack forces but also skilled folks, such as burn bosses, fill-in FMOs and AFMOs, and IMT team members, helps us earn the support of key decision-makers.

Our crew composition has remained fairly stable over the winter. **Dan Arnold** (RDD-86) and **Steve Price** (MSO-95) both are moving on to air attack jobs in Nevada this spring, **Dan** in Elko and **Steve** in Minden. **Matt Loe** (RDD-97), now fully recovered from a broken leg suffered in 2003, has decided to give a security gig in the Middle East a go. **Brent Johnson** (NIFC-92) and **Dan Zach** (RAC-00) have been rehired into smokejumper positions.

Grangeville Base Report

by Randy Nelson (Grangeville '87)

After the driest winter in memory, spring of 2005 appears to be a normal one - rain storms intermingled with snow showers on a nearly daily basis. **Robin Embry's** (GAC-85) prediction was dead center. See NSA *Smokejumper*, April 2005.

The past winter found Grangeville smokejumpers engaged in project work from hurricane recovery work in North Carolina to prescribed fire planning and implementation in Big South Fork National Park in Tennessee and the National Forests of Mississippi, and to Asian Long Horned Beetle seek-and-destroy missions in New Jersey.

Rudy Trujillo (MSO-82) retired from the Fixed Wing Specialist/ATGS position on the Clearwater/Nez Perce Fire Zone at the end of February. **Rudy** will be replaced for the 2005 season by **Marge Kuehn-Tabor** (RAC-91). **Ted**

McClanahan (MSO-95) has accepted a squadleader position behind **Brett Bittenbender** (MYL-88), who has transferred back to McCall. **Mike Ward** (GAC-01) will temporarily fill in behind Marge.

Also congratulations to **Jody Stone** (MSO-02) and **Jason Junes** (GAC-04) on their promotions to PSE smokejumper positions.

Early refresher is over. GAC trained 16 in the early session, and most of them are now doing project work across the country. Three are doing APHIS climbing in New Jersey, six are in North Idaho on a hazardous fuels/prescribed fire project, two are working on timber sale preparation on the Nez, and others are involved with leadership and fire training.

We are nearly finished with rookie hiring with three new hires and are planning on two detailers for the 2005 season. Their training will start in MSO on May 23. GAC will have 32 smokejumpers including detailers for the summer if all goes as planned. Our contract Twin Otter is scheduled to start on June 7 and will be available through September.

Bob Nicol (MSO-52) announced that he will not be returning to share the flying duties with **Nels Jensen** (MSO-62) this year. He is going to return to retirement and enjoy his grandchildren and sharpen up on his golf game. **Bob's** piloting skill and dedication to our smokejumpers and our operation will be greatly missed.

McCall Base Report

by Eric Brundige (McCall '77)

The McCall jumpbase is gearing up for a potentially busy season with 70 jumpers on the list. Winter weather was different, to say the least. A relatively dry winter had precipitation totals at 40% of normal through February. However, March rolled in at 140% of normal and brought us up to 65% of normal for the winter. "I'll tell you how it was in October."

Six rookies went through training starting in late May - five men and one woman, along with "old timer" **Pat Baker** (NCSB-82), who is returning to the smokejumper ranks after being out of fire for the past 15 years. After spending time jumping in Boise, Missoula and NCSB, **Pat** started flying C-130s for the Guard. His service commitment is complete and he's coming back to our ranks.

Frankie Romero (MYL-89) is now firmly entrenched in his role as base manager, trying to find a spot on the jumplist whenever possible. **Barry** "this is my last season" **Koncinsky** (MYC-74) is truly in his last season as he hits that magic age of 57 before next field season and will be forced into retirement.

The McCall aircraft fleet is unchanged, with Twin Otters 141Z and 143Z, and Turbine DC-3, 142Z. There may, however, be some different faces in the cockpit. Captain **Matt Harmon** retired this past spring. **Lance Johnston** has been called into active duty and is now touring the world piloting a C-17. Don't be too surprised to see some old familiar faces up front, in the form of some of the recent retirees. **Matt**, "Captain **Andy**," **Marc Anderson**, and **Jay Thomson** are all likely candidates.

Winter work kept a few folks busy in the loft. We sent climbers to New Jersey and Chicago and had Rx work in Montana and Colorado. We also had folks doing some trail cleanup work in North Carolina and a wilderness canoe trail cleanup project in Florida. Both of the cleanup projects involved crosscut saw work cleaning up storm damage and blow downs.

We look forward to seeing everyone this summer, wherever the fires take us, and to seeing lots of folks at the Boise reunion next year. Be safe.

Missoula Base Report

by Keith Wolferman (Missoula '91)

Things in Missoula are picking up with the advent of our early refresher training. Overhead reported in the day after Easter, and the bulk of our other jumpers the following week. We had an extremely dry winter, but as predicted by the bros, the spring storm track is kicking in and we're getting some shots of much needed moisture.

We enjoyed a quality two-day training exercise starting with a jump into the Blackfoot River corridor - including saw training, first-aid scenarios (with great acting by the jumpers on each load), tree climbing, helicopter long-line training, and an excellent field navigation course.

Hats off to **Mike "Goke" Goicoechea** (MSO-99), **John Kovalicky** (MSO-88), and **Mitch Kearns** (MSO-89) for really going the extra mile to keep training fresh, and not just going through the motions! **Mitch** has accepted an assistant operations foreman position in Redmond Oregon. We wish him luck and are grateful for his efforts on our behalf. With the support of **Toby** and his kids, we're sure he'll do well.

Hardy Blomeke (MSO-77) has also moved on - he's accepted the training foreman position in West Yellowstone. His knowledge and his loft high jinx will be tough to replace (we'll try not to let your plants die).

Also going to West is **Bobby Sutton** (MSO-91). He'll be taking over as loft foreman there. **Kevin Lee** (MSO-79) is acting loft foreman as **Todd Onken** (MSO-82) is getting into high gear on the Smoke jumper ISDS study. **Todd** will be going to China this August to help wife **Andy** settle in. She's accepted a 2-year contract teaching abroad. He'll return in the fall, but could be gone for good in January. He too will leave a huge void in the loft, as he is top-shelf professionally and a heck of a great person to work with.

Our own **Robert Ellis Jr.** (MSO-98) is back from his tour in Iraq - he went on alert last spring and shipped out in July. His field artillery unit was reconfigured into a rifle company, and he was in charge of a security detail at an airbase. He came back sporting new stripes, so now we aren't kidding when we call him "Gunny!" Thanks, **Rob**.

Starting next Monday we will be fielding a lot of people for burning operations and work projects. We currently have folks in Michigan and N.J. climbing beetle trees and working burn projects. **Wayne Williams** (MSO-77) and **Sarah Doerhing** (MSO-91) are getting geared up to open the Silver City, N.M., spike base.

Other than that, it's a wait and see proposition to see

what we're dealt this fire season. Hope all is well around the bases, and maybe we'll see everyone on boosters this summer.

Redding Base Report

by Nate Hesse (Redding '01)

We've experienced a rather wet spring here in Redding. Despite the weather, a lot of projects have been completed around the base in preparation for fire season. While projects were being completed by some focused jumpers, former Redding Base Manager **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53) stopped by to tell us how far we have come from the days of yesteryear.

Rookie training commenced on April 4 with five detailers and four temporary hires. **Jerry Spence** (RDD-94) is leading the rookie training this year with **Greg Fashano** (RDD-99), **Chris Gunter** (RDD-01), and **Shane Ralston** (RDD-03).

Shane spent a spell down in Sacramento as a Crew Boss with the Apprenticeship program. **Rachel Kellogg** (RDD-04) was assisting the academy as well. A handful of Redding Jumpers also filled cadre positions in leadership and G.P.S. classes at the Academy in Sacramento.

San Bernadino N.F. will have Redding Jumpers in the mix again this year, potentially staffing fires, and continuing project work. We will be sending rotations regularly throughout the summer.

Casey Ramsey (RDD-01) is headed to the Inyo N.F. to detail to a fire use module located in the southern Sierras by Mammoth Lakes, California. A few jumpers are scheming to get the keys to his boat while he's gone.

Geoff Schultz (RDD-01) accepted a job with the Redmond Smokejumpers, and **Karl Johnson** (RDD-95) left jumping to work full time with the Army Reserve in San Francisco. Despite the losses, Redding is looking to hire one GS-8, a GS-7 and a GS-6.

A few knot-tiers to mention: **Matt Alexander** and his new bride, **Tracy**, as well as **Brad Schuette** (RDD-04) and his wife, **Carmen**, were wed this past winter.

Winter traveling stories from the bros include a completion of the "Tough Man" endurance race held annually in England. Two Redding Jumpers, **Brian Pontes** (RDD-03) and **Dylan Reeves** (RDD-03), competed and are still trying to thaw out after a successful finish. After the race, **Pontes**, dubbed "The Second Most Dangerous Man Alive" by some Alaska bros, traveled south to Argentina to meet up with **Justin Horn** (RDD-03) and **Colby Jackson** (RDD-03), where they reached the 22,841 ft. summit of Aconcagua. Another jumper spending time in high elevations, **Kyle Dornberger** (RDD-01), worked in Peru chipping away at an internship toward his degree in architecture.

Redmond Base Report

by Gary Atteberry (Redmond '97)

Redmond's mild winter and warm spring abruptly turned into winter by late March. Mt. Bachelor advertised less than 5 inches of snow at the beginning of March. By mid-April the local ski resort was reporting 100 inches with

more on the way. The tardy arrival of winter weather has not slowed any work at the jump base though.

Regular Rx details began in January and will continue through May. We've also had our regular contingent climbing for Asian Longhorn Beetles in New Jersey and New York, and expect we'll have folks back east until fire season begins out west.

Redmond's organization structure continues to develop. After filling all the foreman positions this winter, the assistant foreman positions were flown and filled.

Dirk Stevens (RAC-91) received the assistant loft foreman position, **Mark Gibbons** (RAC-87) received the assistant training foreman position, and **Mitch Kearns** (GAC-89) received the assistant operations foreman position. Congratulations to all. And especially, welcome to **Mitch**. He'll make a fine addition to our operation.

The next layer that will be implemented in the organization will be the GS-8 level Spotters. We should see those by early summer.

As always we're ramping up for a busy fire season. The late snows haven't dampened anyone's spirits. The forecasters and weather gurus have peered into their crystal ball and deemed it will be a busy fire season for the northwest.

We'll give you our prediction in October.

West Yellowstone Base Report

by Melanie Pfister (Grangeville '01)

There's still too much snow on the ramp to think about fire season. For those of us in an earlier refresher, many are now headed off for one last vacation. Some people are actually working at West. **Hardy Bloemeke** (MSO-77) is trying to sort out training documents in hopes of saving some of our qualifications in the IQCS system. **Mark Duffey** (WYS-98) and **John Parker** (MYC-98) are on an Rx detail to Michigan. And **Charlie Wetzel** (WYS-92) is doing the finish work on his new house.

The big news around the base is the selection of a new base manager. **Jim Kitchen** (FBX-87) has accepted the position and reports to work May 1.

We will have a couple rookies this year and one transfer, **Quint Gidley** (FBX-03), bringing our total number of jumpers to 23. We are expecting six BLM detailers later in the season.

One development at West is the large number of children that will inhabit the base this summer. **Chad Scussel's** (MSO-03) wife is expecting a baby in November. That will bring the total to around 10 kids. 🍄

Hells Canyon Hospitality

by Jim Rabideau (NCSB '49)

In August, 1949, my kid brother, Phil, and I were at the top of the NCSB jump list. After receiving notice of an Oregon "bust," our boss, Francis Lufkin, organized a late-evening, four-hour flight to Joseph, Oregon. We had four jumpers, gear for 10, plus pilot **Ken Bensch** and **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) as spotter. The other jumpers were **David "Skinny" Beals** (MYC-45), a Kansas farm boy, and **Jim Campbell** (NCSB-48) of the Okanogan Valley. Phil and I were from Coulee Dam, Washington, and had been recruited the previous fall by **Howard Betty** (NCSB-48).

We arrived at Joseph about 0800, very early and without breakfast. Phil and I were loaded in for the first exploratory flight to see where we should be dumped. Now, this wasn't any normal jumper operation as it was our first fire of our rookie year. We finally settled on some fires down in one of the valleys of Hells Canyon, across from the Seven Devils in Idaho. There were two little fires on a hillside, and Jim kicked us out with instructions to deal with one of the fires first as **Skinny Beals** and **Jim Campbell** would be along to help soon. The fires were put out after some laughable incidents about shortages of water and who would ride the mule out of the canyon, etc.

We walked out the next day. The trail off the plateau wandered down near the Imnaha River Road where a ranch house stood about 100 yards off the trail and near the Imnaha School. Noon on August 10 was hotter than the inside of a



Historical Photo Nine Mile 1940 L-R: Bill Yaggy, Karl Nussbacher, Jim "Smokey" Alexander. (Courtesy J. Alexander)

cook stove, and we had no water since before breakfast. I walked up to the back door of the house and knocked. The

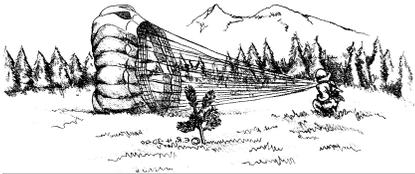
lady of the home answered and asked what I wanted. I explained we had just walked down the hill and would appreciate some cold water. She asked if we were smokejumpers. I explained we were and introduced my kid brother, Phil, Skinny and Jim. She gave us each as much cold water as we wanted before the truck came to take us back to the Joseph Airport. The lady explained that the local people appreciated our efforts in saving the high country. We thanked her for her hospitality and headed back to base.

Time flies. In August 1954, exactly five years later, my jump partner, **Stan Tsunoda** (NCSB-53), and I had two fires in the same area. Our pilot was the late **Wally Tower** and our spotter was the late **Elmer Newfeld** (CJ-44), a couple of special humans. After keeping the plateau safe for the required period, Stan and I walked down the same trail that Phil and I had traveled five years earlier with Skinny and Jim. I spotted that farm house that I had seen in 1949 and told Stan that I bet we could get some cold water there. Stan was a 2nd year jumper and had 85 or so jumps in the Army, one being the only Army combat jump in Korea. I walked up to the same farm house, knocked, and the lady answered. I told her who I was and asked for some cold water. She said, "Where is your brother?" As you might expect I was "nonplussed" as to how that lady could remember Phil and me after five years. I had to tell her he wasn't with me this year. Well, she lived in a remote area and probably recalled things that the rest of us seemingly sophis-

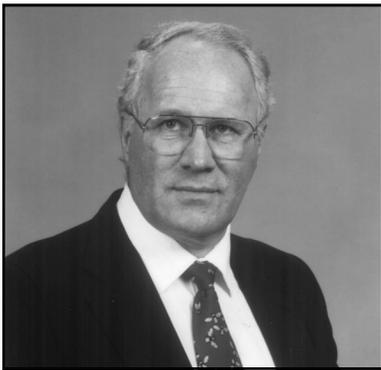
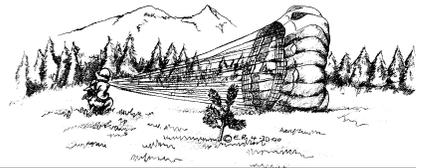
ticated "outsiders" would ignore. I introduced Stan and she gave us water, and we had quite a conversation about what had happened in the intervening years. It was refreshing to reacquaint myself with a human being that truly cared about what we were doing.

We eventually assembled for the trip to Enterprise and arrived there about 2100, after the local cafe was closed. We were tired, hungry and in need of entertainment. We spotted the theatre and approached the door, and the manager asked us if we were smokejumpers. We said we were and would like to buy some popcorn. He let us in, gave us a ton of popcorn and ushered us to our seats to see what was left of the movie: all free. He thanked us for what we had been doing.

Northeastern Oregon holds a special spot for me. Not only did the lady care about smokejumpers, but so did the people in Joseph and Enterprise. This country holds spectacular beauty, in more ways than one. It is little wonder Joseph and the Nez Perce people were so taken with the land. I drive through that area every so often and am continuously thankful that the citizens of Wallowa County in Oregon are the genteel folks they are. If you are a smokejumper there on business, they will know about it and they know you are there. Be gentle and you will be treated with warmth and thanks. Pioneer Smokejumper Francis Lufkin taught us to be reserved and just do our jobs. Smokejumping has its own rewards, especially in the company we kept and the folks we met. 🍄



Checking the Canopy



by **Jim Cherry**
(Missoula '57)

Keepers of the Story

THERE IS A STORY told of a time generations ago in Eastern Europe when the Jews of that area looked to their wise and respected Rabbi to provide them with protection. From time to time they would be threatened with danger and persecution. Each time that his people were threatened, the Rabbi would go to a secret place in the forest, build a special fire and say a special prayer... and his people would be delivered

from the danger.

A generation later when the people were again being threatened, the Rabbi's successor would do as his mentor had done. He would go into the forest to the secret place but he did not know how to build the special fire. He did know the special prayer, however, and he would pray, "Lord, your people are in danger. I have come to this secret place in the forest but I do not know how to build the special fire. I do know the prayer and that will have to be enough." He would pray the special prayer... and his people would be delivered from danger.

Again, another generation passed. Again, the people were threatened with danger and needed deliverance. Again, they looked to yet another successor to the Rabbi. This Rabbi, however, did not know how to find the secret place in the forest nor did he know how to build the special fire. He did know the special prayer. He stayed in his office and he prayed, "Lord, I cannot find the secret place in the forest and I have no idea of how to build the special fire. I do know the special prayer, however, and that will have to be enough." He would pray the special prayer... and his people

would be delivered from danger.

Once again another generation found they were facing danger and they, too, looked to yet another Rabbi to deliver them. This Rabbi would sit in his armchair in his home and he would pray, "Lord, there was a time when those who came before me knew of a secret place in the forest where they could go and build a special fire and say a special pray in order to rescue the people from danger. Lord, I don't know how to find the secret place. I don't know how to build the special fire. I don't even know the special prayer. However, I do know the story... and that will have to be enough." And it was...

We know from our own life experiences that there can be great power in stories. Time has a way of stripping away from us the ability to go to the secret places in the forest (we can't jump there any longer). We may not be able to build (or fight) the special fires any longer. We may no longer remember the special prayers we once prayed as we faced those dangers. But we remember the stories... and it is enough. That's one of the reasons the NSA is committed to the task of being the 'Keepers of the Story.' 🍄

The Blodgett Mountain Fire:

A Claim to the Most Smokejumpers Dropped on the Smallest Fire in Smokejumper History or The Tale of a Greedy Squadleader

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

The death of **Delos (Dee) Dutton** (MSO-51) in 2002 came as a double shock to myself because Dee and I had agreed at the 2000 smokejumper reunion in Redding to write this story together. So obviously this account is dedicated to my good friend Dee. For those who never knew him, Dee was one tough hombre. With practically no neck and his head resting on massive shoulders joined to arms almost as big as my legs, he resembled a small bull and was as strong as an ox. On Sunday morning August 23, 1959, Dee, **John Bledsoe** (MSO-57), **Wade Erwin** (MSO-59), and myself jumped the Blodgett Mountain Fire on the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho from a DC-2 spotted by **Don Morrissey** (MSO-55).

It wasn't until 2000 that I learned the complete history of that fire. According to Dee, the fire had been reported early in the week. One attempt to find it had failed. It was reported again later in the week with another jumper attempt to find it failing. When it was reported a third time, apparently with some pointed remarks, squadleader Dee was seething with frustration. That fire was not going to disappear only to flare up again if Dee had anything to do with it. We were alerted Saturday night for a dawn takeoff.

We took off from Missoula early Sunday morning while the rest of the base was preparing for church, having all returned early Saturday night to do so from the many watering holes near North Higgins Avenue. (If you believe that, I've got a bridge to sell.) And, guess what, we couldn't find the fire! We had circled the reported location for over an hour when suddenly Dee was excitedly pointing at a single puff of smoke that hovered briefly before disappearing. The fire was in rocky terrain near the tree line in the vicinity of 9000 feet, as Dee recalled in Redding. That was enough. Dee and Jon went out in the first stick and I followed Wade in the second stick.

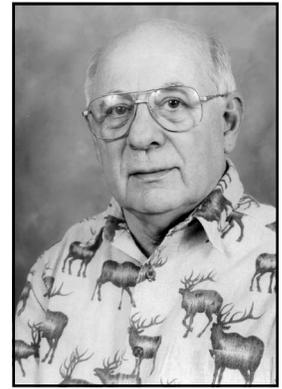
In 1958 two Missoula rookies had broken their ankles on the second practice jump, and I broke my right tibia on the sixth practice jump. One of the broken ankles and myself repeated rookie training in 1959, giving me 13 practice jumps before my first fire jump, which must be a record. Blodgett Mountain became my fourth fire jump, my second in Idaho, the others in Oregon and California.

It was a memorable jump for me because I passed up a 32-foot FS-5 parachute and used a standard 28-foot FS-2 parachute as I had used for every practice and fire jump to date. Big mistake, as you will see. 1958 was **Earl Cooley's** (MSO-40) first year as superintendent at Missoula. There were a number of equipment changes at Missoula by 1959. Whether these were due to Earl's initiative or were coming in any event, I do not know, but they were all for the better.

Two big changes were the introduction of the optional use of the larger FS-5 parachute and the introduction of the new H-3 harness with Capewell fittings on the risers. (The straps of the previous H-2 quick-release harness of Army origin met in a metal box in the center of your chest and were released by pulling a safety clip from the side of the box, turning the cover a quarter turn, and giving it a sharp blow with your fist.) 1958 was also the last year of the famous (or perhaps infamous) wooden Clack-frame packboard. It was replaced by a more comfortable fiberglass packboard. Additionally, in 1959 some lightweight nylon jump suits began to replace heavier canvas jump suits on an experimental basis. Also boots other than the legacy White's began to be used on an experimental basis.

My official smokejumper record says I weighed 160 pounds in 1959, down four from 1958. Scuttlebutt was that smaller jumpers tended to drift with the FS-5 and might have a harder time steering it. Since I didn't consider myself a big guy, this concerned me somewhat. I don't know what the others did but I went with the FS-2 (and a new experimental jump suit) at Blodgett Mountain. At 160 pounds near 9000 feet, I hit so hard I turned my entire left heel black and blue. Never again. I made my next and last fire jump near West Yellowstone with an FS-5 and had no trouble at all steering it to a softer landing.

Once assembled at the jump spot, Dee told Jon and Wade to pack up the gear while he and I went to the fire a few hundred yards away. One of us took a shovel and the other a Pulaski and, most importantly as every jumper knows, some of the food rations. When we arrived at the conflagration, it was about the size of a backyard charcoal grill, all that remained of a lightning-struck tree that had burned for a week or more. Our initial attack was to push the embers together to make a big enough fire to heat our ration cans. After a leisurely lunch, we took a nap and returned to Jon and Wade who had missed all the excitement. Now 46 years later, I do not recall the details of leaving the fire. I do recall it was a long hike on a bruised heel. I suggested to Dee in Redding that it was probably the most jumpers dropped on the smallest fire in smokejumper history. Dee said it could also be called the tale of a greedy squadleader! I looked for Jon and Wade at the 2004 reunion



Fred Donner (NSA file)

in Missoula. Never found Wade and Jon did not recall the event at all! 🦋

NSA Life Member Fred Donner is a frequent contributor to this magazine. He wrote three articles on the CIA-smokejumper con-

nection (Oct 02, Jul 03, Jan 04) and a critical review of the Douglas Gantenbein book that called for the closure of all smokejumper bases (Oct 04). He may be reached at 7320 Pinecastle Road, Falls Church, VA 22043-3017, phone 703/698-5480 or fredandbev@earthlink.net.

Savenac

by Bill Fogarty (Missoula '57)

Jumpers from days gone by may recall those spring months when there was not enough money left for one more quarter of college or when they were accepted for an early New Mexico or Alaska crew. Where does one find a decent paying job, hopefully with bed and board, for a couple of months?

There was one option for the Missoula jumpers at the U.S. Forest Service Savenac Tree Nursery at Haugan, Montana, then under the direction of Jim Augustine. Jim seemed to welcome the temporary jumpers and, depending on the weather, work was usually available in early April. The work was not brain surgery, requiring only a willingness to put in a full eight hour day and withstand the cold and the rain and the mud. Some of the easier jobs included the seed beds, where the very young seedlings were pulled, boxed and prepared to be transplanted

in rows for more growth. Sometimes on very cold, snowy or wet days, work in the “shed” sorting, stacking and preparing the trees for shipment was a great place. One warm, dry, but extremely dusty job was the seed extractor. This involved shoveling last year’s dried cones into a large wire hopper. Then with a crank, spin the hopper until all the seeds fell out. Collect and bag the seeds, shovel out the used cones, shovel in some new ones, and start cranking again. It was a great job to think about an ice cold beer.

The most pressing job in the spring was to get the three and four-year old transplants “gently” pulled and tied in bundles of 50, so they could be sent out to the planting crews. Row after row after row of trees to be pulled and tied. If it snowed we wore heavy coats and took brooms to carefully sweep the



Savenac Tree Nursery, 1959. Front left: Bill Murphy (MSO-56). Back left: John Murauo (MSO-57). Right: unidentified. (Courtesy of Bill Fogarty (MSO-57))

trees. If it rained we wore raingear and worked in the mud. A good pair of insulated rubber boots was a must.

Jim Augustine gave the impression of earning his stripes the hard way; a no-nonsense old timer that knew his business. He was not one to tolerate poor behavior or unsatisfactory performance. He was a fair, but tough taskmaster. How tough was he? There was only one time I don't recall him in the field. We were told he had gone to Spokane to get all his teeth pulled. His absence did not provide much of a respite since he was back by early afternoon. He wasn't saying much, but we could tell his opinion of our work by the expression on his face. My fondest memory of Jim is how he would instruct us in the proper manner of getting the trees out of the ground. If we were walking down the rows, bent over and pulling trees, Jim would come by and say, "No, you can't do it that way. Get down on your knees and closer to the trees." If we were going down the rows on our hand and knees, Jim would come and say, "No, you'll never make any progress down there in the mud. Stand up and walk down those rows."

Time seemed to stand still in those fields. We would pull to the ends of several rows and look at our watch. O.K. – only 9:00 o'clock. Do several more rows and look to see if it was break time; nope, only 9:10. What seemed like an hour later and many more rows and it might get near on to 9:30. I guess we could have worn gloves to pull the trees, but you sure as hell couldn't tie them in bundles of 50 with gloves. Thus, we

labored with a very slow clock, cold fingers, wet backs and muddy knees (per Jim's orders of the day). Depending on how evil the weather, how muddy the field, or how many visits from Jim, there was an oft murmured, and sometimes screamed, oath heard from various parts of the field as we pulled and tied our bundles. My genteel upbringing precludes the use of all the correct words, but for those of you that may have spent a spring at Savenac, do you recall: "47 – 48 – 49 – 50 - Some \$@&#. And stink? God, I hate this \$#@&ing place."

In all fairness, Savenac was a great experience. The late Jim Augustine was one of the finest men I ever worked for. There were warm and sunny days, the wages were good and much appreciated, the work healthy, the bunkhouse comfortable, and the food good and plentiful. Savenac was home for two springs, and I was, and am, grateful for having had the opportunity to work there.

The Savenac Nursery was one of the oldest and largest of the U.S. Forest Service nurseries. It was started in 1907 and served as a CCC camp during the '30s. It is no longer a nursery, but is still there, just off I-90 between Saltese and St. Regis at Haugan. It was declared a National Historical Site in July, 2000, and now, with the help of many volunteers, the old buildings have been restored and updated and an interpretive trail constructed. The bunkhouse, cookhouse and a cottage are available for very reasonably priced accommodations through the Lolo National Forest office. 🦌

Earl Cooley the Hunter

by Ross Parry (Missoula '58)

In the early 1960s, Earl Cooley (MSO-40) and I were elk hunting in the O'Brien Creek drainage near Missoula. Our plan was to hunt in the same general direction, but not together, and eventually meet at the end of the road. We started off with me in the bottom "thick stuff," while Earl worked his way up toward the ridge top where the going was easier.

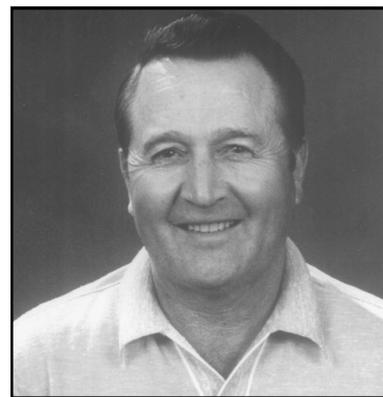
As I struggled through the "thick stuff," I heard a commotion off to my left. I raised my rifle and through the scope spotted a patch of hair about 20 yards away. I knew it was an elk, and since the hunt was either sex, I felt 99% sure it was safe to shoot. However, I was not certain of the body location of hair or perhaps it was a deer? I figured if I took one step to my right I could see more clearly. So I took that one very slow, cautious step and crash, bang, the

beast was gone.

I continued my struggle through the bottom, then up the ridge, down to another bottom and up another ridge to the end of the road; cursing myself for failing to shoot when I had the chance. I waited for Earl – and I waited – and I built a fire and I waited some more. The bull I had spooked had run up the ridge toward Earl and he shot it square between the eyes. It was a three or four-year old bull and, while I had been waiting, Earl had skinned and quartered it and had propped it up in the shade to allow the meat to cool properly.

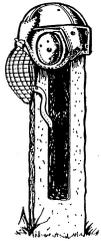
I heard a story once that Earl shot an elk late in the afternoon and, rather than hastily cleaning and leaving, he had stayed out all night to make sure the meat was taken care of. I believe it.

A few days after our hunt, Earl



Ross Parry (NSA file)

and I and our wives processed the meat. Earl had all the supplies and equipment to make cube steaks and hamburger, etc., plus the know-how and patience to do it properly. In the next two years Earl and I shared three more elk. I can guarantee that Early Cooley knew how to make elk meat into "prime-eatin." 🦌



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. Please

phone, write or e-mail the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). We'll take it from there.

Warren Short Hall (Missoula '49)

Short passed away December 19, 2004. He was a WWII veteran and graduated from Colorado A&M in 1950 with a degree in forestry. Short made his first fire jump August 3, 1949, just missing the Mann Gulch crew by two spots on the list. He spent most of his long career with the US Forest Service on the Cibola N.F. in Region 3 specializing in timber management. Short retired and moved to Dallas, Oregon, where he bought five acres and built an A-frame and lived until his passing.

Henry J. "Hank" Florin (Missoula '46)

Hank Florin died on May 8, 2004, of natural causes in the company of his daughter and son. He grew up in Missoula and attended St. Francis Grade School, Missoula County High School and the University of Montana. He was a hiker, hunter, skier, and angler, and he canoed every river and crossed every stream in the Five Valleys.

Hank flew B-17s in World War II. That most intense year of his life remained riveted in his memory ever after. When recently asked which 15 minutes he'd like to live over, it was the bomb run over Berlin. He was a smokejumper after the war in the company of other combat vets. They were winding down.

Hank worked for the *Missoulian* for 35 years. He provided security and an atmosphere that inspired a deep respect for life and nature. He was a liberal. He was inclusive. He believed men might respond to their better angels.

Eldon R. Down (Pilot)

Eldon passed away December 5, 2004, in Boise, Idaho. He served in the US Army in Italy during WWII and returned to Oregon after the war where he operated Blue Mtn. Air Service in LaGrande. In the late 50s he converted two B-25s and two B-26s into Borate planes and leased them to the Forest Service. Eldon was instrumental in developing the belly dump for the B-25s and also dropped smokejumpers while at LaGrande. One year the jumpers talked Eldon into making a jump, which he did, much to his wife's dismay. He went to work for the USFS in 1964 and worked with the Fire Lab in Missoula flying the Convair 440 in a scanner development program. Eldon went to Smokejumper operations in 1968 flying from Boise, Idaho City and McCall where he flew jumpers and lead plane until retirement in 1982.

Thanks to Dick Wildman, Dale Matlack and Kaye Jenkins for information on Eldon.

Ovid M. Williams (Missoula '55)

Ovid of Hamilton, Montana, passed away Thursday, Feb. 17, 2005, at Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital of natural causes. Ovid was raised and educated in Darby. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1951. After his discharge, Ovid jumped three seasons at Missoula. He also

packed and guided for several local outfitters, skidded logs and drove a logging truck for more than 30 years.

Benjamin "Will" W. Case (Missoula '44)

Ben passed away Feb. 16, 2005, at Horizon Hospice House (Billings, Mont.) at the age of 86. In 1937, he left Shelter Island, N.Y., and moved to Brooklyn to pursue an education at Browne's Business College. Throughout his life he worked as an accountant, first in the dairy business and later for a trucking firm, retiring in 1983. In 1944, he volunteered to be a smokejumper and was based in Missoula and jumped two seasons. He fell in love with this area and moved his family to Montana in 1949. Ben was a private pilot and enjoyed soaring in his later years.

David Slagle (Cave Junction '59)

Dave passed away March 4, 2005, in Pacific City, Oregon. He graduated from Klamath Falls High School and served four years in the 82nd Airborne. After his military service, he graduated from the University of Oregon in 1960 and relocated to Boston and began working for New England Life while attending night school at Suffolk University where he received his law degree. He returned to Oregon in 1974 and ran a private law practice in Portland and Lake Oswego until 1995. Dave jumped the 1959 season on the Gobi.

Donald L. Duffy (North Cascades '60)

Don passed away March 18, 2005, at home in Yelm, Washington. After graduating from Winthrop High, he jumped at North Cascades one season before entering the Navy where he served two tours in Viet Nam as a medic. After his tour of duty, he worked for the USFS as a backcountry fire guard before moving to Alaska where he met his wife, Marilyn. They later moved to Yelm where he was a supervisor for Lyle Moving and Storage Company in Tacoma.

Kingdon "King" Brady (Missoula '46)

King was born in Virginia, Minnesota, and graduated from high school in Yakima, Washington, and passed away March 7, 2005. He served with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Europe during WWII and graduated from Ohio University after the war. King jumped three seasons at Missoula. He received his doctor of medicine from the University of Cincinnati in 1954 and practiced family medicine before going into Pathology in 1966. King then practiced Pathology in West Lafayette, Indiana, until his retirement to Stuart, Florida, in 1989. He was an NSA member and liked to keep up with smokejumping through the *Smokejumper* magazine. Thanks to Bonnie Brady for sending along this information. 🍄

Jumped a Smoker Lately?

by Andy Stevenson (Redding '65)

I stopped at an AM-PM gas station in Redding to top off the tank of my pickup before heading up I-5 to Mt. Shasta. I prepaid and started pumping when this lady approached me from the rear of my Ford Ranger. She asked, "Mister, do you have match?" My first thought was she wanted to light a cigarette and my second thought was we were in a gas station with several other vehicles fueling. I told her, "No, I'm sorry I don't have any matches handy."

She came back at once with, "What do you have against smokers?" I said that I had nothing against people who smoke, that I had known people all my life who smoked: friends, relatives, fellow workers, etc. It was no problem. She continued, "This is the USA, and we are free and we can smoke if we want to." All this time I was trying to figure her out. Who was she? Did she have mental problems? Did she have me mixed-up with someone else? Where in the hell was

she coming from? So I asked her, "Why do you think I dislike smokers?" She doubled up her fists, placed them on her hips and strutted toward the rear of the pickup. Irately, she proceeded to tell me it was obvious that I didn't like smokers because of my bumper sticker. My bumper sticker reads, "Smokejumpers."

The mystery started to unfold. I mistakenly asked her if she knew what a smokejumper was. Still irate, she replied that I must be an individual or belong to a group of people who jump down people's throats and slam them for smoking. She went on to say that we were most likely organized, had meetings, campaigned against smoking, lobbied against tobacco companies and probably played a large part in having the NO SMOKING laws pushed through in California and other states. She was all puffed-up like a horned toad and madder than hell. I tried not to laugh while I explained to her that a Smokejumper was a wildland fire fighter employed by the U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management. I told her that most of the time smokejumpers are deployed on lightning fires in wilderness and remote areas, mostly in the western United States and Alaska, that they usually arrived at a fire via aircraft and parachute and departed by foot, horse back, or, if lucky, by helicopter after the fire was out. She burst into a smile, saying that she didn't know that. She apologized for being so abrupt. She seemed to want more information on smokejumpers, so I referred her to the www.smokejumpers.com website.

Driving up I-5 to Mt. Shasta, I couldn't help but wonder if this experience that I had or something similar has happened to others over the word Smokejumper and its meaning. 🔦



Andy Stevenson (Courtesy A. Stevenson)

Living My Dream

by Gail Barrett (Associate)

Leaping from an airplane into the slipstream, hurtling ninety miles an hour toward the fiery earth – who are these fearless people who risk their lives to fight fire? Smokejumpers, of course, and the same men and women who helped launch my writing career.

A few years ago, I needed to find a profession for the hero of the book I was writing. I knew this man took risks. He was daring, independent, liked change, and preferred to work with his hands. But the usual romantic professions – FBI or DEA agent, police officer, Navy SEAL, had all been overused.

Then, one day, I came across a list of the ten most exciting careers, and smokejumper was at the top. That grabbed my attention and started me thinking. A smokejumper would fit my story well.

Better yet, I knew one. My husband grew up in Montana next door to **Ron Rockwell** (MSO-59). I immediately invited Ron and his wife, **Gabi**, to dinner. Ron kindly explained the principles behind smokejumping and gave me an overview of the job. His amazing anecdotes convinced me I was on the right track.

He also left me a stack of his old Static Line and Smokejumper magazines to read. Suddenly, I had a whole new vocabulary to learn – snags, stobs, streamers, sticks... What was I getting myself into?

Then I read the article **John Culbertson** (FBX-69) wrote about **Jimmy Pearce** (FBX-69), and my world forever changed. Jimmy Pearce was so much like my hero that it shocked me. I realized then that my hero was definitely a smokejumper. But he would get the happy ending Jimmy Pearce deserved.

Now I really swung into gear. I joined the NSA. I read and reread **Murry Taylor's** (RDD-65) fantastic book, *Jumping Fire*, taking notes and flagging every page. I watched the NSA video (Smokejumpers, Firefighters from the Sky) so many times I felt I knew everyone in it.

Finally, in July 2003, my husband and I combined a visit to relatives with a trip to the Missoula smokejumper base. I came home armed with photos and a tee shirt I wore with great pride.

By now I'd gone off the deep end. I talked incessantly about smokejumping. I lectured friends on the role of fire in the forests, boring everyone I knew. I even tried to convince my youngest son to join a hotshot crew (he declined).

I finished my book, sent it off to an editor, and started another. But now I was so immersed in the smokejumping world that I wanted to write a more action-oriented romance. But putting my hero in the forest brought up more questions, things only a smokejumper would know. What's the food like? How long do your batteries last? What do you put in your PG bag?

About this time, my husband returned to Missoula, so I asked him to stop by the base and pick up more videos. Not only did he get the videos (Fire Wars, Fire on the Mountain), but he discovered Forest Service spokesman, **Tim Eldridge** (MSO-82).

I didn't have the nerve to call Tim at first. As an unpublished

writer, I doubted he would take me seriously. But I finally gathered my courage and sent him an email, and surprisingly, he telephoned back. Not only did he answer my questions, but he encouraged me to ask even more. Thus started a long series of emails, some of which I'm sure made him laugh. But, ex-

hibiting tremendous patience, he told me what I needed to know.

In the meantime, I sold my first book. Months later, I sold the second.

Now, thanks to smokejumpers, I have a writing career and am finally living my dream. Best of all, I'm writing smokejumper romances for two different lines at Silhouette. My first book, *Where He Belongs* (November 2005) is a Special Edition. These small-town, community-based romances will involve smokejumpers in the off-season, or where the job is more peripheral to the plot. My second book, *Facing the Fire* (release date TBA), will be an Intimate Moments, which is romantic adventure/suspense. These faster-paced stories will feature smokejumpers at work fighting fires.

And while I have never fought a fire myself and still have much to learn about smokejumping, rest assured that my characters will always be as incredibly courageous and heroic as you smokejumpers are in real life. They'll put out the fire and rescue their world. Plus, they'll have that happy ending. 🐾

After living everywhere from Spain to the Bahamas, earning a graduate degree in linguistics, and teaching high school Spanish for years, Gail Barrett fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a published author. Her writing has won numerous awards, including Romance Writers of America's prestigious Golden Heart. Hard at work on her next smokejumper story, Gail currently lives in Western Maryland with her two sons, a quirky Chinook dog, and her own Montana rancher-turned-retired Coast Guard Officer hero.

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Gail Barrett (Courtesy Gail Barrett)