10-1-2005

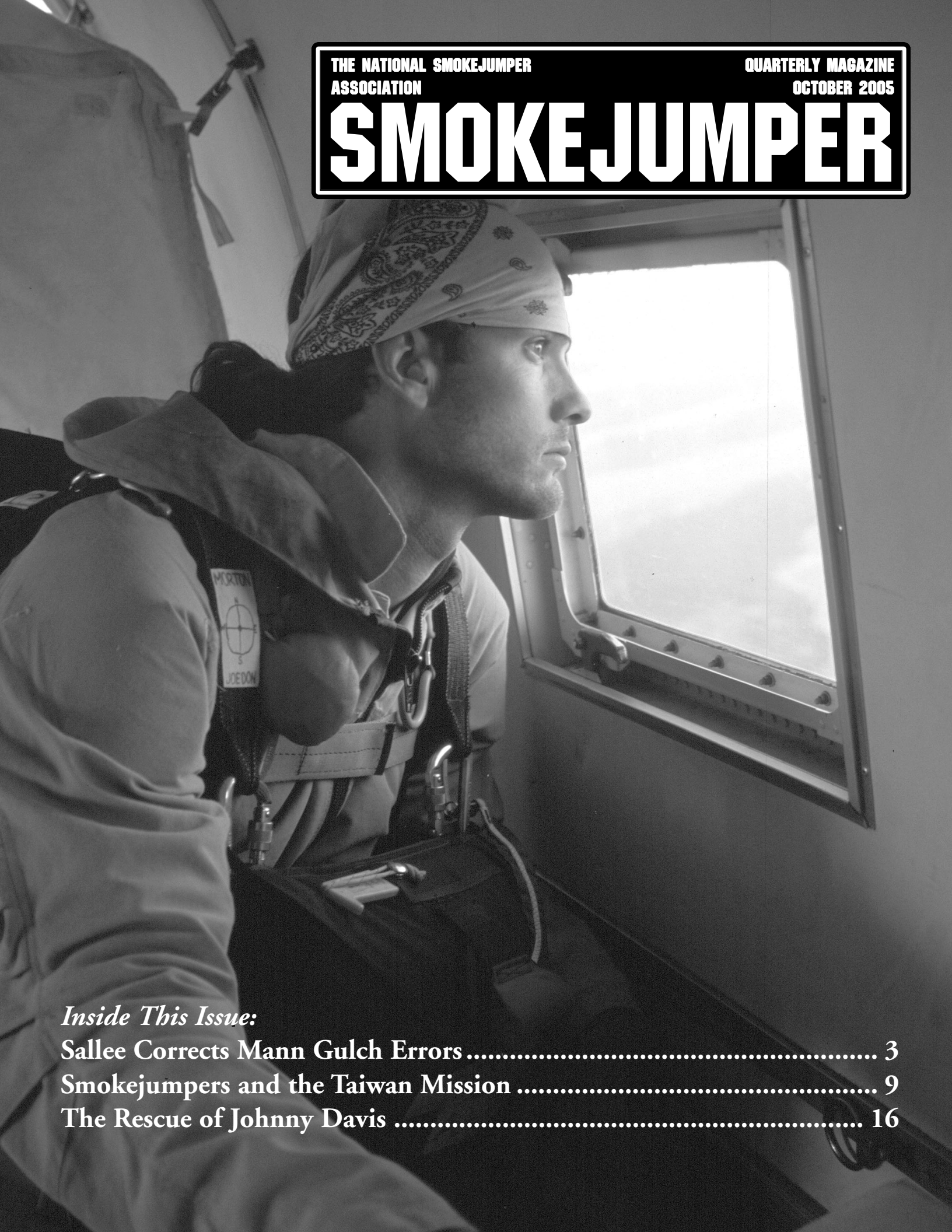
# Smokejumper Magazine, October 2005

National Smokejumper Association

Hans Trankle

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2005

# SMOKEJUMPER




*Inside This Issue:*

**Sallee Corrects Mann Gulch Errors ..... 3**
**Smokejumpers and the Taiwan Mission ..... 9**
**The Rescue of Johnny Davis ..... 16**

# CONTENTS


**Message from the President** ..... 2
**Snowstorm** ..... 2
**Mann Gulch Survivor Corrects Errors** ..... 3
**Smokejumping Under the Midnight Sun** ..... 5
**Sounding Off from the Editor** ..... 7
**Historical Memo from Frank Derry** ..... 8
**Members of Missoula Elite Unit Recruited for CIA Mission to Taiwan** ..... 9
**Over the Se Khong River** ..... 11
**From My Desk** ..... 12
**The View from Outside the Fence** ..... 13
**The Fish Lake Project** ..... 14
**The Rescue of Johnny Davis** ..... 16
**Get-together in Texas** ..... 17
**Iditarod in Winter** ..... 18
**Odds and Ends** ..... 20
**Recipe for a Smokejumper Gathering** ..... 22
**Julie** ..... 23
**It's a Long Way to CJ** ..... 24
**Items from the Fire Pack** ..... 26
**The Last Ford Jump?** ..... 27
**Psychology of a Smokejumper** ..... 28
**Checking the Canopy** ..... 31
**Mountain Jumping—Chronicle of an Ex-smokejumper** ..... 32
**Vietnam Tour** ..... 33
**Blast from the Past** ..... 34
**June 2005—A Memorial Service Long Overdue** ..... 34
**Boots Begone** ..... 35
**A National Fire Plan** ..... 36
**Off the List** ..... 37
**A CPS Smokejumper's Seven Training Jumps—"T'ain't the pilot nor the spotter but it's me, oh Lord"** ..... 38



*Smokejumper,* Issue No. 49, October 2005
ISSN 1532-6160

*Smokejumper* is published quarterly by:
The National Smokejumper Association
c/o 10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95926

The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA.

NSA Web site: http://www.smokejumpers.com

Managing Editor: *Chuck Sheley*

Editing: *Bill Fogarty, Emmy Haynes, Jill Leger, K. G. Sheley, and Denis Symes*

Illustrators: *McElderry Books, Nick Holmes, Chris Demarest, Ken Morris, Dan Veenendaal, and Eric Rajala*

Printing: *Larry S. Jackson,* Heidelberg Graphics, www.HeidelbergGraphics.com

Cover photo: *Joe Don Morton (Courtesy Mike McMillan)*


# Message from the President

**by Doug Houston**
(Redmond '73)
**President**

It's hard to believe that one year of my two-year term is already in the past. It has been a very rewarding year, and I believe that the board is very strong and moving in a direction that will keep the NSA solid for many years. Some of those items that we have done and are doing:

1) Gaining more membership, especially life members. Life members are very important to the longevity of the NSA.
2) Further investing in higher yield return, yet not high risk, investments. This will keep us up with inflation.
3) Turning our merchandising over to Western Heritage, a highly regarded company out of Colorado. NSA will maintain a consultant role, however. Western Heritage will handle all sales and inventory. It is a very exciting arrangement for the NSA.

The most recent board meeting, held in Redding, had over 90 show up for the Saturday night social including a dozen jumpers as recent as 2005. The next meeting will be in Bend, Oregon, October 1, 2005, with a social that night. Put it on your calendar and we'll see you there.

Until then, the door is yours, your static line is clear, and the whole world is a jump spot. Enjoy the ride...

## Snowstorm

Squall ye, stark wind from the North!
Blanket us with snow—douse out summer's torch.

Your first snow fill hearts with delight
As petite flakes of heaven float down and alight.

I see not a rainbow, customary of spring,
Just winter white, star-studded icing.

Quilt Mother Earth with crystallization.
Cover the scars of man's laceration.

Blizzard the crags and swallow the valleys!
Drive us to clear walks and plow through alleys.

Using frost as your medium-sketch on our glass,
Drift over our eaves and close down the pass.

Perhaps, ye were meant to slow down life's pace-
Rekindling warmth of family around the fireplace.

**Hal Meili** (Cave Junction '52)

# Mann Gulch Survivor Corrects Errors

**by Carl Gidlund** (Missoula '58)

Fire and Ashes," a book by John Maclean, contains several errors, and **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49) wants those that relate to the Mann Gulch Fire corrected.

The error that concerns him most is about his fellow '49 rookie and Mann Gulch survivor **Walter Rumsey** (MSO-49). It's in a section of the book called "The Last Survivor." That was written about Sallee as the last of the three smokejumpers who survived the 1949 fire on Montana's Helena National Forest that killed 12 jumpers and a wilderness guard.

In that story, Maclean writes that Rumsey couldn't bring himself to jump after the Mann Gulch disaster.

"That's just not true," Sallee says. "Walt and I jumped two other fires together after Mann Gulch, and he jumped two more after that."

## *NSA Members — Save This Information*

Please contact the following persons directly if you have business or questions:

***Smokejumper* magazine**
*Articles, obits, change of address*
Chuck Sheley 530-893-0436
cnkgsheley@earthlink.net
10 Judy Ln
Chico CA 95926

**Membership**
Fred Cooper 503-391-9144
frederi920@aol.com
1445 Ranier Loop NW
Salem OR 97304-2079

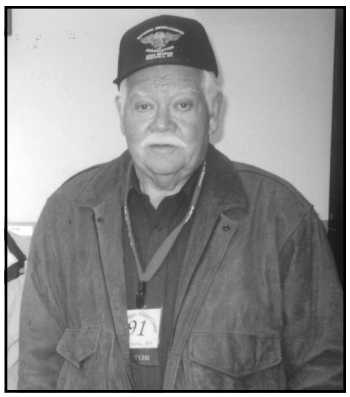
**All else**
Doug Houston 406-844-0326
doughouston@centurytel.net
NSA President
P.O. Box 1022
Lakeside, MT 59922

**Trail project**
Jon McBride 406-728-2302
N2601@aol.com

***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 |

Records maintained by Missoula's Aerial Fire Depot corroborate Sallee's memory: He recalls that 10 days after their August 5 jump into Mann Gulch, Sallee and Rumsey were dropped on a two-man fire into Pattee Canyon on the Lolo National Forest just east of Missoula.



*Bob Sallee (NSA file)*

Then, on August 19, Sallee and Rumsey were paired again, this time on a 16-man fire near Plains, Mont.

The fire depot's jump records indicate Rumsey jumped two more fires, on August 27 and September 2, 1949. Fire records for that year are incomplete, however, and there's no indication of where those fires were.

As indicated by the title of Maclean's piece, Sallee, at 72, is the last living witness to what occurred in Mann Gulch. Foreman **Wagner "Wag" Dodge** (MSO-41), who ignited a rescue fire the other jumpers disdained to use, died of Hodgkin's Disease in 1955. Walter Rumsey perished in 1980 in a commuter plane crash near Omaha.

Sallee feels an obligation to set the record straight for his fellow jumpers, for students of the fire, and for future historians who may read this article.

Maclean's account states that 15 jumpers were dispatched to Mann Gulch. Actually 16 jumpers were on the load, but turbulent air caused one jumper to become so sick he was unable to jump. He remained with the aircraft and returned to the jumpers' Missoula base.

The other errors in John Maclean's Mann Gulch piece concern the sequence of events after the fire blew up and the identification of the Forest Service's principal investigator.

According to Maclean's account, Sallee followed Rumsey through rimrock on the north escarpment of Mann Gulch after Sallee stopped to look into the gulch.

Sallee says that's incorrect. He was the first one through the rimrock and he looked back, he says, only after he'd made it through, with Rumsey on his heels.

Maclean writes that, after the main fire passed through the gulch, Dodge left his rescue fire, climbed to the ridge top and there met Sallee and Rumsey. Then, according to Maclean, the three found squad leader **Bill Hellman** (MSO-46) and jumper **Joe Sylvia**

(MSO-48).

That's not how it happened, according to Sallee. Here's his

account:

"By the time Dodge made it to the top of the ridge, Walt and I had found Hellman. His clothes had been burned off his back. We helped him over to a rock and sat him down.

"I tried to return to the jump spot to get the first aid kit, but it was still too hot in the gulch. I couldn't make it."

It was then, Sallee says, that Dodge joined them. He told the three jumpers he'd found Sylvia alive and not badly burned. He'd removed Sylvia's boots, then climbed to the ridge top.

"Dodge then decided that Walt would stay with Hellman while he and I went down to the river for help," Sallee recalls. "We hiked down the next gulch north, the one that became known as Rescue Gulch."

The two jumped over three-foot flames from the fire that had slopped over into that gulch, but reached the river easily. They flagged down a boatload of tourists watching the fire who took the jumpers to Meriwether Landing at the mouth of the gulch just south of Mann Gulch. There, they met Ranger Robert Jansson who radioed for a rescue crew.

Sallee found a sleeping bag and slept until 10 p.m. when that crew arrived. It consisted of an alternate ranger, two doctors and several others.

After the short boat trip back to the mouth of Rescue Gulch, Sallee led the party, including Ranger Jansson, back up the gulch to Hellman and Rumsey, then over the ridge top to Sylvia. Hellman and Sylvia were evacuated to a Helena hospital the next morning, but died later that day.

The final error spotted by Sallee in Maclean's account is the identification of the Forest Service's chief Mann Gulch investigator, A.J. "Bert" Cramer. Maclean writes that Cramer was a smokejumper foreman. In fact, Cramer was not a jumper, but retired as a ranger. His son Albert, now deceased, jumped from 1943 to 1969 from Missoula, McCall and Fairbanks, retiring as the superintendent of the latter base.

Walter Rumsey's 51-year-old son, Steve, lives in Colville, Washington, where he and his wife run a bookstore and publish a magazine. Colville is two hours north of Sallee's home in Spokane and about three hours from my North Idaho residence.

At Sallee's request, the three of us met in a Colville restaurant on a beautiful November day in 2004. **Jim Manion** (Missoula '54), who also lives in Colville, spotted us and joined our group.

Steve Rumsey recounted memories of his father, while Sallee contributed additional memories and observations of events following Mann Gulch.

Walter Rumsey, born in 1927 in Larned, Kansas, dropped out of high school to join the navy just as World War II was ending. After his discharge, he returned to school and, in 1949, was a student at Utah State University.

"Dad told us he'd wanted to return to smokejumping in 1950," Steve says. "but the next summer he had to go to a range management summer camp, so he couldn't."

Walter Rumsey graduated with a degree in range management in 1951, then farmed for 18 months before joining the Soil Conservation Service. He remained with that agency for the rest of his life, serving in Utah, Idaho, Colorado and New Mexico, and finally Nebraska. In addition to Steve, he fathered another boy and a girl.

"Dad went out of his way to avoid talking about Mann Gulch," Steve says. "I believe he told mom the facts, but he kept his emotions to himself."

Steve Rumsey said his father had periodic nightmares that, he believes, were related to the killer fire: "In some, he was trapped in situations where he thought he was going to die, but he couldn't do anything about it. In at least one of the dreams, he scientifically analyzed the dramatic event." "Obviously," he said, "Mann Gulch affected his father, but he moved forward with his career and his family and, to the best of my knowledge, it didn't unduly affect his life, although he did mention survivor's guilt a couple of times."

But it did affect Sallee's.

"Since then, I've been an emotional exile," the last survivor says.

"I think it's because of Mann Gulch that I don't feel sorrow or elation like other people seem to. When my grandparents, parents and my first wife died, I couldn't cry. I just took it numbly.

"And, since Mann Gulch, I force myself to stay away from emotional situations," he says.

Recalling the immediate aftermath of the killer fire, Sallee is pretty sure that **Fred Brauer** (Missoula '41), who was then a jumper foreman, was testing him and Rumsey when he offered them a fire jump soon after Mann Gulch.

"I think he wanted to see if we could force ourselves to jump," Sallee says. "In those days, it was almost unknown to pair up two new men for a two-man fire."

But jump they did, and with no hesitation. In fact, Steve says his grandfather – Walter Rumsey's father - had counseled Rumsey that he should jump again.

Sallee says, "After we knocked down the Pattee Canyon Fire, we got to talking a bit about Mann Gulch. The principal thing I remember is that we were both amazed Joe Sylvia had died.

"He was hardly burned at all, but I guess he'd inhaled hot gases."

Sallee says he and Walter Rumsey remained "Christmas card friends" until July 1978 when Norman Maclean, author John's father, brought them together as part of his research for the best-selling "Young Men and Fire." They returned to Mann Gulch with the author and remained close friends until Rumsey's death two years later.

*Carl can be reached at: smokejumper@adelphia.net*

## Please Tell Us When You Change Address

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

# Smokejumping Under The Midnight Sun

**by Hans W. Trankle** (Missoula '51)

*Originally published in the May 1960 issue of "American Forests," a magazine of The American Forestry Association. Reprinted with permission and thanks. It is interesting to read about the birth of a program that has grown into the present day Alaska Smokejumpers.*

The midnight sun bounced flame-like reflections off the wings of the C-47 as it began to circle a cloud of smoke rising from a rapidly spreading forest fire in arctic Alaska. Suddenly, three white-clad men bailed out of the airplane's open door. As their orange and white parachute canopies snapped open, a new era in Alaska fire fighting was born.

The men are part of the first unit of 16 smokejumpers brought into action in June 1959 by the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, in Alaska.

The fire was located 200 miles from the nearest road, 20 miles from the nearest lake, and 300 miles from BLM fire headquarters in Fairbanks. This time it was put out in a few hours. Before the smokejumpers arrived on the Alaska scene, it would have taken days, perhaps even weeks, to get to and put out a fire so remotely located.

Smokejumpers have been used for 20 years in many forest regions of the other western states, and their worth has been well established. The problem this year in Alaska was not to prove need – but rather to find out what new fire-fighting methods could be developed and how best to fit a jumper force into the existing fire-fighting organization.

Alaska's 225 million acres of forest and range land have been under protection from fire by the Bureau of Land Management since 1940. The annual acreage burned has been greatly reduced, but the average for a 20-year period is still over one million acres annually. A million acres is equal to a strip of land one mile wide from Washington, D.C., to Denver, Colorado. No state can sustain such drastic losses to its natural resources. These losses are particularly burdensome to a new state confronted with the various problems of financing its first years and encouraging the necessary capital to invest in its resources. It is obvious that widespread destruction by fire can ruin any industrial development, and that utilization of Alaska's resources is totally dependent upon adequate protection from fire.

A critical problem in the new state of Alaska is lack of roads. In an area approximately one-fifth the size of the

*Rampart Fire 1959. L-R: Don Hanson and Bill Fogarty (Courtesy Bill Fogarty)*

other 49 states there are only 5,000 miles of road. While most of the man-caused fires are in the areas opened by roads, it is sometimes amazing to learn that Alaska's annual burned acreage is largely the result of lightning fires which comprise 28 per cent of the occurrence but 78 per cent of the lost acreage.

A late fire season provided the new jumpers with the opportunity to get their gear ready and make a few practice jumps. Also, an idea of Alaska fire behavior was gained when the men assisted in several walk-in fires being handled by the regular fire personnel. A C-47 loaned to BLM by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service arrived on June 1 and was immediately converted for jumper use by taking off the door and installing a static line.

Then, all hell broke loose!

During the first week of June the men made seven consecutive jumps before receiving a break. Some of the men were on four fires that week. Lack of sleep, continuous physical strain, heat and smoke exposure, and clouds of mosquitoes provided a brutal initiation for Alaska's first smokejumpers.

It was found that the ground cover of moss and grass was often so thick that it was extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to reach mineral soil; therefore, most of the fires were controlled with water pumps, either of the back pack or power variety. Water was not a problem because in the muskeg country, potholes containing water are nearly as numerous as the mosquitoes which they breed.

The moss and grass cover does have one big advantage. It provides a soft landing cushion. More than once the jumpers were thankful for that cushion. One man had a chute malfunction and barely managed to pull his reserve at 500 feet. In another instance three jumpers left the plane during a routine pass, but two chutes opened with the men facing each other. Coming together at a forward speed of 8 to 12 miles per hour, the two jumpers had no time to work guide lines before tangling and had to go down together. No one was injured in either case – thanks to Nature's arctic cushion.

The fire control organization in Alaska is too small to handle even "normal" fire seasons. That fact, combined with Alaska's large size, lack of roads, long fire season, and generally rapid rate of fire spread have forced the fire control men to think in terms of air operations for all phases of the work.

After the fires are located, aerial tankers (a TBM, F7F, and B-25) carrying borate chemicals make initial bombing attacks. These bombing attacks cool the fire down and limit spread. Next, the jumpers are dropped in. Then, if needed, the tankers make second runs after the jumpers are on the fire line. In some cases the tankers or the smokejumpers can handle the fires alone, but on the larger fires the 1-2-3 technique of borate first, then jumpers, and then borate again has proven to be the fastest and cheapest method of fire suppression.

Between fires, the smokejumpers spend most of their time making up fire packs, rigging parachutes, and cargoing pumps, power saws, and other equipment to be dropped with them from the airplane. All packing of parachutes is done by qualified riggers who are especially trained for the job and hold C.A.A. licenses.

A complete smokejumper outfit weighs about 40 pounds and includes the parachute and harness, a high-colored padded jacket, padded pants, a football helmet with face mask, gloves, and logger-type boots. A 100-foot letdown rope is carried in a "jump pocket" located in the right leg of the padded pants. In case of a hang-up the jumper uses the rope to lower himself to the ground.

Speed is very important in fire suppression, and once a fire is detected and located there is no lost time in getting under way. Usually it takes less than 30 minutes to get airborne after a fire is reported.

Upon arrival in the fire vicinity a spotter selects a drop area. The jumpers then leave the plane in three-man passes from an altitude of 1,200 feet. Their rate of descent varies from 18 to 32 feet per second depending on the air density, porosity of parachute canopy material, and weight of the individual jumper. Before coming in for a landing the jumper places his feet together and, upon impact, flexes his knees slightly and goes into a roll to absorb the shock. If a safe landing is made the plane is signaled by two orange streamers laid out in the shape of an "L."

Float planes and helicopters are used to pick up the smokejumpers and their gear and, if necessary, to bring in reinforcements.

The "C" ration is the standard food on the Alaska fire line – supplemented by fresh food every three days in the case of regular fire crews. The country is so much a frontier that if the rations become depleted, it may become difficult for the crew to obtain food. However, we found in a few instances that fires did burn near good fishing streams. Purely as a matter of research, the men would occasionally wet a line to see whether the Arctic grayling, rainbow trout, or Arctic shee fish actually attacked a man (as we were told by some of the sourdoughs) and whether they could be used to supplement the discouraging sameness of the "C" rations. We found them excellent eating – large but not vicious.

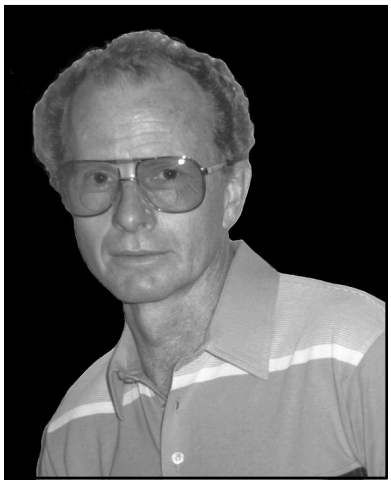
Alaska has needed this highly mobile fire unit, which can operate independent of landing fields, roads, and lakes. It has proven to be a highly successful operation, but it is too small!

At least 80 percent of the 49th state has been burned over. Much of this waste of natural resources can be prevented if the use of modern aerial attack methods is increased. This means that better detection methods will be needed, better communications, a larger basic fire organization, and certainly an increase in the size of the smokejumper contingent. Sixteen men spread awfully thin when there are 225 million acres involved.

At the end of the season 166 jumps had been made on 35 fires, but on one day in June there were 70 fires burning on BLM lands in Alaska. There were 538 emergency firefighters and 31 permanent personnel on 23 of those fires, but 47 remained unmanned and uncontrolled.

Many of the original 16 smokejumpers plan to return north again next summer. They hope with additional aid and reinforcements to hasten the day when wild fires no longer tarnish the wonderful Alaska summers.

# Sounding Off from the Editor

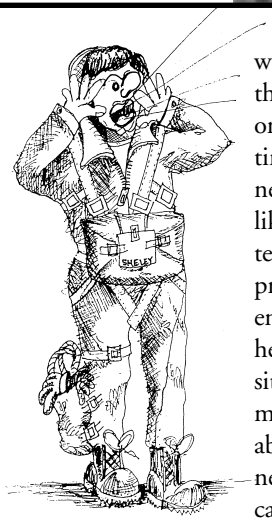


**by Chuck Sheley**
(Cave Junction '59)
MANAGING EDITOR

THIS IS ONE OF THOSE issues where my own magazine deadline is backing me into a corner. I'm still mailing out July issue returns and the October issue needs to go to layout. The fact is that once an issue hits the mail, it is time to start layout for the next issue.

The amount of time that goes into a single issue is considerable, but there is a major change that will ease some of that load. As of July I have been out of the NSA merchandising business. In October of 1998 I took over that program with an idea that we could really increase the income to the NSA with an expanded merchandising effort. Prior to that time we had netted a little over $3,000. Nothing wrong with that as it came through the hard work of dedicated individuals who were willing to put in the time and effort. As an Athletic Director and teacher, I had been supplementing educational programs for over 30 years and had a good background in bringing in a buck. Could a small merchandising effort, run out of a person's home, succeed?

Starting in October 1998, we cleared $1220 for the NSA in the first three months. I remember doing everything I could to cut expenses and up the profit. We used the cheapest packing tape, and I went around to dumpsters to salvage boxes that could be used for shipping. Setting up a web store came a bit later as I worked with Webmaster **Dan McComb** (MSO-87) to offer our goods to the general public. At one of the Board of Director's meetings, a director suggested that we only sell smokejumper logo items to smokejumpers. It was my goal to have every kid in America wearing a smokejumper logo cap. The web store at least opened that option.



In 2001 Webmaster McComb told the BOD (Board of Directors) that the website was in trouble and need upgrades and a plan for the future. Dan McComb, who took over as Webmaster in July 1999, had dedicated about $20,000 of volunteer time in developing the NSA web site. Unfortunately nothing was done and the site went down in November of 2002. The server dumped 87 orders on me that had piled up when the site went down. It took about a year to clear up the finances on those orders. Dan's personal web development business was taking off and he no longer had the time to do the NSA work. Fortunately we were able to find current NSA Webmaster **Jon Robinson**. As an organization we owe Dan McComb a tremendous amount of thanks for the creation of a web site that is a credit to our organization.

With absolutely no background in smokejumping, Jon put in an inordinate amount of hours to develop a new site and get the store back in business. Every month the web store was down, we lost $1,000 worth of business. Jon kept the old site (minus the store) on line while, at the same time, he was building the new site and store. It seemed like we were on the phone ten times a day working out problems. Many of Jon's emails came at 2:00 a.m. as he worked to get the new site up. Certain BOD members were concerned about the cost of creating a new site. When the new site came up we doubled our merchandise income. That income, in one year, paid for the development of the new site.

The business had developed to a point where I was handling, on an average, two orders a day, seven days a week. Two rooms in my house were taken over by NSA merchandise and supplies. Time spent standing in line at the post office was exceeding the time it took to pack the order. **Dr. Michael Steppe** (IDC-61) answered a call for help printed in the magazine. Michael operates a very large Equine Hospital in Southern California. He volunteered **Mary Ann Heintzman,** his office manager, to help out with our effort. After a 1,000-mile round-trip south, I was able to spread out the merchandise. It took me a very short time to know that Mary Ann was one of those people who makes an office run; she is good at her job! I had seen that many times in education knowing that without the main office secretary, most Principals would be failures.

The next step was to have our local clothing vendor do the shipping and packing for NSA orders. That cut our profit but time was more important. The shipping was split 3-ways now. What a relief.

Well, where do we stand now? My tenure as NSA Merchandise

Manager ran six years, nine months. We filled over 4600 orders and my final report to the BOD shows total ***profits*** to the NSA near the ***$102,000*** mark. The Western Heritage Company will take over the operation from here. At our last BOD meeting, one board member stated that with the new company, "we're going to move NSA merchandising to a new level." That certainly was my goal in 1998.

# Historical Memo From Frank Derry

Instructor-Rigger Parachute Project, Oct. 2, 1943

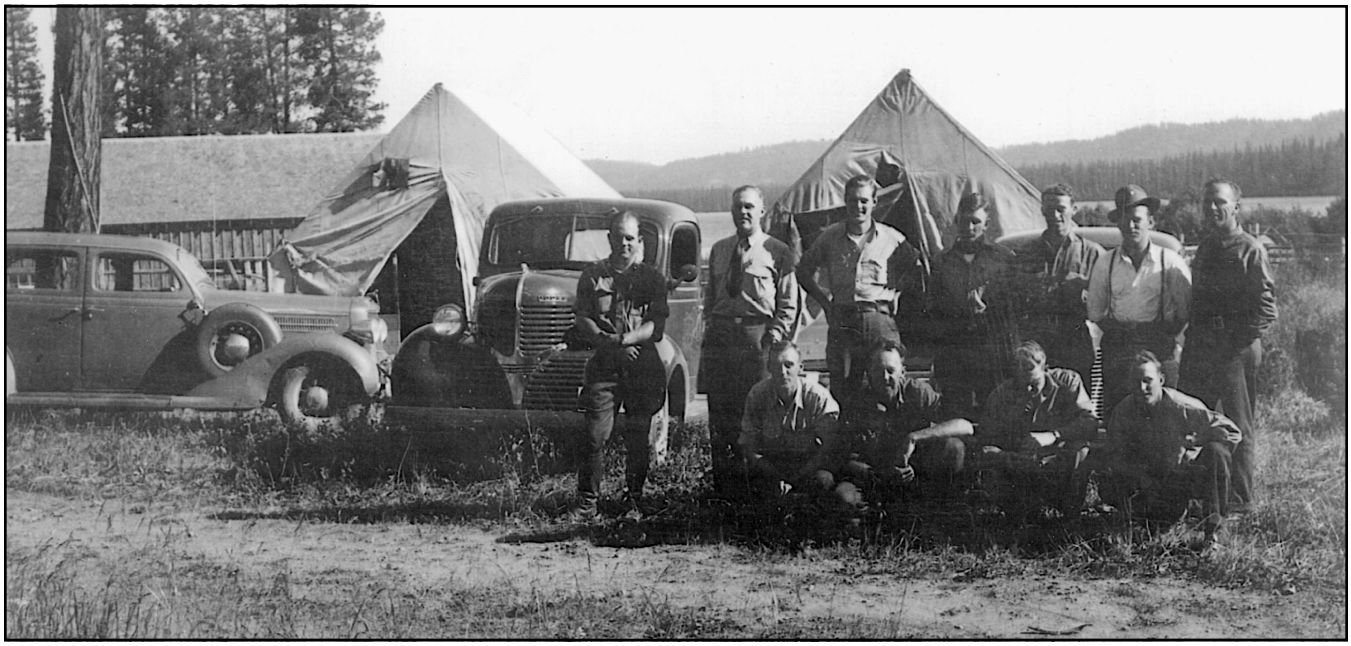
It has been brought to my attention that certain smokejumpers have been jumping from an altitude of ***300 feet or less*** above the ground. These jumps were made with the sanction of and under the direction of their squadleader. These low altitudes were estimated by timing the descent of three jumps that were made on a fire. The timing on these jumps was 14, 14 and 15 seconds. Normal rate of descent is approximately 1,000 feet per minute; therefore, the estimated 300 feet is probably liberal as the timing was started when the jumper left the plane and not when the chute opened. Jumping from such low altitude eliminates any chance of using the auxiliary chute should an emergency arise. In fact, there is no necessity of carrying an auxiliary if such practice is to be continued. I do not feel, however, that we are ready or in a position to take such drastic measures in transporting men to fires. If winds or other weather conditions indicated that jumping under 1,000 feet is necessary to get into the only available spot, then don't jump! This is in line with instructions that were carried out through the training season and everyone should be familiar with them.

Frequently a canopy will spiral out of its pack, and the opening shock of the canopy flips the jumper around in such a manner that the lines become wound up. Lines have wound all the way up to the canopy and should this occur on a low altitude jump, the jumper wouldn't have a chance. One fatality occurring in our parachute organization, regardless of what forest or region it might happen in, would undoubtedly be the swan song for the entire project.

Paratroopers train with auxiliary chutes and jump from altitudes high enough to use them, dropping to extremely low altitudes such as 300 feet only in actual combat, and then without an auxiliary which would be useless anyway.

Any contemplated deviation from the standard methods or policies that have been previously set up and approved pertaining to parachutes, their packing design and use, should first be submitted to me for approval.

*The above memo was sent in by **Craig Lindh** (MSO-59) and was left in files by his father, Axel (deceased), who worked for the Forest Service from 1927 to 1963 including a position as Assistant Regional Forester for Fire Control in R-1.*



*Historical Photo Seeley Lake R.S. June 1940 L-R: Unidentified USAF, David P. Godwin (Chief of Fire Control USFS), Jim Alexander, Earl Cooley, Jim Waite, Bill Bolen, Frank Derry.*
*Front L-R: Merle Lundrigan, Rufe Robinson, Chet Derry, Glenn Smith. (Courtesy J. Alexander)*

# Members of Missoula Elite Unit Recruited for CIA Mission to Taiwan

by John Q. Murray

*The following article was printed in "The Clark Fork Chronicle," Huson, Montana, in the June 25, 2004 issue. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.*

**Lyle Grenager** (MSO-48) of Huson, a member of the U.S. Forest Service elite smokejumper firefighting unit from 1946 to 1951, attended the smokejumper reunion held in Missoula last weekend as part of the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Forest Service's Aerial Fire Depot.

In a *Chronicle* interview, Lyle recalled smokejumper adventures and friends. He said he just missed being assigned to the Mann Gulch Fire because he was returning from an assignment in Republic, Wash., and missed that flight by half a day.

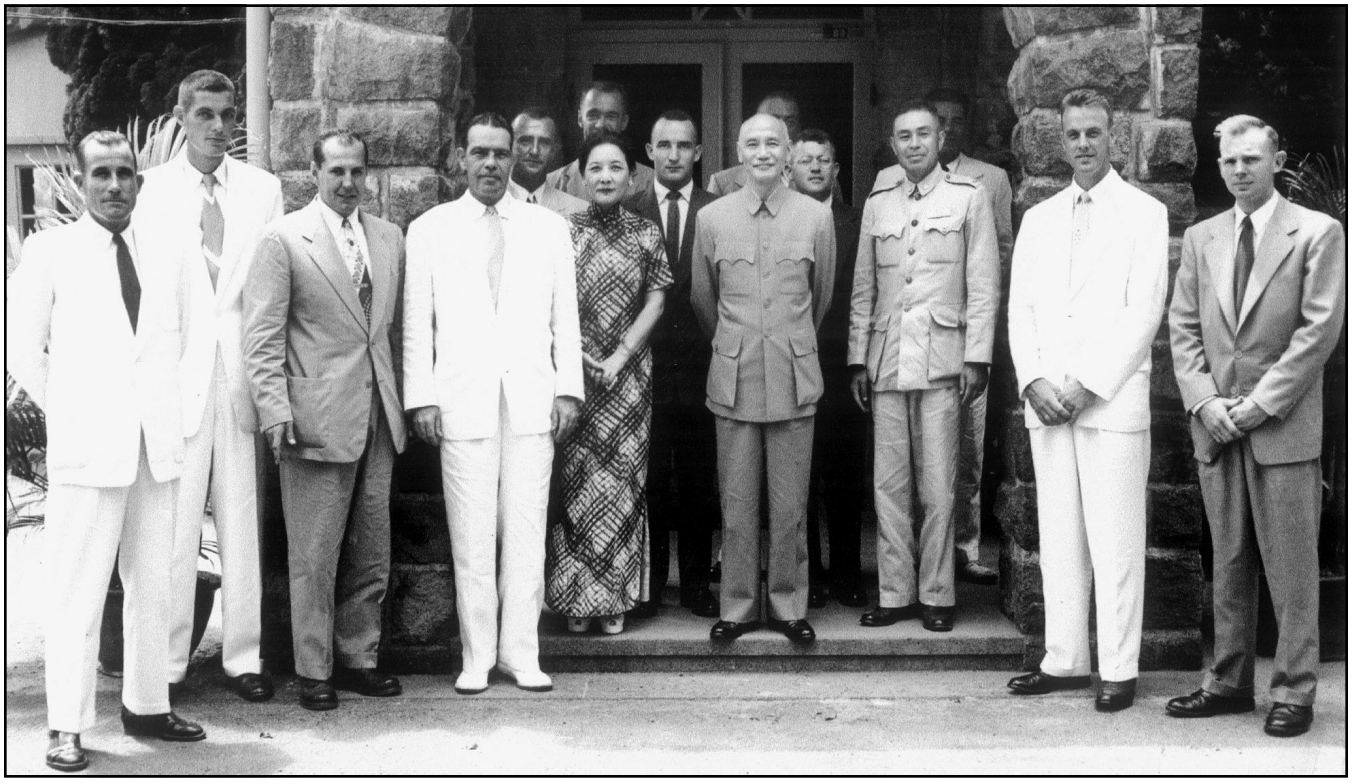
In the Forest Service's first (smokejumper) catastrophic wildfire tragedy, 13 men lost their lives in the Mann Gulch Fire in the summer of 1949. Lyle was good friends with two of the Missoula men who gave their lives at Mann Gulch, **Jim Harrison** (MSO-47), who was his neighbor across the street, and **Eldon Diettert** (MSO-49).

"They were really good men," he said. Harrison, a fire lookout, was "a ground-pounder," he said, the smokejumpers' term for those who scouted the fire in advance of the smokejumpers' arrival.

With 13 deaths, the Mann Gulch Fire had the most (smokejumper) fatalities on a wildfire until 14 firefighters were killed on the Storm King Fire near Glenwood Springs, Colorado, in 1994.

"The best duty for the smokejumper was the two-man fires," Lyle recalled. Two smokejumpers went out in a Travelair on small fires, usually involving a single snag that had been hit by lightning. The two men parachuted in and put the fire out, then had to wait 24 hours to watch it and make sure it was out. They then hiked back to civilization, using "a little square of a map with a crayon line on it." The Montanans were good at finding their way out of the backcountry.

The tougher duty was the 16-man fire. The DC-3 held 16 smokejumpers, and when that many men were needed, the fire was already big and growing. "That duty was much



*The guerrilla airborne training staff pictured with generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Smokejumpers L-R: Herman Ball (MSO-50) 2nd from left, Jack Mathews (MSO-48) between Madame and Gen. Chiang Kai-shek, Jack Wall (MSO-48) two back of Gen. Chiang just part of head visible, Gar Thorsrud (MSO-46) 2nd from right in white suit, Lyle Grenager (MSO-48) far right next to Thorsrud. (Courtesy L. Grenager)*

more labor-intensive," he recalled.

"The unit trained at Camp Menard, behind the Nine Mile ranger station," he said. They used football helmets with a screened facemask to keep sticks from poking them in the face. They also put together their own training equipment, such as the tower with the early bungee cord that they used to practice the correct position during a jump. "If your body wasn't in the right position, that chute would snap you around when it opened," he said.

"Because the smokejumpers represented the most advanced parachute technology in the world at that time, with elite men like **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) and **Frank Derry** (MSO-40) pushing the state of the art with their innovations, the CIA turned to the smokejumpers for help with a secret mission after the war," Lyle recalled. He was one of five or six men from Missoula recruited to serve his country.

"We can't tell you where you're going, but this will take the place of your required military service," he was told by the recruiter. Lyle, who was in the Naval Air Corps ROTC at the time, accepted the assignment.

He soon found himself in Taiwan, giving parachuting training to units that served the nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek. The smokejumpers also trained the units in survival techniques to prepare for dropping behind enemy lines on the mainland. Among the other men with him in Taiwan, he recalled **Jack Wall** (MSO-48), **Herman Ball** (MSO-50) and **Wally Dobbins** (MSO-47), who passed away just last year.

Lyle offered a photograph of himself and other Missoula men standing in front of a Taipei hotel with the Chinese leader and his wife. "She was the brains behind the outfit," Lyle said, indicating Madame Chiang Kai-shek on the photograph. She was educated at Wellesley College in the United States and was instrumental in developing Taiwan's aeronautics industry. Madame Chiang Kai-shek just passed away last year on October 23, 2003, at the age of 105.

After two and a half years in the Orient, he returned to Missoula, only to find that his mission was still top-secret. Nobody at the Missoula draft board knew about it, and they had been looking for him because he was not exempt from the draft. After several phone calls to Washington, D.C., the CIA told him that the draft board had more power than they did. They advised him to report, but said they would get him out as quickly as possible.

On the train down to Butte, he commiserated with two other men in the same situation. One, a sheep rancher from Sheridan, Wyo., had been exempt during World War II because he was in a critical industry, but he had been told that he had a month to find someone to run his ranch or sell out. "He was boiling mad," Lyle said.

Lyle was starting to get nervous as the weeks went by and he was shipped to training in Missouri. But during his eighth week, the general called him into his office. "Grenager, I don't know who you know, but my instructions are to open the gates and let you go." Lyle said he played dumb and didn't let on that he knew what was going on. The general stopped him. "Do me a favor, will you. I've never seen anything like this in my career. When you can, drop me a postcard and let me know what this is all about."

"You bet, general," Lyle said.

The CIA didn't want him to return immediately to Missoula because there might be questions about how he was released from service, so they got him a job in ordnance in Washington, D.C., listed under the Department of the Army. He worked there until word came that he was being transferred to England. The Montana man thought that would just be too many people, and he wanted to go home. "I told them, 'I don't care if I starve, I'm going back to Montana.'" "They let me quit," he said.

One of his most memorable experiences involved neither the CIA nor wildland fire. The smokejumpers often participated on rescue searches for lost hunters. One fall Lyle had just ended his summer smokejumper service and had started attending classes at the University of Montana when he got the call asking him to return as a volunteer for one such search on the Magruder Ranger District, southwest of Darby.

After fire season, the Forest Service only kept a few full-time smokejumpers, and they needed more to successfully carry a stretcher out of the backcountry. The DC-3 held 16 men, but they needed at least 12 to give them three crews of four men each. Four men would allow one man on each corner of the stretcher to pack the injured person out.

On the DC-3, the plane often circled a few times to get lined up with the landing zone. A spotter kneeled near the doorway, peering out for the smoke from the signal fire, and told the jumper by tapping him on the back of the ankle when it was time to go. But Lyle's partner didn't have his foot in the right position, and the spotter touched his foot, trying to move it forward so that it would be in the right position when it was time to jump. But as soon as he touched it, Lyle's partner was out the door. Lyle followed and it was soon apparent that they had jumped too early. Lyle used the Derry slots to twist around and look for the smoke, but couldn't see anything.

He yelled over to his partner going down, "Where's the smoke?"

"Heck if I know!"

To make matters worse, Lyle ended up in a high yellow pine and it took two hours to disentangle his chute and collect his equipment.

They had no idea where they were or which way to go. So they cached their equipment and Lyle suggested that they head down the draw. They marked the location of their equipment with a lot of orange streamers.

It took them two hours to walk down the draw, but they found the main camp and joined the search. The men split into different parties and headed up different drainages. On the second or third day of the search, the local ranger and his assistant were on a ridge and noticed a bunch of orange streamers across the valley. They decided to investigate, and their route toward the streamers—Lyle and his partner's equipment—took them down to where they heard a man moaning. It was the lost hunter, who had gone "berserk" from hunger and exposure.

The 12 rescuers toted him 19 miles cross-country to the

Moose Creek airstrip, where he was flown to the hospital and enjoyed a speedy recovery. Four of the crewmembers were in college at the time and had worked as volunteers for a week. The crew chief said he would see what he could do and visited the hunter in the hospital. "Four of your rescuers were volunteers, and I just wanted to see if you'd contribute to help reimburse them for their time," he told the man.The man told him to get lost.

"But there was a happy ending," Lyle recalled. The hunter's brother heard about it and kicked in $50 for each of the college men. And Lyle, who missed a week of classes and wasn't doing too well in typing already, didn't get the failing grade that he had feared. "The teacher took into account his work for the smokejumpers, so gave him a D-minus instead," he said, laughing.

# Over The Se Khong River

**by Jack Demmons** (Missoula '50)

**As told by Jack Mathews** (Missoula '48)

***This story** was originally printed in the January 1995 issue of "The Static Line".*

During March 1960 a battalion of the Royal Lao Army's best-trained and equipped paratroopers, the Second Parachute Battalion, became lost while operating against large groups of Pathet Lao and Viet Minh (the name at the time for the North Vietnamese Forces) guerrillas near the southern tip of Laos, along its border with Cambodia. The Second Battalion had actually crossed the Se Khong River into Cambodia and was hotly pursued by communist guerrilla forces.

On March 9, 1960, a Lao Army officer contacted me and said that General Ouane Rathanacone, Chief of the General Staff, was willing to allow the Second Battalion to be overrun by guerrilla forces since its commander, Capt. Kong Le, had refused to become involved in the opium trade Ouane was engaged in with the hill tribes in northern Laos. Capt. Kong Le had received training from Col. Simons and his Special Forces team in 1959 in Vientiane.

Col. Simons did his best to get the General Staff to mount a rescue effort to get the Second Battalion out of the trap, without success. At that point, Col. Simons shouted at me, "To hell with formality and diplomatic games! We will have to mount our own god-damn rescue mission and try like hell to get supplies to the battalion before it is destroyed!"

We began to gather rice and canned food, purchased at outrageous prices, plus ammunition and cargo parachutes. Col. Simons was finally able to induce an Air America pilot to fly us and the cargo in his C-47 transport to southern Laos to look for the lost battalion.

From the time we had been alerted regarding the plight of the missing unit until airborne, only six hours had elapsed. Col. Simons jokingly shouted, "We are on our way to becoming either lucky bastards or corpses, and, regardless of how this caper turns out, we will never get any accolades, except perhaps in the eyes of their Buddha!" As we drew near the Se Kong River, the plane took several hits in the tail section from guerrilla gunfire.

Capt. Kong Le and his paratroopers heard the C-47 droning overhead and put out smoke grenades to pinpoint their location. The pilot brought his plane down over the drop zone at less than 500 feet, drawing heavy gunfire. Hot lead ricocheted around inside the ship. Two passes were made over the surrounded troops, and the plane and crew then headed back to Vientiane.

Col. Simons and I received considerable official flak over the impromptu rescue mission, but our mission had been a smashing success. We did not have to fire a shot and the aircraft was only slightly damaged.

The lost battalion, after receiving the airdropped supplies and ammunition, was able to fight its way back into Laos. Later, Capt. Kong Le became a Royal Lao Army general, after helping pull a coup d' etat that deposed General Ouane and other corrupt Lao Army and Air Force officers. In June 1964 Gen. Kong Le's picture appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine.

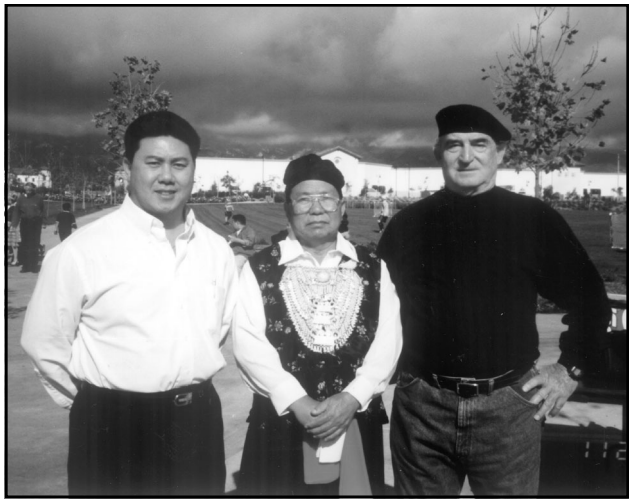
I met Col. Bull Simons several times throughout the

*Chinese Nationalist interpreters used for CIA training on Taiwan in early 50s. (Courtesy L. Grenager)*

years, with the last occasion being in 1967. Col. Simons commanded the U.S. Army Special Forces unit that conducted the bold and unprecedented commando raid on the Son Tay prison camp in North Vietnam in 1970. Unfortunately, the POW's they had planned on rescuing had been moved out earlier.

Col. Simons retired in 1971, but in 1979 he and a small team, made up largely of former military personnel, secretly pulled off a highly dangerous and unconventional rescue mission in Iran in the middle of a revolution, rescuing two executives of the Texas-based Electronics Data System, who were being held in a Tehran prison. That story is the basis of the book *On Wings of Eagles*, which was a best seller for six months in 1983.

*Jack passed away on January 8, 2001, at his home in Santa Barbara, Calif., at age 71. After graduation from the University of Montana, he signed up for duty with the CIA which was then recruiting smokejumpers. During his 27-year career, Jack worked on many Cold War assignments in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and Taiwan. His work in Taiwan included a late Korean War secret operation allowing Chiang Kai-shek's forces to assault a Chinese-held island near the North Korean border with a parachute regiment leading the invasion. Jack Mathews was the only American jumping in with the Nationalist Chinese paratroops, and he survived despite huge casualties among the Nationalist attackers. For this service Jack Mathews received a medal for valor from General Chiang Kai-shek—-all of which was secret until after the Soviet Union fell 36 years later. (Ed.)*



*Jack is pictured with Bee Moua and his son Tony at the Hmong New Year celebration in Santa Barbara, Calif., in 1999. (NSA file)*

# From My Desk

**by Dora Flint** (Associate)

I was fortunate to wear different hats during my 30 years with the U.S. Forest Service in Region One. I knew that Missoula was the home of the smokjumpers, but I did not know they would play an important part of my life. My first association with their lives was August 1949, after the tragedy of Mann Gulch. The Chief of the Forest Service assigned my boss the task of writing letters to the families of the fallen jumpers. We worked several days until midnight writing and rewriting those letters. It was quite a task typing letters and the several carbon copies through a veil of tears. Many years passed before I got to see the Mann Gulch area, but I will never forget the tragedy.

I was transferred from Fiscal control of the Division of Procurement and Supply, where I issued purchase orders for the supplies of R-1 forests and the Aerial Fire Depot. One of the first bids I had to prepare was for rope, and I had always figured rope was rope. I was soon aware of various tensile strengths, sizes and warps. It seemed that the AFD needed miles and miles of a certain kind of rope, boxes of orange crape paper, 50-inch zippers, sewing machine needles, cones of sewing thread, football helmets, canvas material and various things too numerous to itemize.

I thought the AFD must be a very unusual place, so my supervisor gave me a tour. I was bug-eyed at seeing sturdily built men sewing. Some of the machines were four needle machines and these men were doing a magnificent job. I had sewn a lot of my own clothes, but my machine had only one needle. Even then I made mistakes. I was fascinated with all the facets of the smokejumping project. I even wished I could be a smokejumper, but that was before women's lib.

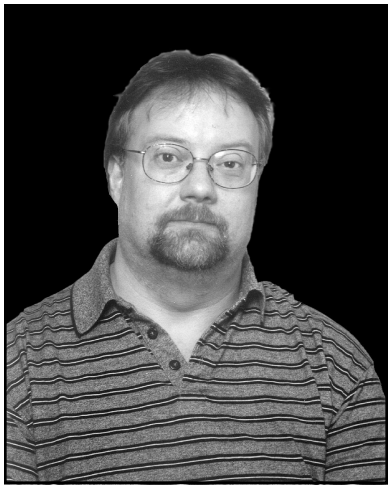
My dream of a more exciting job was granted in 1955 when I transferred to the Division of Fire Control. The remaining 17 years of my Forest Service career were the most memorable time of my life. Smokejumpers are special people and I am happy to have known so many of them.

I relive memories like going through Sea-Tac Airport with a roll of Copenhagen tucked under my arm and having several little old ladies comment on how terrible that was. I was on my way to Fairbanks and some jumper wanted his "Copenhagen." I had the pleasure of sitting in the co-pilot's seat of the Ford Tri-motor while Bob Johnson dropped jumpers. **Al Cramer** (MSO-43) asked if I wanted to see the cargo kicked out. It was a thrill to lie on the floor of the Ford and see those drift streamers fall earthward and finally know what all the orange crape paper was for.

I could ramble on but will quote Bob Hope with, "Thanks for the memories," NSA.

*Dora Ellen can be contacted at: 411 W. Phillip St Apt 304, Rhinelander, WI 54501.*

# The View from Outside the Fence



**by Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT the air tanker controversy was coming to an end, the entire situation has become absurd beyond imagination.Ten heavy tanker pilots have failed Federal background checks and were grounded in early June. One of those who failed the background check has been a tanker Captain for twenty years. BLM pilots, SEAT pilots and all helicopter pilots are not subject to Federal background checks, only heavy tanker pilots.

The Forest Service has made zero progress on the plan that called for a fleet of 30 to 35 jet-powered air tankers and 15 to 20 large helicopters by 2008. "I can't put a time on it," said Larry Brosnan, the Forest Service's top-ranking aviation official. "Our focus ... is on the upcoming season," Brosnan said. "We take this one season at a time." I can't think of a single business that could survive by looking no further ahead than one season at a time. The leadership needs to engage in some serious, long term planning, as far as twenty years out, and decide what the future is going to be. The forest service has decimated the tanker industry, yet they want private enterprise to develop a new fleet of modern aircraft. Currently only three individual aircraft are being tested for use as air tankers: a wide body DC-10, the Evergreen 747, and Minden Air's converted BAE-146 commuter jet. You have to admire the tenacity of contractors who are tanking these three aircraft. They are spending millions of dollars in hopes that the government will contract it, and then they have to fight with them on how much they are going to pay for daily availability, hourly cost and other expenses. Then they have to hope that the government will sign a long-term contract so that maybe in twenty years they might have their development, building, flight-testing, and certification costs paid off. Then maybe they could make a profit. Farming has less risk than being in the air tanker business.

In March, Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer formally asked the Department of Defense to return all Montana National Guard troops and the State's Blackhawk helicopters serving in Southwest Asia to Montana due to a projected bad fire season. The request was denied and the Air National Guard Red Horse Squadron is headed back to the Middle East for their second deployment in the past three years. Pundits criticized the request as political grandstanding. Supporters saw the request as a State's rights issue. In actuality, the truth is probably somewhere in the middle.

A tip of the hard hat to Matthew Ramige and Jodee Hogg who were awarded the Forest Service Heroism and Emergency Response Award for 2005 for their actions after a plane crash in the Bob Marshall Wilderness last September. Despite suffering serious burns and broken bones, Ramige and Hogg cared for another passenger, Ken Good, before he succumbed to his injuries the following morning. Flathead County Sheriff/Coroner Jim DuPont flew over the crash site 24 hours after the accident and declared everyone dead. Despite their injuries, Ramige and Hogg walked for a day and a half until they reached a highway and help. Ramige was flown to the burn unit at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle and is now recuperating at home in Albany, New York. Ramige and Hogg previously received the Montana Medal of Valor along with pilot Jim Long from Montana Governor Judy Martz. Long received the award posthumously. Pilot Long helped Good escape the burning plane but could not save himself. The Medal of Valor is awarded annually to those who display "extraordinary courage in a situation threatening the lives of one or more people." Hogg, Ramige and Long were the only 2004 nominees for the award.

Finally, I would like to wish Representative Barbara Cubin a speedy recovery. She suffered a heart attack this summer in Washington D.C. She has been and continues to be a voice in congress for wildland firefighters.

# The Fish Lake Project

**by Pat Harbine** (Missoula '51)

The news came as a surprise. We would have to sign up for work projects until the fire season started. We were first year smokejumpers and had finished our training and the 7th mandatory jump days before. Somehow we expected the USFS to pay us for sitting on our butts until fire season began. Surprise!

My buddy, **Ted Rieger** (MSO-51), and I were late in arriving at the bulletin board that day. Some jumpers had signed up for the worksites close to Missoula so they could return quickly to the jump list. Others chose exotic spots in the Idaho wilderness to travel to at government expense.

There was only one destination left when we worked our way to the front of the line, Locksa Ranger Station, only 70 miles from Missoula. Only problem, you couldn't get there from Missoula in 1951. At least not directly!

Six of us rode on the back of an old green Dodge truck to the bus depot, where a foreman handed us our tickets to Spokane and transfers to Grangeville. The soft seats and air conditioning of the Greyhound lulled us to sleep as the scenery of the Northwest rolled by our window. The two hour wait in Spokane was interesting because the depot was located in the low rent district. It was like being home, if you lived on Railroad St.

Our bus was announced, and we took our bags to begin boarding. The idling engine emitted a small cloud of smoke. We were startled at the vehicle's poor condition. It was a vintage 1940s model that had seen many miles. The vehicle's entry was marked by a trail of oil staining the depot's concrete apron. The dark green paint and the crudely painted letters identified it as the "Palouse Express". The seats in the front were worn, and coil springs penetrated through the upholstery. We moved to the back, and that


*Pat Harbine (Courtesy P. Harbine)*

proved to be a poor choice. We could not see the billowing black cloud that followed behind us until we reached Hangman Hills, and then it passed us as the Stage lumbered slowly up the hill. Fumes and diesel smoke from the rear-mounted engine entered the cabin from hundreds of small cracks in the body. When we lowered the windows, the smoke blew in faster than the fresh air. The front seats had filled, and our only relief was in those few minutes when the relic raced downhill. The swaying of the vehicle, as it clung to the curves of the narrow highway, intensified the nausea incited by the fumes. Our faces were green and our stomachs turned violently by the time we reached Lewistown. We found seats in the front, and we were left alone with the driver. No one else in the whole world wanted to go to Grangeville. Certainly not on this bus.

A truck awaited us as we entered Grangeville. It was a small-ton vehicle with stock racks. Those of us forced to ride in back placed our bags on the single bale of hay and moved to the front of the rack to avoid the piles of road apples left by a previous occupant. We stood knowing our White Brand Boots would protect us from the juices that sloshed back and forth. The truck plunged down the highway into the valley of the South Fork of the Clearwater River. Soon we were on a graveled road. Standing behind the truck cab, gripping the rack tightly, was an exhilarating experience as we watched the road disappear beneath the hood and the cab of the truck. To our right the Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers surged by in the opposite direction. I vowed I would come back someday to challenge the rapids in a boat. Our young legs soaked up the jarring of the washboard road, and we breathed deeply of the fresh mountain air laced with the fragrance of mule crap. We arrived in time for dinner and bedded down in cots after a long day of travel.

The ranger explained our job the next morning. We would start by hiking eight miles to Fish Lake. Once there we would clear a longer airspace for airplane takeoffs from the short airstrip by clearcutting trees near its end. There were no laggards on the hike as this was primitive country and the trail was poorly marked. Finally, we saw the airstrip as we crossed a rise. It was very, very short, and a wall of trees demanded an aggressive takeoff or ascent for any pilot who dared to land.

All was in readiness when we arrived. In the cabin a metal tub on top of a table was used to keep rodents from the canned food inside. Everything was in a can. There was canned milk, canned bread, canned meat, canned potatoes, canned vegetables and canned fruit. Mostly there was canned "surprise" as the mice had nibbled off most of the labels.

After supper we looked around and we found the Tractor. Its paint was faded, and the tire treads had been chewed by animals seeking the traces of salt left by the perspiring hands of the last driver. A Farmall, Model-A International Harvester, what a find! A close inspection revealed the machine was inoperable. Critical ignition parts were missing and there was no gas. Those damn Rangers, they didn't trust us. They suspected we might joy ride or something like that. Ridiculous, it had never crossed our minds. The vehicle had apparently been flown in via a C-47. The daring pilot took the big plane on a steep climb out of the valley after the tractor was unloaded. Behind the tractor was a pile of black rubber that proved to be a life raft. Sixteen passengers was the limit printed on the side. There were only six of us.

Next morning we were at our job. Two men were on opposite ends of the crosscut saws. We felled the tall Lodgepole Pines into a clearing made by previous workers and the airspace grew.

We were not alone. Several cow moose dominated the lake as their calves waded along the shoreline. The adults would submerge their heads completely for several minutes and then raise their snouts upward with long strands of moss dangling from their jaws. They seemed oblivious to our presence, even as the heavy trees fell nearby.

After supper was the time to try the raft. A slow leak and balky pump kept the craft from being fully inflated, but we launched it anyway. The limp pontoons and sagging, slippery floor resulted in a pile of people in the middle of the raft. Straddling the pontoons, we soon found a balance, of sorts. The lack of paddles had been supplemented by seizing old boards and tree branches that lay scattered about.

The lake was small and soon we approached a cow moose and her calf. Shoulder deep in the water the moose seemed to pose no threat, but then the warning cry sounded. "That Mothers coming right at us," a panicked voice barked. The surface of the lake was whipped to a frenzy by the uncoordinated fury of six paddlers. Rotten boards broke suddenly and sodden tree branches sank into the water. "Every man for himself," they cried, as the saner individuals abandoned ship and swam away from the threatened craft.

Perhaps it was an answer to a frantic prayer or the moose, which had been overtaking the ridiculous craft, lost interest. She stopped as the few who remained on the raft paddled to shore. A fresh leak appeared at the spot where a nail protruding from a board had penetrated the rubber. The limp craft slipped under just as it reached shore. Nearly an hour went by as the crew pried the pile of rubber from the lakebed and dragged it to its spot in the shed. Shortly afterward as we finished our suppers of Canned Surprise, a packer arrived with his string of mules. He had instructions for us to leave in the morning. The fire season had arrived!

We hiked out early in the morning, and we were treated to the comfort of a new Chevy Carryall that waited at the Ranger Station. As the driver sped down the road, spewing gravel at each curve of the road, I looked at the river. "I will be back here," I promised myself. A venerable old Tri-motor awaited us at Grangeville, and we were soon in the air for an hour ride to Missoula.

I go back fairly often to kayak on the Lochsa River. I always bring along some Canned Surprise, in case the restaurants are closed. Despite the heavy traffic on the highway and the many rafts in the river, little else has changed. The old Ranger Station is now a museum, and the corridor is part of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Route. The best part of all is the drive to Missoula now only takes an hour.

# The Rescue of Johnny Davis

**by John Gordon** (North Cascades '63)

As fellow school district superintendents in the State of Washington, **Johnny Davis** (NCSB-66) and I were together in Ellensburg for a Gates Foundation workshop in June 1999. I hadn't seen or talked with Johnny since the summer of 1966, just prior to his first firejump. Johnny was in his rookie year, and I was one of his junior squadleaders responsible for his physical training. Additionally, I had known John all his life as we were both raised in our hometown of Winthrop, where I graduated in 1963 and Johnny in 1965.

Johnny had encountered a tough rookie training at the North Cascades Smokejumper base. He had been a high school athlete and was in great physical shape from working in the hay fields for his grandfather, but had sprained his ankle in one of his seven practice jumps and had taken several extra weeks to get qualified.

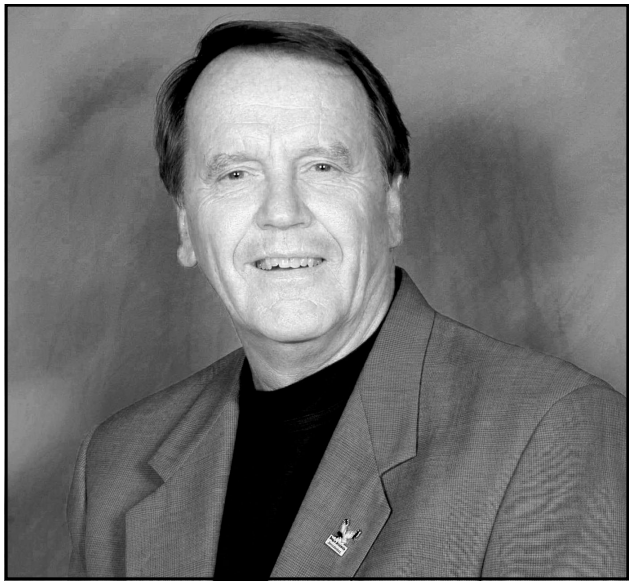
Finally, in the middle of July, Johnny was on the jump list ready for his first fire jump. Basically, that is the last memory Johnny had of his smokejumping career as evidenced by his question to me that day in Ellensburg. He asked me, "John, what happened to me?"

Like any good smokejumper, I replied, "For a drink!" Johnny said, "I have over a hundred dollars and we both have all night."

It was evident that Johnny Davis had suffered severe injuries. One of his arms looked like he had suffered from Polio and he walked with a noticeable limp. He informed me that he had used some of the "settlement money" to put himself through school including earning his Doctorate from an eastern university.

As the scotch began to flow, I began to spin the tale something like this: It was one of those hot July days following a thunderstorm that had moved quickly through the North Cascades. The ominous fire call that put a chill in every smokejumper's body came over the intercom, "Two man fire on Delancey Ridge, top four on the jumplist, suit up!" Delancey Ridge is one of the steepest, most rugged and godforsaken jump spots in the world. Additionally, timber rattlers inhabit every rock and fallen tree and the 'skeeters' are huge. Even the crustiest jumper fears Delancey Ridge. At the top of the jump list was **Ben Hull** (NCSB-64) and rookie Johnny Davis.

The Beech returned in less than an hour with only two jumpers. Ben and Johnny had successfully landed and were on their way to the fire. In less than an hour, **Bill Moody** (NCSB-58), EMT and soon to be the second base commander at NCSB, came to me in the loft. "John, suit-up, we need to make a rescue jump. You and I will take the first two jumpers on the list. There has been an accident on Delancey Ridge and we need to get there quickly." The next two jumpers on the list were **Bruce "Don't call me Hubbard" McWhirter** and **Rich Pratt**, two rookies. Both were excellent young jumpers. (Bruce flew fighters during numerous tours of Viet Nam and Rich was killed five months later during a skirmish in Viet Nam).



*John Gordon (Courtesy J. Gordon)*

Things got worse. As we took off we could see that a thunderstorm had moved into the area and turbulence was magnified. **Terry McCabe** (NCSB-58) was the spotter and was known as one of the toughest and best spotters in smokejumping. "The conditions are terrible. We have two jumpers on the ground and at least one is seriously injured. If you do your job, I can get you out safely near the spot." We were all trying our best to accept what he was saying. The stretcher accompanying us was of "industrial strength" quality. One of those great smokejumper creations that would never fall apart but would take 4 – 10 Olympic weightlifters to pack and put on the airplane. Because of the air turbulence and the cumbersomeness of the stretcher, Bill and I decided to help Terry push the stretcher out the door and then we would jump. As we approached the spot, we pushed the stretcher into the door. As **Ken Cavin**, one of the best pilots I ever flew with, approached the spot, we realized the stretcher was "jammed" in the door. The buzzer rang and it took Bill, Terry and me three huge pushes to exit it out the door. Meanwhile, we had passed the spot, lost altitude and as Ken informed us, "We damn near crashed this ol' Beech!"

By now, the storm included rain, hail, lightning, swirling air and giant roars of thunder. Bill and Bruce were first stick

and soon as they exited the door, one went north and the other went south. Later, we discovered they landed over 1 mile apart. Rich and I were a little luckier. Rich followed me closely and we both landed nearly one mile from the spot, but at least we were in the same drainage. It took us another two hours to get to the fire and to find the stretcher.

When we got to the fire, we discovered that Ben had not only been making every effort to keep Johnny Davis alive but also had to keep his attention on the pitch-filled snag that was spewing fire all over the steep hillside. Ben told us that he and Johnny had a good jump and immediately began working the fire. Ben felt that John wanted to prove himself to the veteran and was working furiously under the snag. Ben yelled at Johnny several times to get away from the base of the tree as the top was swaying from the storm. All of a sudden, Ben heard a tremendous snap and watched as the top of the snag was falling. The tree top hit Johnny directly and drove his body into the embers at the base of the tree. Ben diagnosed Johnny immediately and realized he had internal injuries, broken ribs and limbs, lacerations, severe burns, and head injuries as evidenced by his amnesia.

Delancey Ridge is not accessible to helicopter or any type of emergency device; in fact, it isn't really fit for anything other than mountain goats and timber rattlers. The only way out was to put him on the stretcher and cut a swath for four or five miles to the nearest road. Darkness had settled in as we placed his limp body on the stretcher. It took four able-bodied men to carry the stretcher and one jumper to lead the way through the rock slides, streams and underbrush and endure the continuing thunderstorm. Some five hours later, we made it to the road where a USFS wagon was waiting.

We made quick time to the airport. Bill and I loaded Johnny on the Beech and took off for Wenatchee, the nearest hospital facility. An ambulance met us at the airport and Cavin took us back to Intercity Airport. That was the last time I saw Johnny Davis until our chance meeting 32 years later.

That wasn't the end for us however. **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40) woke us up early the next morning to inform us that we were going to "groundpound" back to the fire location, put out the fire, fall the snag and pack out all the gear! Of course, we did it knowing that whatever the pioneer of smokejumping, Francis Lufkin, said, we did. Two days later, we returned to the base.

John thanked me for the story, the one he had not known for 32 years. We finished the bottle of scotch and went on our way. I haven't seen him since.

*Where are they now? Johnny Davis retired as a Superintendent in SW Washington and is considering a run as a legislator. John Gordon currently lives in Scottsdale, Arizona and is retiring a second time after serving 38 years as an educator in Washington State (four years as Superintendent in Wenatchee) and five years as Superintendent of Cave Creek Unified Schools, Arizona. Bill Moody, past NCSB Project Manager and jumper emeritus has retired but is still consulting (lately with Evergreen International, creating a 747 Tanker). Ben Hull, retired, served for over 25 years as a USFS Investigator and lives in Wenatchee. Terry McCabe retired from fire control and lives in Twisp, Washington. Bruce McWhirter lives in Peshastin, Washington. Rich Pratt is deceased.*

*L-R: "Doc" Reesing, Tom Butler, T.J. Thompson, Jack Saunders, Gary Welch, Dave Bennett. (Courtesy E. Reesing)*

# Get Together In Texas

Six former smokejumpers enjoyed a "gathering" at the **Jack Saunders** (MSO-61) ranch in Marfa, Texas, on the 9th and 10th of July. Jack and Terry Saunders hosted the event in the West Texas town where the film "Giant" was shot 50 years ago. In addition to Jack, **Dave Bennett** (MSO-61), **Tom Butler** (MSO-61), **T.J. Thompson** (MSO-55), **Gary Welch** (CJ-60) and **Ernie Reesing** (MSO-61) were in attendance. There was plenty of food and drink. Many names were recalled, fires re-fought and time relived.

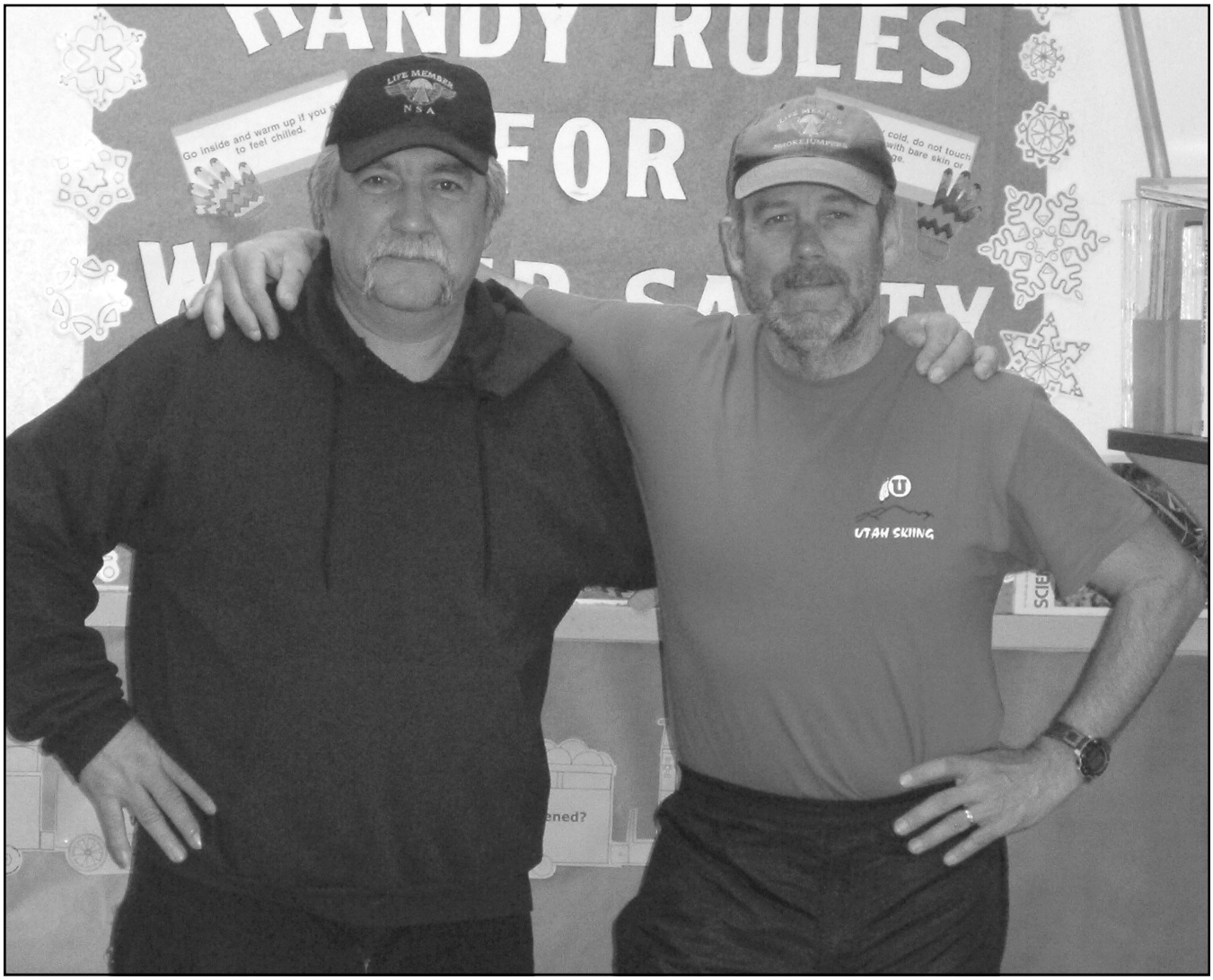
# Iditarod in Winter

**by Jerry Dixon** (McCall '71)

It had been 38 years since I was last in the Iditarod region. In August 1967, I fought the Camelback Fire near here. We worked for 17 hours before it started to rain. It rained for 10 days and nights. The Chena River flooded and Fairbanks was underwater, so they pulled all our helicopters and support for rescue. **Fred Rungee** (MSO-45) was fire boss. When we ran out of food, one of the crew bosses shot a moose, as many firefighters carried weapons for protection or survival back then. The natives from Shageluk, Anvik and Holy Cross showed us how to cut the moose in strips and cook it over the fire on willow branches. When the helicopters returned, we were starting to put the roof on a log cabin we had constructed.

This winter, 2005, my friend Dick Griffith and I arrived at Iditarod, an historic mining town on the Iditarod River. It has been abandoned for 70 years. We were hoping there would be a ski trail, but surprisingly there is no winter trail there except when the Iditarod mushers come through. There has been no trail since 2001 due to the alternating north-south routes of "the last great race" on even and odd years and the lack of snow in 2003, which required a new route from Fairbanks down the Yukon River.

The Iditarod Trailblazers would not be arriving for a week, just hours ahead of the first musher in this year's race. So we volunteered to work "for food" (just like the SJ trail crews). It was time well spent, as there was no trail for 100 miles. We set out the gear and food for 79 mushers, put up three tents and helped get four oil stoves up and running.




*L-R: Robert Walker and Jerry Dixon. (Courtesy J. Dixon)*

As soon as the Iditarod Trailblazers came through, we were behind them on the trail. Early in the morning Roberto, "The Italian Moose," passed us. He was racing in the Ultra Sport, a 1049-mile race on foot, or ski or bike to Nome. He had his own film crew following as he was a celebrity in Italy. I yelled out, "Buon giorno," and greeted him in Italian. When he found out who my partner was, he said, "Dick Griffith, you are a great man." Then he continued on hiking 60 miles per day, pulling a sled to Nome.

At the Big Yetna River crossing, a German musher passed us. I said, "Meine familie kommt aus der Schweiz." Sebastian, the German musher, responded, "You guys are incredible. Can I take your photo? Nobody in Germany would believe you do this on skis."

Between the Big Yetna and the NW fork of the Innoko, I was skiing ahead of Dick and we had passed two mushers. It was a warm day for Interior Alaska and I took my hat, gloves and shirt off. Then I rolled my pants above my knees just before I came upon two female mushers. I could read the look on their faces, "What is this guy thinking. Doesn't he know this is Interior Alaska in winter?" Like so many wonderful folks we met who had given us smoked salmon, moose burgers and jerky on the way, they offered us food and drink.

We skied to Shageluk and were there when Dallas Seavey, age 18, rolled in. He took his lead dog and put it in swing position and then took that dog and set it in his sled as he started to put out straw and put warm-up covers on his dogs. Two vets started down his team doing a check up and I walked over to say, "As VP of the Seward Iditarod Trailblazers,let me be the first to welcome you."

"How did you get here?" He asked,

"We skied," I replied. It turns out it took us four days and two hours to ski from Iditarod to Shageluk over 13 ridges, which Dallas did in seven hours.

"And that was slow," he remarked.

The Seavey's have a long history with this race. Dan, president of the Seward Trailblazers, raced the first one in 1973. They are the first family to have three generations race. Mitch won in 2004, three brothers have run and finished and Dallas is the youngest ever to run the race.

Tyrell Seavey passed us several days earlier when we were camped above the Big Yetna River. He came by just before dusk with a strong team. When he saw we were pulling 75 lb. sleds with a week's worth of gear, he said, "You guys have got to be tough."

Fourteen miles from the Yukon and the village of Anvik, **Robert Walker** (ANC-70) shows up. Robert and I jumped together in 1972. We had seen each other only once in 33 years at the 2004 Missoula reunion. When he showed up on the Iditarod Trail, which he has worked on for years in this section, he was wearing his SJ Life Member hat. So was I.

The only other time I had seen Robert astride a machine was at the McGrath Roadhouse, summer of 1972. The Roadhouse was full of testosterone-charged jumpers having a brew between fires. Suddenly the door pops open and in comes Robert Walker riding a motorcycle. The bartender was not happy, but what are you going to do with a bar full of jumpers? We loved it. Robert said he would exit when he was given a beer. Finally the owner gave him one and then said, "Don't leave skid marks when you leave." Robert finished his brew and left without a trace.

Anvik is located on the Yukon. I was skiing out of the woods onto the frozen river when I fell. The Iditarod trail dropped steeply to the river.

Seventy mushers and 1200 dogs had gone in front of me, and there was overflow and ice below. Pulling a 75-pound sled didn't help. I threw my hands in front of me to protect my face and felt my left shoulder pop. I had skied 27 miles and was exhausted. As I lay on the ice in the river, it wasn't the potential injury that bothered me so much as the wrath of my wife, Deborah, if I were injured. Before I left, she said, "Listen (give me eye contact Jerry). I don't want any more calls from the Alaska Trooper and Mountain Rescue Group telling me that they are on their way to extract you from some Class V gorge, inaccessible peak or slot canyon and not to worry. You have two teenage sons. You come back in one piece."

"Yes ma'am," I replied. Fortunately my shoulder will heal without an operation.

While in Anvik I stopped by to visit Iditarod HQ and met **Ken Chase** (ANC-67). I had heard he was there, just as I learned that **Pete Snow** (ANC-68) was still in McGrath. Ken raced in the first (1973) Iditarod and 18 thereafter. Twenty years ago the Iditarod race committee was trying to get a trail through from Iditarod to Shageluk and asked Ken to help. He contacted two locals from Flat about breaking trail with their snow machines. They said they would but didn't know the route. Ken led with his Tri-Pacer airplane. There are 13 ridges to cross in this 65-mile section. Ken would fly to a ridge and land so the snow machines could follow. Then he would fly to the next one and land. He continued this until there was a path for the Iditarod mushers.

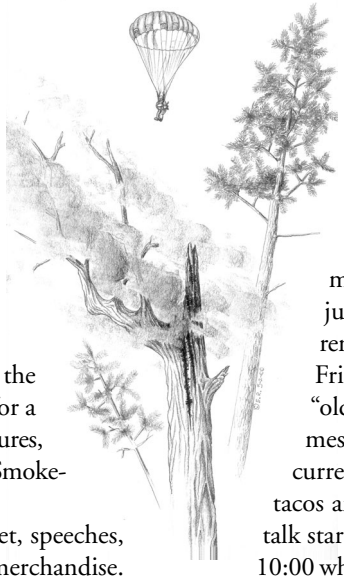
It was terrific spending time with Robert Walker's family in Anvik. Through the vastness of time and the eternity of space, we had met again on the Yukon and the connection was through NSA. I remember well jumping with this dark-haired young man whose people had inhabited this region for thousands of years. On his wall is a striking photo of Robert, **Melvin Walunga** (FBX-70), the first Inupiat jumper, **Freddie Pete** (ANC-71) and **Don Bell** (IDC-69) under a DC-3 in Anchorage. I was interested to find out that nine of the 37 jumpers that trained in Anchorage were Native Americans. I much enjoyed jumping with them and being able to see Alaska through their eyes.

It was so good to see that Robert had lead a full life, raised a family and lived where he could see the wide Yukon flow to the Pacific below the bluff as his people had for 20,000 years. His wife, Julia, invited me to talk to students at Anvik School, where she taught, about our journey.

Robert and I found out that we had both been on the 1967 fire out of Iditarod, and he was the one who had showed the "city boys" how to cook moose on willow sticks. We relived every jump as we ate moose and salmon at his home above the mighty Yukon River.

# Odds and Ends

**by Chuck Sheley**



From **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69) and also co-chairman of the 2007 NSA National Reunion: "Pencil in June 8, 9, 10 of 2007 for the following facilities and services at Boise State University-

—The 'Lookout' room in the Student Union Building (SUB) for Friday the 8th from noon on and all day Saturday. This will be our constantly staffed, registration/check-in place.

—The patio and soccer field out back of the SUB for Friday afternoon and night. Plan is for a catered Bar B-Q with kegs, individual base pictures, vendors, and possible jump-in by Boise BLM Smokejumpers.

—The Pavilion for Saturday night banquet, speeches, recognitions, audio visual presentations and merchandise. This will be the biggest gathering of the weekend. Right now we're planning for 1500 people, knowing that the facility can handle an increase.

—Reservation of an undetermined amount of student residential rooms, adult lodgings, and suites for very reasonable rates. All are on campus and recently constructed and renovated.

—Jordan Ballroom in the SUB for Sunday morning MemorialService.

As you can see, it's all on BSU campus. We feel that this central location for the main events will make for a maximum of visiting, connecting, remembering and smooth execution of events".

Mark your calendars now. This looks potentially to be one of the best ever reunions. Everything from lodging to meals in one place.

NSA member **Paul Dominick** (CJ-51) passed away last July. We received the following submission to our website recently from Paul's daughter, Ann Marie Elethorp: "I was recently looking for information to assist my son 'Paul' with a WW II questionnaire for school when I stumbled upon my father's obituary. My father was a very important part of my life and I miss him dearly. He always shared his stories about the smokejumpers, 82nd Airborne, Naval Seabees etc. with such pride and patriotism. My dad helped my two daughters with their WW II project and my son eagerly awaited his chance. Sadly he lost his grandfather and never had the opportunity to hear more about his endeavors protecting his nation, friends and family. I wanted to take this time to thank you for being a part of my father's life."

**Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) is the keeper of the Cave Junction records and sent along this statistic: From 1943 through 1981 the Gobi jumpers jumped 1,945 fires with 6,259 fire jumps averaging just over three jumpers per fire. A pretty efficient use of jumpers. Since the closing of the base, the Siskiyou has suffered some of the most costly fires in history.

I just got back from the April 30, 2005 NSA Board meeting and social in Redding. One of my goals for the social was to get a mixing of the jumper generations by really encouraging the current jumpers to attend. When I left for Redding early Friday morning, I had 48 RSVPs composed of our "older" jumpers. My spirits went up when I got a message from **Don Sand** (RDD-79) that 20 of the current jumpers would attend. When we got down to tacos and beer last night we had 92 in attendance. The talk started about 6:00 p.m. and was still going well after 10:00 when I left. It was gratifying to see **Tye Erwin** (RDD-02) engrossed in conversation with **Bill Green** (MSO-45). That is a mixing of generations! The younger guys had a chance to hear from Redding legends **Dick Tracy** (MSO-53) and **Bob Kersh.** I've never felt better about a regional social that we've sponsored. It was truly an example of what the NSA is about.

**Steve Vittum** (MSO-71): "My wife, Cheryl, and I have moved. I retired as Deputy Fire Chief of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department in March of '05 and am moving to Colorado to enjoy the Rockies. Thank you for all the time and great work you (and others) put into the magazine, I enjoy reading through it immensely. It is a privilege to have been part of a program with so many incredible men and women." Good luck to you and Cheryl in your new home in Buena Vista, Colorado.

**Cindy (Wallace) Super** (MSO-98): "I'm still in the Army and currently in the Big Sandy (Baghdad, to be specific). This has been one of the strangest experiences of my life. I'm on the outskirts of one of the most dangerous and violent cities in the world, but I have three computers and work in a palace. By the way, my little brother (Cort) is working again for GAC this year and I still keep in touch with a couple of the folks in MSO."

**Hal Weinmann** (NCSB-47) and **Tom Kovalicky** (MSO-61) passed along an article in *Ruralite* magazine in the May 2005 issue in which **Troop Emonds** (CJ-66) and his firefighting tools are featured.

One of the feature articles in this issue is a remembrance of **Rollo (Julie) Julander** (MSO-50) written by **Bill Buck** (CJ-53). **Bill Fogarty** (MSO-57) was handling the editing job on this piece and contacted the family to clarify some details. Here is a touching email to Bill from Jes Julander (daughter of Rollo): "It is quite an honor that Mr. Buck

wants to remember my father by sending in an article about him. I must admit that I am eager to learn anything I can about him as he passed away when I was only 3 years old and I have no memories of him. Most information about my dad has come only from random comments, sometimes spread years apart. This past weekend, mom told me and my other siblings about the article Mr. Buck had written. Since my mom held him so dear, she has kept almost everything safely tucked away. With her help, we soon found employment records, job applications, and even the wallet he had with him when he was killed. I learned more about my father in those few short hours than I have in the nearly 34 years it has been since his death. I also appreciated the information that Mr. Buck knew. It is obvious that he knows much more about my father than I do.

Anyway, thank you for giving me, personally, and my family the opportunity to learn and remember."

From **Niki Price** (Associate): "I love getting the magazine and had a great time at last year's reunion. My dad, **Glenn Hale** (MYC-57), is still going strong, post-bone marrow transplant. He might be headed to the 2006 Reunion."

Got a note from **Jim "Smokey"Alexander** (MSO-40) who recently moved to Meridian, Idaho. He attended a dedication of a statue honoring wildland firefighters held at the Boise Airport. One of the speakers was Cecil Andrus, former Idaho Governor and Secretary of the Interior under President Carter.

"Cece and I go way back. They took my picture with him." Hope to have it in the magazine when it arrives.

**Jerry Dixon** (MYC-71) about memorial to Mark Westover, Alaska firefighter killed in 1969: " This photo (is) of (the) memorial to fallen firefighter Mark Westover. I was on that fire waiting for the helicopter when it crashed. Over the past 10 years, I have worked with three District Rangers to get this (memorial) up. The dedication was June 3rd." Jerry also enclosed a photo showing **Woodie Salmon** (FBX-73), who is now an Alaska State Legislator.

The *Eugene Register-Guard* featured **David Atkins** (CJ-70) in a great profile article in the May 4, 2005 issue. Dave is an attorney dealing solely with non-profit organizations and has about 750 clients scattered over the world. "I have the narrowest niche of any law office in the state. But if I wasn't doing this kind of law, I probably wouldn't be doing law at all."

**Darwin Miller** (CJ-51) is recovering from open-heart surgery (May) and returned for further surgery later that month. Best wishes for a good recovery.

The 1969 Missoula rookie class is well represented in the Montana House of Representatives. **Robin Hamilton** and **Harry Klock** both just finished their first terms. Elect a smokejumper! Keep it up guys.

**Stan "Clancy" Collins** (MYC-67) has to be proud of his daughters, Emily and Elena. Both girls were on the 4 x 400M relay team that won the last event of the state track and field championships to bring the Oregon 3A title to Marist High School (Eugene, Oregon).

My wife and I were the guests of **Lee Gossett** (RDD-57) at the Air America Reunion in Reno, Nevada, June 2nd and 3rd. Had a chance to meet some of the jumpers that I had heard about and also some old friends. Visited with **Cliff Hamilton** (CJ-62), **Barry Reed** (MSO-60), **Jack Cahill** (MSO-58), **Bob Herald** (MSO-55), **Gene Hamner** (MSO-67), **Ken Hessel** (MYC-58), **Shep Johnson** (MYC-56), **Dave Towers** (CJ-60), **Pete Landis** (CJ-62) and **TJ Thompson** (MSO-55).

More on **Woody Salmon** (FBX-73) from **Jerry Dixon** (MYC-71):

"Woody has been on the front page of the Anchorage Daily News three times in the last month. He just got $105 million for his district. He has 95 villages spread out from Aniak to Bettles and from Holy Cross to Eagle. He flew to 90 of them in this own plane while campaigning. There have been smokejumpers helping him across Alaska including Robert Walker in Anvik. I intend to campaign for him in Eagle where I have my log cabin."

**Karl Brauneis'** (MSO-77) son Keith participated in the Wyoming All Star Shrine Bowl game (football) in Cody. Keith's North team won the game10-0. Keith will be attending Wyoming this fall and playing for the Cowboys.

From **Don Mathis** (MSO-56): "Chuck-The image of a tough talking, go to hell type, hard drinking, lying SOB smokejumper was shattered by your inspiring editorial in the last issue of "Smokejumper," and it was refreshing to read of the service you performed not only for the people of a less prosperous community, but also for a troop of American teens. They will remember the experience for the rest of their lives.

I have spent six years of my life blending in with European cultures and have at times wanted to crawl under a rock with the shame I felt at the behavior of some of my countrymen. The "Ugly American" syndrome is all too often exhibited by those who don't take the time to observe and appreciate a different language and culture. There was a time I organized a youth conference of Bulgarian teens

in a country poorer than Mexico where the creature comforts we enjoy are scarce to non-existent. Their evaluations of the conference were telling. They wanted to do more in the way of service projects for their countrymen when they themselves had little more that willing hearts and hands. It was refreshing to read that you are the "good shepherd" of American youth who have this same characteristic.

My faith in the future has been strengthened by your insightful article. Keep up the good work and counsel those youth that being different doesn't mean being inferior."

**Gordon Kellog** (CJ-57) says he's making a comeback after being laid up for three months last winter due to a fall. Gordy batted .703 for the Rosemere Tavern (Oregon) Senior Softball team that won the 65 and up AA Senior Softball Championships last summer. He's anxious to begin the 2005 season after playing 60 games in 2004.

**Ed Johnson** (MSO-48): "I just finished reading the July issue of the magazine cover to cover. Congratulations on another great issue!

You do a brilliant job as editor and each issue seems to be more interesting and successful than the last. Keep up the great work. As editor, you are holding the association together more closely and deserve a medal of recognition for outstanding work! I've heard from several jumpers of the classes of 1951 and 52. I even heard from both **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) and **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41). Earl and his wife are still going strong. Earl is now 93 years old. Fred refers to every jumper who ever lived as "my boys."

Heard from **Starrr Jenkins** (CJ-48) who just celebrated his 80th birthday. He and his wife, Stella, are living in Pismo Beach, California.

**Phil Clarke** (CJ-51) forwarded a couple good newspaper articles concerning the effort to save the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base at Cave Junction, Oregon. Since the base closed in 1982, the airport has been taken over by Josephine County. When the county changed the airport from a "utility" airport to a "greater than utility" airport in the early 90s, the implications that went with that change were not well known. Currently there are plans to cut the trees that surround the old crew house and some of the base buildings could be torn down. The parachute loft is considered the oldest building of its type in the nation. Associate member **Roger Brandt** is heading up the effort to have the remaining buildings designated as a national historic site. Roger is an amazing person who has put endless hours into this project. If it is not successful, another piece of smokejumper history will disappear.

**Greg Whipple** (MSO-59): "Just received my latest copy of Smokejumper and felt compelled to let you know that I think you have the finest publication on the planet. It is my guess that that has to be a labor of love, otherwise you would be elsewhere in the blink of an eye." Thanks Greg.

**Doug Gochnou** (NIFC-74) is the District Ranger in Idaho City, Boise N. F. and wanted to let us know that the Idaho City Museum has allocated space for a permanent Forest Service display. Part of the display will feature the history of smokejumping at the Idaho City Base. Kitty Egurrola (Sunset lookout) is creating the display and would be interested in any old photos, notes or souvenirs. Also, they are looking for a cheap (free?) mannequin that will be used to display an old jump suit. Kitty can be reached at 208-392-6623 and Doug at 208-392-6681. Next summer, stop by the museum and check out the new smokejumper display. Doug also mentioned that he walks the trail around the Idaho City airport most evenings with his wife and golden retriever, and he often reflects on how neat it is to be trusted with managing an important piece of smokejumper history.

**Brent A. Smith** (RAC-78): "I returned from deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in January 2005. I spent about seven months there in the Bagram Air Base area. I spent 10 years on active duty in the US Army and continue to wear a uniform as a US Army Reservist. I was unaware that Butch Hammer was there until his aircraft went down. The search and rescue operation that ensued to try and find Butch and those on board was heroic and many people risked their lives trying to get to the crash site as soon as possible. Butch died in the service of his country in this war against terror. I rookied at RAC in 78, jumped at MSO 79-83 and NCSB 85.

I currently live in Benton, LA (Northwestern Louisiana) and am an Emergency Medicine physician. Just wanted to pass on my condolences to Butches family and say hello all."

Mary Norton, wife of **David Norton** (MSO-50): " My husband died 10 years ago on July 25, 1995. He was a professor of philosophy at the University of Delaware. He wrote of his smokejumper experience in his book *Democracy and Moral Development*. Of all the many things he did in his life, it was his experience of being a smokejumper that he was proudest of and that he said marked his life most positively."

**Cecil Hicks** (NCSB-62): "I always enjoy getting and reading Smokejumper magazine. I retired from elementary school teaching (4th grade) this past year and am busy enjoying life, working with home building projects, visits from our grown kids (Maureen and I have five and eight grandchildren), a little golfing, and writing freelance magazine articles part time and working on a children's book. We live in Sandpoint, Idaho.

"After spending 16 seasons with the U.S. Forest Service and BLM, I then spent a few years managing a microfilm business in Alaska and then six years as a reporter and editor for weekly newspapers in Alaska and Idaho before getting my teaching degree.

"Anyway, I have a little comment about Tommy Albert's 'Can Do!' article (July 2005 Smokejumper). I was on that helicopter and was the next person scheduled to rappel and watched Dave Liebersbach fall after his rappelling apparatus came apart. As I recall, not too many jumpers were overly enthusiastic about repelling and becoming helitack crew members. It was a pleasure to read the article on Dave's highly successful career after recovery from the rappelling accident and now taking on the director's job of the National Emergency Management Association."

# Recipe for A Smokejumper Gathering

**by Carl Gidlund** (Missoula '58)

We didn't know what to call it; it certainly wasn't a reunion, so we settled on the rather bland "Smokejumper Gathering."

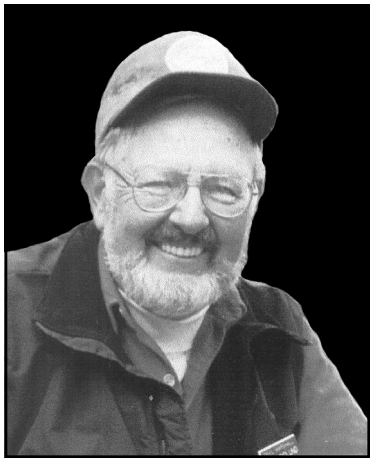
But it was grand. On June 3, 2005, about 80 jumpers and their spouses from Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Western Montana – plus a stray from Arizona – convened at Templin's Resort Hotel on the shores of the Spokane River in Post Falls, Idaho, for an evening of fun.

Planning for the event began about three months prior, with meetings of the Missoula jumper organizers **Bob Sallee** ('49), **Fred "Fritz" Wolfrum** ('53), **Fred Ebel** ('57) and me. We modeled it on a smaller one we'd put together five years ago at the same resort.

Initially, we planned on offering a buffet dinner, but after learning that the cheapest served by the resort would be $23, we decided that would keep away potential guests when we added in the other costs. So, we elected to set up a cash bar in our meeting room, and warned invitees that they should eat before the event began at 6:30.

The party room we reserved would hold 75 so, using a formula developed by the NSA board for inviting guests to their after-meeting socials, we decided we would send about 600 invitations to fill the room. We asked **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63) to send us the addresses of those jumpers who live within about 200 miles of Post Falls. Ultimately, he came up with 570 names. When the replies came back, the guest list included jumpers from Missoula, North Cascades, Nine Mile, Idaho City, Cave Junction, Fairbanks, McCall and Grangeville, plus several pilots and associate members.

Our expenses up to that point were $75.41 for room rent, $328.82 for printing and $116.89 for postage. We decided that $9 per person would cover our expenses and that's what we asked. When the replies were in, we discovered we would have about $200 extra, so we purchased $200 worth of hors d'oeuvres. After the event, when we tallied receipts and expenses, we found we came out $2 ahead, seed money for our next gathering!



*Carl Gidlund (NSA file)*

It was a very unstructured event: Garrulous Fritz was the master of ceremonies, and he began by asking everyone in the room for self-introductions. Following that, he told a few anecdotes, then NSA Trails Coordinator **Jon McBride** (MSO-54) made a short recruiting pitch.

The rest of the evening was devoted to schmoozing with old friends and meeting new ones, the only "entertainment" being a television in the corner on which we played the historic smokejumper video.

Here's what a couple of old jumpers had to say:

· **Ron Fritsch** (MSO-63): "I had a great time. It was good to see old friends and fellow jumpers. I look forward to the next time we get together for an informal event such as this. I'm hoping more Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho folks will show up next time."

· **Henry "Hank" Jones** (MSO-53): "I enjoyed the informal gathering. It was small enough to get to talk to several folks, close enough to get to and inexpensive enough to afford."

By the way: The cash bar would remain in the room only if the bartender sold at least $150 worth of liquor the first hour and $75 each hour thereafter. For what it's worth, she was still pouring when we broke up at 11!

# Julie

**by Bill Buck** (Cave Junction '53)

It was a hot, dry, windy day in mid-June 1971. For the last few days the entire length of the Mogollon Rim across Arizona and New Mexico had been riddled by dry lightning strikes. Regional overhead teams, national forest overhead teams, sector teams, air tankers, helitack crews, ground tankers, Indian fire fighting crews and even out-of-region personnel were all scrambling. Our Apache National Forest team was on a fire below the rim on the Tonto National Forest at the time. The forest-net radios had been "squelching out," but in the middle of the din there was a mid-day

quiet and a chilling announcement: "Julie was dead." Julie had just left us and transferred to the Flagstaff Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. He didn't even have time to unpack his bag. How could this be?

**Rollo (Julie) Julander** (MSO-50) was killed in the crash of a Cessna 182 while flying air attack on his new district near Little Round Mountain. There was much speculation over the cause of the accident: the plane could have vapor locked flying in tight circles or perhaps the pilot failed to switch to a reserve fuel tank. We may never know why the incident occurred, but we do know the results. I am writing this now because Julie needs to be remembered.

I knew of Julie long before I really got to know him. Everyone called him "Julie," a big man with a heart as big as his gnarly hands. He was so quiet sometimes he seemed invisible. A product of the "old corps," you'd seldom see him in the boss's office unless he was told to be there. He had a ready smile, a shiny face and was nearly always in a clean but rumpled field uniform. We first met in 1959. He was a Ranger on the Prescott National Forest and I was Assistant Ranger on a neighboring forest. We met again in 1968 when I transferred to the Apache National Forest. Julie was the Ranger on the Alpine District and probably had the heaviest work load in Region 3. His office headquartered both the Alpine and Black River Districts, and he was responsible for the largest timber program in R-3 as well as the Alpine Job Corps. None of this seemed to slow him down. He'd go about his job without fanfare: quiet and unassuming, always the consummate professional. He was a "Class One" line boss when "Class One" meant something more than the watered-down version of today's classification system. It was a joy to watch him work a fire.

Only a year before the accident, Julie and his son Tim had driven my pilot and me back to town. We were low on gas and had landed at an unauthorized landing strip. During the trip I learned more about my friend, Julie. He started smokejumping in Missoula during the summer of 1950. He was recalled to active duty in September of that year and served as a rifleman in the Marines. He was part of the rear guard of the First Division as they fought their way out of the frozen hell known as the Chosen Reservoir. He returned to jump in Missoula in 1952.

A couple of years after the tragedy, Mrs. Bonnie Julander stopped at our office to tell us she was not going to pursue any lawsuits. She felt Julie had left her and their children more than enough. That, too, was Class One.

*Bill Buck can be reached at 861 Washington St., Traverse City, MI 49686.*

# It's a Long Way to CJ

**By Larry Peters** (Cave Junction '63)

During the summer of 1965, I jumped my first season out of Alaska. The previous two years I had jumped out of Cave Junction. We had a great fire season that year until the early rains came in late July. I had nothing to do for a month until school started, so I asked my brother, **Garry** (CJ-63), a squad leader at CJ, to talk to **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) and see if I could finish out the season there. Jim said that wouldn't be a problem. The night I left Fairbanks, the remaining jumpers and I celebrated my departure at the International bar. Consequently they poured me on a Pan Am flight out of Fairbanks at one o'clock in the morning. Back then, there was a three-hour time change between Fairbanks and Seattle, so I arrived in Seattle at about 0800 the next morning. From there I was scheduled to depart on a West Coast Airlines commuter at 1200 that would arrive in Medford about 1500 that afternoon. Since I had a four-hour layover in Seattle, I called **Pete Landis** (CJ-62), our former fantastic first baseman, and had him come down and join me for a few beers. The time flew by and before I knew it, it was almost noon. I ran down to the gate just as the plane was taxiing out. I asked the agent to stop it, and he replied that an act of congress couldn't stop that airplane. The next flight to Medford was the milk run at 1800 that stopped in every small town on its way to Medford (six more hours in Seattle). Pete was nice enough to stay around, helped me down a few more and made sure I made my flight. Due to a few too many beers and no sleep, it didn't take long to fall asleep, even in those hard seats of an F-27. When I woke up, I heard the flight attendant say to fasten your seat belts in preparation for a landing in Klamath Falls. I asked her when we were going to land in Medford, and she said that they had already landed there and had taken off again. It's a good thing I woke up when I did or I would have been on my way to San Francisco. By the time we landed in Klamath, it was about 2200, so I hitchhiked to the Greyhound bus station. They didn't have a bus leaving to Cave Junction until the next morning, so I decided to hitchhike the rest of the way. I lucked out and got picked up right away. The guy said that he would take me all the way to Cave Junction, but he wanted to stop by his house first. I said OK and thought what a break, not many cars would be crossing over the Green Springs at midnight. (Green Springs is a very windy road with some very steep cliffs that cross over the mountains to Medford). As we were driving, he

*Practice Jump CJ airstrip in background. (Courtesy Al Boucher)*

asked me to look in a sack that he had in the back seat. I did and it was full of women's underclothing. He said, "I wear those," and I thought that this might be a little longer trip than I had hoped. As luck would have it, he asked if I'd like to stop and he'd buy me a beer. I said sure, but after the beer, I was going to find another ride. This pissed him off, and he said I would never find another ride over the Green Springs at this time of night. He was wrong, but it took me a couple of hours to catch a ride. Compared to the guy that picked me up, I was stone sober. Fortunately, he said he was quite drunk and asked if I wanted to drive. I drove for about five miles, but I guess he didn't like my driving because he wanted to drive again. The rest of the trip was quite eventful. I think we covered every inch of both sides of the road, and a couple of times I thought I would have to jump before going over the edge. He dropped me off at the Medford Airport to get my bags, but the airport was closed. I hitched another ride to Cave Junction and arrived at 0745 to start work at 0800. I was glad they didn't put me on the Gobi that day picking up Gobi stones.

# Items from the Fire Pack

## The 1941 Season

In 1941, **Dick Lynch** (MSO-40) took a crew of eight jumpers to Big Prairie R.S. with **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) as rigger. The remaining 10 jumpers were stationed at the old CC camp at Nine Mile with **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40), **George Honey** (NCSB-40) and **Glenn Smith** (NCSB-40), who had come over for the summer from R-6.

**Earl Cooley** (Missoula '40)

## Eagles Converted to Static Lines

During the winter of 1940-41, all the Eagle parachutes were converted to static lines. In the early spring, the Forest Service put on a rigger's course in the old Park Hotel. I got excused from the last ten days of school from the University to attend the training. Jim Waite, Francis Lufkin and I took the training. I graduated from the School of Forestry on June 6th, got married on June 8th and left for Moose creek with a crew of jumpers shortly after.

**Earl Cooley** (Missoula '40)

## A River Runs Through It

Our camp at Big Prairie was so isolated that it was 30 miles to the nearest road. As you can imagine, it was necessary to develop some extra interests for the off-duty hours. Running through this beautiful valley, just outside our cabin door, was a very cold mountain stream. Our group was made up of about a dozen fellows. One of these men was **Hubert Blackwell** (MSO-43), a outdoors type who grew up in the woods of Michigan. He was a real hunter and fisherman. When I saw him fly fishing, I soon became a strong follower of Hubert's expertise. He was happy to help me through the early stages of learning the art. The rainbows were so abundant that we would tie two flies on our line and, most always, bring in two trout with one cast. I have never found a fishing place that good in the fifty years since the summer of 1943.

**Vern Hoffman** (Missoula '43)

## It Was A Good Day

The call came in for two jumpers for a fire near Wahoo Peak. An ex-marine and I suited up and headed out with **Al Cramer** (MSO-43) as the spotter. The fire was on a narrow ridge and none of the test chutes found the mark. Al told us there would be no more test chutes and that we would have to do the best we could. The ex-marine hit the ridge and I sailed just over it and landed in a tree. During the night it snowed several inches. We hiked out 18 miles and saw three bull elk. It was my 21st birthday and very enjoyable. I couldn't have had a better partner than the ex-marine whose name I no longer remember.

**Marshall Jensen** (Missoula '44)

## First Sack Race

It was my first fire jump in 1945. They jumped 50 paratroopers (555th) to assist when the fire got away. We had been out on the fire line all day and came back late. Our sleeping bags had been spread out all day. One of the paratroopers had just got back into his bag when he felt something wiggling. A rattlesnake had crawled under his bag while he was working during the day. The man got up and let out a yell that could have been heard a quarter mile away and took off running in the sleeping bag. I have never seen anybody before, or since, who could run in a sleeping bag, but he went at least 50 yards before he lost it.

**Dr. David Kauffman** (Missoula '45)

### Fishes and Loaves Miracle-No!

We had a 70-person group to be fed daily by a single USFS cook. **Roy Wenger** assigned 2-man teams to relieve the cook once a week. We arrived at the kitchen about 2:30 to see the cook lounging. When we questioned him as to what we could use for dinner, he replied, "You can use anything available." Then he ambled away. A quick inspection found only a 3-pound bone with meat scraps, a sack of potatoes, carrots, onions, bread and a can of coffee. As we stood in shock, the cook reappeared. "How could this happen? We can't make dinner for 70 people out of this," we said. "It's all we got," he muttered and left the building. Could he be determined to show these religious objectors they couldn't repeat the miracle of the loaves and fishes? Or was he also a victim?

Reviewing what we had, I proposed that we serve a meal of soup and toast. One of my mother's most popular dishes was beef vegetable soup. We found a large 20-gallon pot, brought water to a boil, dropped in the bone and hoped that we could get a useable beef stock. We added potatoes, carrots and onions and by 5:00 early arrivals were on hand. By 5:30, the grumblings began to arise. By 6:00, sounding like a mutiny was in the offing, we gave them the facts on our "surprise" dinner. At 6:30 we served and they were hungry enough to eat anything, consuming about a quart per person. Surprisingly they didn't criticize us and complimented us on the soup. The cook was unseen at dinner.

**Norman Kriebel** (Missoula '43)

## Forget the Parachute

It was my luck to be chosen to make a ripcord jump to demonstrate for several USFS officers how to get out of a disabled plane. The experience of jumping out of a plane with the door in place was new to me. Each time I opened the door, it was

blown shut again before I could get out. Finally, after three more passes, I found my backpack (chute) was too high for the door, but I finally crawled out successfully. **Frank Derry** told me afterward that he was about to suggest that I take off the parachute.

**William Laughlin** (Cave Junction '43)

### Escape Fires

In reading Maclean's account of the Mann Gulch Fire, I was reminded of the only fire I was on which blew up and got away. It was in the Salmon River (country) and blew up to over 3,000 acres. We had over 100 firefighters on it including several planeloads of the 555th paratroopers. They landed complete with cooks, and it was the best food that I've ever had on a fire.

Maclean said on page 105 that, "There are still good grounds, however, to believe that Dodge 'invented his escape fire'." Although we never practiced it, we knew of burning out the nearest clearing as the escape of last resort when trapped by a fire. We were told, if possible, to use our canvas jump jackets or tarpaulins to cover ourselves as further protection while the main fire passed.

**Wallace "Pic" Littell** (Missoula '44)

# The Last Ford Jump?

**by Denis Symes** (McCall '63)

The Ford Tri-motor was a stalwart in smokejumper transportation for over a quarter century. A real workhorse, the Ford was equally at home in backcountry airstrips and commercial airports. The plane was retired at the end of the 1962 fire season and replaced with DC-3's and other WWII veterans.

While working on the Dixie Ranger District in Idaho's NezPerce National Forest in 1962, a Tri-motor carrying jumpers from Grangeville landed at the airstrip. They were on fire patrol and landed for a break. I took a number of great photos of the plane and watched as it lumbered down the dirt strip, climbed for altitude and then made a sharp right turn to continue following the creek bed and avoid the mountain at the end of the runway. Man, that sight clinched my decision as to next summer's job!

In1963, I was accepted for jumper training at McCall. Our planes included a Douglas C-47 (DC-3), and two Beechcrafts, a C-45 and an AT-11. The AT-11 was a WWII modification of the C-45 for training bombardiers. The plane had a large Plexiglass nose cone for the bombardier trainee's station. With the Ford's retirement in 1962, I missed jumping it by one season, with lots of regrets.

Toward the end of June 1963, 16 McCall jumpers were sent to Missoula to backfill after a fire bust emptied their roster. Unfortunately, the bust was short-lived and we were not needed. Just before we returned to McCall, several senior Missoula jumpers returned from an early-season forest work detail needing their annual refresher jumps. The Ford was rolled out and they loaded into the plane. I snapped the accompanying photograph wishing that I could have been on the plane.

I recall our Johnson Flying Service C-47 pilot (Swede Nelson) saying that this refresher flight would probably be the Ford's last jumper flight, as the plane was history. I do not know who the jumpers were, but I've envied them for the past 40 years.

*Denis Symes can be reached at 9504 Rockport Rd., Vienna, VA 22180 or at denissymes@verizon.net*

*Missoula 1963 (Courtesy D.Symes)*

# Psychology of a Smokejumper

**by Hal Werner** (North Cascades '48)

What I read in an NSA jump list section about the compilation of information regarding the chronological history of Smokejumpers from early days to the present, I was struck with the thought, "What type of a person applies to become a smokejumper?" After reading through the many bios of the jumpers who were trained and stationed at each base, I have come to the conclusion that those individuals who voluntarily decided to take on the task of becoming a firefighter, who flew to remote fires and parachuted from various types of low-flying aircraft into mountainous terrain were, indeed, rather unique personalities.

Remembering my own early contact with the individuals who were training for the 1948 fire season at Inter-City Airport (later became NCSB), I have vivid memories about the type of people with whom I was training. There were twenty-one new rookies seeking to become smokejumpers in 1948. The weather that season began rather spectacularly. An exceptionally large snow pack in the Cascades began an early meltdown, which released a gigantic volume of water into the watersheds of the Pacific Northwest. It became a rampaging flood-driven body of water as it flowed through the state of Washington on the way to the Pacific Ocean. The Methow River, that ran by the base, became a raging torrent that was awesome to behold.

At the height of the time when the flood-swollen Methow River was boiling over and passed the river bridge in Winthrop, most people were afraid to venture out onto the span for fear it might break up at any time. I had purchased a five-man rubber raft from a surplus store and had anchored it along the riverbank. **Herb Bartlett** (NCSB-46) said, "Hey man, let's run the river from Winthrop to Twisp!" Without giving it a second thought, several of us loaded up the raft and proceeded to launch the craft off the bridge in front of a crowd of people who were shaking their heads. Well, the ride down that stretch of whitewater river was indeed quite a thrilling experience. Apart from being completely drenched, we finished the river section in good shape

I learned that year how versatile the smokejumper unit could be. Instead of hiring a construction company to come and rebuild the base buildings that were destroyed by the flooding river, **Francis Lufkin** NCSB-40) and the squad leaders led the other jumpers in completing the re-construction of the base. This attitude of being able to solve any problem and to improve the given situation has permeated the smokejumper organization throughout the years. I was impressed with the self-sufficiency of the unit and the philosophy of "making something better." This attitude stood me in good stead during my four years spent in the US Air Force as a Survival Instructor.

I witnessed firsthand how competitive those individuals were and how much pride they had. Our softball squad that played in the Valley League had to be disbanded because of the "all-out" effort by the jumpers resulting in collisions with opposing players. Hard to justify a sprained ankle or separated shoulder to the base foreman when not done in the line of duty.

The "jump pot" for the final rookie training jump became quite a prize when all 21 rookies put up $10 apiece. The pot would be claimed by the jumper landing closest to a smudge fire placed in a circle of trees in a timbered area. I was scheduled to be in the last stick of the morning and listened to the results of previous landings. One jumper had actually dropped into the tree circle, where the smudge fire was built, and had landed within 50 feet of the fire. Most of the other jumpers had "hung up," as was expected.

By the time my flight was over the target, the wind had picked up. The opening shock of my main chute brought me back to the reality of the task at hand. After determining which way the ground smoke was drifting from the smudge fire, I developed my plan of attack. Approaching the spot, I had to virtually lift my legs to clear the tops of some second growth trees and then plummeted into the fire circle. I will never forget hearing those shouts from the group of people assembled below. "Holy S—t, look out! Here he comes!!" They scattered like chickens as I hit the ground and rolled across the fire. I bought the beer that night.

Jim Campbell was interested in buying his own aircraft, and one spring day he asked me if I wanted to go up with him to check out a Cessna 180. We took off at dawn so as to be able to get a flight in before reporting for work at 7:30 a.m. After climbing to 15,000 feet we found ourselves high up over the backcountry of Lake Chelan. Suddenly the prop stopped turning! Jim made a few shallow dives to restart the engine, but then said, "Wow, I forgot to turn on the carburetor heat. We'll have to set down somewhere. Look out your side, and see if you can spot a meadow where we can land." After scanning the land below, I replied, "There is nothing on my side, Jim, but cliffs and trees."

We headed back toward Methow Valley in a dead-stick floating maneuver, like a leaf falling from side to side. As we got lower to the ground, we spotted a high alpine meadow and headed for it. Surrounding the meadow was a grove of coniferous trees that we had to negotiate before having a path to the meadow proper. Preparing for the impact, I had cinched my seatbelt up tight and braced my legs up on the instrument panel. After clearing the trees, we literally floated across that small meadow. Seeing the approaching trees at the other end of the meadow looming up, I shouted, "Jim, those trees!" I will always be indebted to Jim for his actions in those last split seconds before impact, for he managed to lift the wing up enough for clearance as we side-slipped into the ground with a resound-

*Hal Werner (NSA file)*

ing crunching sound. Luckily for us, the meadow was mushy with early spring runoff water absorbing most of the force of the impact. The only injuries we suffered were a cut to my hand and a cut to Jim's neck and face as his head hit the instrument panel during impact. After scrambling out of the crumpled fuselage, we examined the damage and then Jim made a joking remark, "Now we know what is meant when they say any landing where you can walk away is a good landing!!" That comment sent us into peals of nervous laughter. I realized then that both of us had never, at any time during the crisis, exhibited a sense of panic but had coolly concentrated on actions that would solve the problem. That experience proved to me that when faced with a life-threatening situation, I would not see my life's history-memory flash before my mind's eye, but would remain calm and try to analyze the situation in order to do what I could to find a solution. That summer was the last time I saw Jim Campbell alive for I enlisted in the Air Force. I learned that Jim and his family had all died in a fatal aircraft accident in the Midwest.

Other memories from those early years remain with me as I head in to the 21st century. I recall sitting around with some jumpers in the loft, where we usually gathered during our break time, and discussing what we might be in 50 years. We all expressed the hope of accomplishing something noteworthy in the future. I remember the respect I had for the squad leaders when I was an 18 year-old rookie, and how they seemed to be so confident and self-assured. Some, like **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46), were veterans from World War II, who served as a role model of dependability. Jim later went on to become the base manager at Cave Junction for a number of years and then headed up the Redmond Base after that. I always felt a special kinship with Jim and his wife, Emily.

I can still vividly recall my first fire jump that initial year of 1948. We had just finished eating an enormous meal, and I was ready for the dessert of lemon meringue pie. Just as I was finishing my fourth piece of pie, the jangle of the fire bell sent us running for the loft. Upon reaching the administration shack, I heard the words that I had been waiting for since completing my training jumps—"Schmidt and Werner, suit up!" **Carl Schmidt** (NCSB-48) was a local boy and I was born and raised just 90 miles from Winthrop. I recall thinking to myself, "This is just like getting ready for an athletic contest." The excitement and anticipation of getting into action was a real high.

After donning our heavy canvas jumpsuits we climbed into that stubby, high-winged monoplane piloted by **Ken Bennish** and droned off toward the high peaks of the Cascade Range. It didn't take long to arrive in the vicinity of Delancey Ridge. The spotter, Jim Allen, was crouched in the doorway, trying to locate the fire. He was using hand signals to indicate to the pilot in which direction to veer so he could get a better view. The motion of the aircraft began to produce a sensation in the back of my throat that I recognized as motion sickness, and I began to sweat profusely. If I had to vomit, I would remove my helmet and use it for a temporary receptacle, for I didn't want to foul the aircraft floor. About that time Jim spotted the fire and threw out the drift chutes. I had no desire to watch the progress of the drift chutes, but was determined to keep my stomach from retching up its contents. As Jim turned to me and raised his hand in a signal to take the position in the doorway, I literally slid across the floor and had one leg out on the middle platform, all in one motion. I heard the motor being cut, glanced back at Jim who had a big smile on his face. I swear he shouted, "Don't forget to write," then he slapped me on the shoulder.

The relief of getting out of that hot aircraft and into the cool alpine air was overwhelming. Delancey Ridge was one of the highest crests along the range of mountains in that vicinity, and my descent seemed more rapid than those during the training jumps. I found myself crashing through the trees, where I hung up about 30 feet off the ground. As I was dangling from a tree, I retrieved the streamers from my leg pocket and began to wave a streamer back and forth, acknowledging that I was fine. Yes, fine, except when my arm flew from side to side, I also began regurgitating each time I waved. There go the mashed potatoes and the chicken and the pie. I vowed never again to gorge myself at meals, especially when I was at the top of the jump list.

Our fire amounted to a big snag that had been struck by lightning and had ignited the surrounding second growth brush. After putting it out, we got ready to depart from the high ridge when a helicopter flew over us and dropped a message that the pilot would be back to pick us up later. Feeling fortunate to be selected to be airlifted off that high, craggy mountain ridge gave us an added incentive to quickly clear a small heliport at the edge of the escarpment. The helicopter returned in a few hours. "I can take one with all your gear on the first trip and the second person on another trip," he yelled. I climbed into the cockpit alongside the pilot, and he did a nose first sideslip down into the mouth of the canyon. This was my first helicopter ride and I thought, "Wow! This is better than the giant roller coaster ride I took once in Seattle." Within a few minutes we were landing in a meadow alongside a forest service truck.

The 1949 fire season was what the jumpers called "rather dismal," but other regions were having normal fire activity. In early August several of us had a request to suit up and be prepared to take off for Montana in Region 1. After sitting in the

aircraft in full jumping gear for some time, we began to wonder about the delay and then learned that that they had decided to send Missoula jumpers to the fire. After deplaning and re-hanging our jumpsuits, one of the jumpers asked a squadleader if he knew the name of the fire that we had missed out on. "Yes," he replied, "it was called the Mann Gulch Fire."

After our fire season was over, **Les Kile** (NCSB-48), **"Gus" Hendrickson** (NCSB-47) and myself were selected to become members of a bridge building crew. The foreman for this project was an old, red-haired trapper by the name of **Harry Tuttle,** whom I learned to respect and admire immensely. Harry and his wife, Florence, were the last persons to be allowed to set up trap lines in the Pasayten Wilderness Area. Harry had been involved in the early experimental jumps made at Winthrop in 1939 when the Derry brothers had come over from Montana. He related how the opening shock of those early Eagle chutes would give him black and blue bruises on his shoulders. I believe that I learned more about the simple things of life and how to make common sense decisions from that non-academic, pragmatic man then from any teacher I had had in my past history.

There was a claim of a man living a hermit's existence in the backcountry and he had not been seen by anyone except by Harry Tuttle. "Gus" Hendrickson, Les Kile and myself were sitting around the table, finishing off one of Florence Tuttle's outstanding meals, when we heard the loud report of a booming gunshot. "There he is," spoke up Harry, "the old man of the mountains, shooting off his black-powder gun. He only fires once, but I'm sure he has his game." Then Harry related the story of how he came to see the shy hermit. One Fall, Harry had come up early to the Pasayten backcountry in order to set up his string of trapping cabins and decided to do some fishing. As he was standing on the riverbank, he was startled by someone who jumped onto the riverbank from an adjacent bluff. Looking up, he found himself staring into the face of an individual who had long flowing hair, a long black beard, and who was dressed in an outfit resembling skins. After staring at each other for some time, Harry raised his open hand and said, "'Lo there!" The stranger whirled around and bolted off into the brush. Harry discovered a homemade fishing pole the man had dropped in his haste to depart from the area. He never saw the man again, but had heard the reports from his gun from time to time. Harry also mentioned that he'd left his own store-bought fishing pole hanging in an obvious place, and after returning to the spot later, saw that it was gone.

One thing I remember about the Pasayten Wilderness country was the feeling that one could roam throughout the entire region and never see another human being. At times I would set out on a trail to explore some new territory and run for several miles, just to feel the exhilaration of being free with no one around. I will always recall the great soothing refreshment of lapping up the water of those cold mountain streams. Once, after jogging over to Big Hidden Lake, I stopped to take a swim. That crystal clear water was exhilarating, and I was surprised to see that a flock of Canadian geese on the nearby bank were not bothered by my presence. This must be the way it was intended to be. Man and beast (bird) coexisting together in perfect harmony, enjoying the benefits of Mother Nature in quiet solitude.

Growing up and fighting forest fires in the Cascade Mountain Range gave me the impression that this environment was rather natural, mundane and not anything out of the ordinary. Now, as I've grown older and have had the opportunity to travel around the world, I realize that the Western US high-timber country is one of the choicest examples of national beauty found anywhere on the planet. I am proud of having been part of a group of smokejumpers that have served to protect and preserve this valuable heritage.

During the 1951 fire season I received a letter from my draft board in Wenatchee informing me that my present status had been changed to 1-A. I had spent the two previous years at a university that afforded me a collegiate draft-deferred status. Now I had to make a decision; finish the fire season and then report for induction into the Army or resign from the smokejumper program and enlist in the Air Force. I joined the Air Force and after the first six weeks in basic training was selected for the new Survival School that the Air Force was organizing. Again a six-week training course qualified me to begin a three-year stint as an enlisted Air Force Survival Instructor. This Survival School became the "number one" military school for teaching Air Crew members survival techniques and escape and evasion tactics.

When my enlistment was terminated in 1955, I returned to the University to pursue a degree in education and in the summer, resume smokejumping. This time I was stationed at Cave Junction, where **Jim Allen** (NSCB-46) was the foreman. Also taking the smokejumping training were three former Survival Instructor friends of mine, whom I had persuaded to train for the 1955 fire season. This was a particularly enjoyable year for me. We were able to incorporate a blending of the mentality of the Survival Instructor's character and the technique of "doing it the smokejumper's way." The similarities of achieving a common success were evident within both groups. This proved to me that a certain type of individual with a unique type of personality would be the one who would accept the responsibility of undertaking an assignment that required unusual physical and mental abilities. In athletic parlance, the term "cream of the crop" seems an appropriate terminology.

**Bill Long** (CJ-55) was an example of this type of individual. Bill also served in the Air Force as a Survival Instructor. While still a member of the Air Force he was selected to be a lead climber in the Californian Himalaya expedition, which made an attempt to scale Mount Makalau (fourth highest in the world) in Nepal. He and **Willi Unsoeld** (CJ-50) climbed to the highest camp on the mountain before being forced to turn back because of extreme weather conditions. A retired glaciologist, Bill is now living on a ranch in Palmer, Alaska.

That fire season of 1955 gave rise to the acquisition of a new nickname, "150 foot Hal." It seems everyone who jumps is, sooner or later, christened with the a moniker. Well, my circumstance began with a fire call from the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in Northern California. After a fairly short flight we were soon circling over the fire and preparing for the jump. The fire was on the upper side of a ridge and surrounded by some of the tallest timber I had ever seen. The spotter, **Orv Looper** (CJ-49), yelled to me that he would try to put us in a

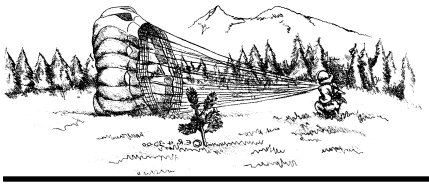
small opening on the ridge above the fire so we could walk downhill to the fire. After clearing the aircraft, I started to maneuver for the small opening in the trees. Suddenly, a huge tree appeared in front of me, and I found myself oscillating back and forth like a yo-yo on the top branches of a huge tree.

After tying off and disconnecting the safety snaps, I began a slow letdown. When I reached the end of the rope, I was still about 30 feet from the ground and had already used up 120 feet of nylon rope. I knew what I had to do—cut loose and free fall to the ground. I banged my feet together and hit the ground and finished off with a good Allen roll. The ground was soft and sloping, which helped to absorb the landing force, and my only injury was a slightly sprained ankle.

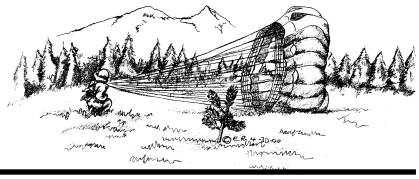
My last fire jump that season was on the Modoc National Forest. After taking that long step into space from the aircraft, I was waiting for that reassuring tug on my shoulders. This jump seemed different from others, in that I seemed to be falling for a longer length of time than usual. I knew something was wrong and saw that the main chute appeared to be tied in a knot. I popped the reserve and came crashing through a grove of second growth timber, hanging up a few feet off the ground.

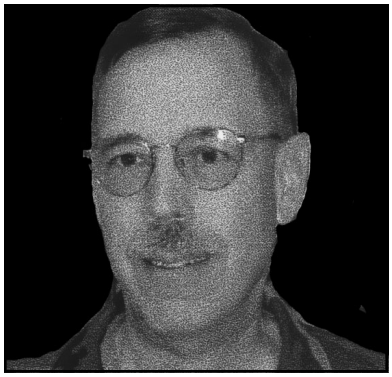
After hiking up to a high point, I could see that my jump partner was still attached to his chute and was lying motionless on the ground beside the canopy. I made my way over to where he was lying and found that he'd suffered an injury to one of his legs. After stabilizing his leg, I laid out streamer signals for injury and the need for a helicopter. The helicopter showed up not long after and evacuated my partner to the nearest hospital. I then directed my attention to the job at hand and put out the fire. When I got back to Redding, my jump partner told me that when he got to the hospital he was told that his leg was set in perfect position. They were able to cast the leg without any further manipulations.

I will always remember that fire season of 1957 and the excitement generated by an extraordinary time of firefighting and jumping. That year was to be the last time I performed as a smokejumper, as I began a teaching and coaching career that has lasted over 40 years and is still continuing. Throughout those six seasons I spent "rubbing elbows" with fellow smokejumpers, I became aware of the spirit of comradeship that has existed in the smokejumper program since its inception and continues up to the present day.



# Checking the Canopy





**by Tom Decker**
(Idaho City '64)

## Walking Trail

FIRE CALLS COME AT all times of the day or night. One day a fire call came late, just before sunset. A lightning strike set a fire. The bosses decided that we needed to walk into the fire, even if it was dark. Since a cloudburst had accompanied the thunderstorm, the trail was dark, wet, and dangerous. On that trek, I learned not to walk too close to the guy in front of me so as to avoid the sharp, wet slaps in the face from the boughs that snapped back as he pushed them out of the way. We never did make it to the fire, and later learned that—as we expected—the rain had put out the fire. We ended up sleeping in the middle of a logging road so as to be found the next morning when our pickup ride came for us.

We all walk trail...wherever we live. And we take our cues from those who go before us. Sometimes we have to go, even when it's inconvenient. Sometimes we're not sure exactly where we'll end up because it seems like we're walking in the dark. We find that some on the trail are considerate while others are thoughtless and careless, letting the unexpected hit us. There are also the crazies, and some we suspect to be headed in the wrong direction. Sometimes they listen; more often than not, they don't. Trails take unexpected twists and lead us to unexpected destinations, sometimes to inevitable dead ends. We trust those who are in the know to pick us up when we need a lift.

We walk the trails of life wherever they lead with a certain amount of trust that there is one who accompanies us in all life's journeys. He's been here before us. He's walked the trails, knows the route, the pitfalls, and the goal. He fears neither the darkness nor those who think they own it. If we take misstep, he sets us on the right track. Even when it's bound to be a dead end, and we're insistent on going that route, he doesn't give up on us. In the end, he brings us out. He keeps his word. We call him the Good Shepherd, not a bad companion for the trails...or the sidewalks of life.

*Colonel Tom Decker recently retired from the U.S. Army and is now a part-time parish pastor at the St. John Lutheran Church in Long Beach, Calif. He can be reached at thomasdecker@verizon.net*

*Mike Durtschi (Courtesy M. Durtschi)*

# Mountain Jumping-Chronicle of An Ex-Smokejumper

**by Mike Durtschi** (Fairbanks '79)

Our Cessna 180 circles over the Chugach Mountains in south central Alaska. The sweeping vistas are stunning with steep snow and ice slopes dropping 5000 feet to the Pacific. We exit the airplane and deploy our ram-air chutes and fly to the summit of a snow-covered peak. We had dropped our skis low level before jumping. One rule in this game is the jump spot is where your skis land. We then get to ski a "pushy" new route above this spectacular fjord that has one of the highest tidal surges in the world. From the time the plane takes off from the little dirt strip in the village of Girdwood, the fun meter is pegged. Fun is what mountain jumping is all about: pure, unadulterated, 100% enjoyment of how, where, and what you are doing.

**Jerry Dixon** (MYC-71) talked to me about writing an article on mountain jumping, as he was fascinated with the descriptions. Jerry, his son, Pyper, and I were sitting down for lunch during a day of skiing at Alyeska resort. I mentioned I'd seen an article in the Anchorage paper Jerry had written about doing first-ski descents in the mountains around Seward. I don't know if it was the reason for instigating the topic, but it certainly dawned on me that if I listened to his stories, there was a chance he would listen to mine. Well, listen he did and so did Pyper, age 10. Just after beginning, Pyper leaned over and whispered to his Dad. When he was done, Jerry laughed and said Pyper wanted to know if his Dad had saved my life like the other guys he had to listen to. Pyper had obviously been subjected to a lot of jump tales and, apparently, Jerry has saved a lot of lives. It was fun talking about mountains, parachutes, and ski runs that day, although not nearly as fun as doing it.

In the late 70s and early 80s, the Fairbanks Smokejumpers were in the process of developing a ram-air parachute system to

# Special Announcement—NSA Vietnam Tour

## When: January, 2007 How Long: 11 days

### Cost: $2,950 per person - Twin sharing hotel room

**Itinerary:**

Day 1 - Depart Seattle EVA Airlines, 747-400, refuel Taipei, Taiwan then Ho-Chi-Minh City (formerly Saigon)
Day 2 - Arrive Ho-Chi-Minh City about noon and rest
Day 3 - Tour re-unification palace (formerly Independence Palace) and War Remnants museum
Day 4 - Tour Cu-Chi tunnels - former bastion of Viet Cong, close to Saigon
Day 5 - Depart to Da-Nang by air, rest, stay Furama Resort on China Beach
Day 6 - Tour Marble Mountain and historic town of Hoi-An near China Beach, another night at Furama Resort
Day 7 - Drive to Hue, cultural capitol of Vietnam via scenic Hai-Van Pass, visit historic Thien-Mu Pagoda
Day 8 - Tour citadel in Hue and old Emperors tombs
Day 9 - Depart for Ho-Chi-Minh City by air
Day 10 - At leisure in Ho-Chi-Minh City
Day 11 - Depart for Seattle via Eva Airline and arrive same day

**Included in cost:**

All airfare both transpacific and in Vietnam
All ground transportation according to tour
All meals - Breakfast, lunch and dinner
All hotels - will be five star hotels in Saigon and Da-Nang and three star hotel in Hue for two nights
Guide service - three guides for 30-person group
Travel insurance to include medical evacuation, lost baggage, etc.

**Not Included:**

All personal expenses - laundry, telephone, etc.
All beverages - soda or alcohol
Tips and unspecified meals
Any side trips or transportation at your expense
This tour is limited to first 32 people and twin sharing hotel rooms.

**Other Information:**

Tour will be led by **Fred Rohrbach** (MSO-65) and Vietnam veteran.
Fred is currently a businessman with 30 years experience in Asia and Vietnam. He has traveled Vietnam extensively since 1975 and has co-authored the first picture book on Vietnam by an American in 1988.

**Interested:**

Contact Fred at 206-574-3300 - Mon - Fri and specify NSA tour when calling or email at pollynfred @comcast.net
Note - Prices such as airfare and hotels could increase by Jan. 2007 but would be minimal if at all.

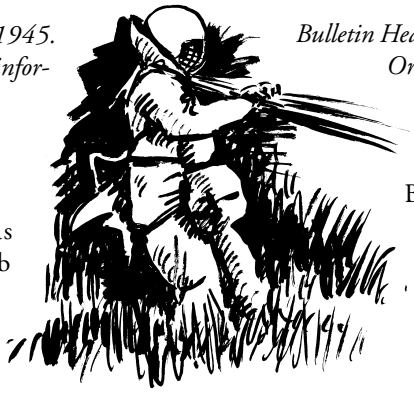
jump fires. I rookied during the midst of the project. It was an enlightening time. Ideas were discussed, materials and designs were analyzed, systems were tested, and procedures were refined and recorded. I absorbed the fact that a parachute was a combination of material, design, and technology, that, when accurately constructed and sequentially deployed, stood between death and me and allowed me to do my job. The ram-air parachute took this to another level with increased flight characteristics that broadened horizons as a mode of transportation.

I had an idea and step one was to be able to hang under a square parachute on demand. This meant skydiving. Lucky for me and my pocket book, there was a military-sponsored jump club on Ft. Wainwright to which BLM types like me had access. There was also a healthy contingent of Alaska jumpers, who had taken the same path before me, and they offered advice, encouragement and equipment. Included was **Ron Lund** (FBX-64), who always had the right answer, though gruff at times. Others were **Matt Kelley** (FBX-71), **Jim Veitch** (MSO-67), **Mike Silva** (RDD-72), **Bert Mitman** (RAC-70), **Steve Nemore** (RAC-69), **Doug Certain** (MYC-75), **Craig Irvine** (RDD-75), **Lynn Flock** (MYC-68), **Al Owen** (CJ-70) and **Jerry Waters** (MYC-75). Kelley pimped me real good after one jump by convincing me to call **Dave Pierce** (FBX-64), who had been our Ops supervisor before moving to MEDC, and telling him about the handling and performance of a sport rig we all had been sharing. Dave could have cared less, and I am sure Kelley is still chuckling over that one. After ground school and a couple of hop and pops, I had expanded my repertoire from the static line to the ripcord, and the sky was the limit. Parachuting to snow-covered peaks and skiing down to the Pacific followed.

*Mike can be reached at: hmdurt@alaska.net*

# Blast from the Past

*Roseburg (Oregon) News Review August 8, 1945. Thanks to Mark Corbet for all of the following information.*



## Paratrooper Dies in Forest Fire Fight

(The other headline of the day was "Hiroshima Made into Inferno as Atom Bomb Hits")

One Army Negro paratrooper was killed and another critically injured Tuesday when 16 men jumped into remote forest areas north of Diamond Lake. The injured man was reported en route to Roseburg. A stretcher party became exhausted and a relief party was sent in today to help carry the injured man over 15 miles of mountain trail. The original party was forced to travel two miles through heavy timber and brush.

The paratrooper, who was killed, was one of a group of 16 dispatched from Camp Pendleton (Oregon). He was said to have landed in the top of a tall fir tree. Each jumper is equipped with 200 feet of rope (letdown). The man, who was killed, was reported to have fallen approximately 140 feet into a rocky creek bed.

Ten additional paratroopers were dropped on the Umpqua Forest today to combat three additional fires bringing the total to 56 fires started by Monday's electric storm. Excellent cooperation from the Army was reported. Officers from Camp White were at Roseburg forest headquarters to coordinate the work of paratroopers with that of forest crews.

In addition to the unidentified Negro paratrooper killed in the **Umpqua** Forest, a bulldozer on the huge Tillamook Fire killed another firefighter. Early last month a civilian was crushed by a falling snag and two soldiers were killed when a truck overturned on the Wilson River Fire.

*Bulletin Headquarters 555th Parachute Infantry, Pendleton, Oregon, 8 August, 1945*

The following order of the Commanding Officer announces to the command the death of Private First Class Malvin L. Brown, Headquarters Company, 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. "It is my regrettable duty as Commanding Officer to announce the death of PFC Malvin L. Brown, which occurred on 6 August, 1945, in the Siskiyou (Umpqua) Forest near Roseburg, Oregon."

"His death was caused by a fall from a tree in which he had landed after making a parachute jump from an airplane in the execution of a special mission in the interests of the public welfare and the Army."

Vernon D. Adams WOJG, USA

*Roseburg News Review August 9, 1945*

Frank Derry, Missoula, Mont., who heads the Forest Service smokejumpers, arrived in Roseburg today to investigate the accident which caused the death of a paratrooper from Camp Pendleton Tuesday.

The Forest Service, Derry reports, is constantly attempting to improve the equipment furnished smokejumpers and every accident is investigated to determine whether improvements can be made which will prevent similar accidents.

*Region Six Fire Control Narrative Report November 30, 1945.*

*Training given to military firefighters*: 16 hours (2 classroom/ 14 field).

*Ground Forces*: 270 men stationed at Camp White, Medford, Portland Airbase and Ft. Lewis

*Paratroopers*: 150 stationed at Pendleton Airbase (later to Chico, Calif. Airbase)

*Spotters*: Furnished by requesting agency

# June 2005-A Memorial Service Long Overdue

**By Lee Gossett** (Redding '57)

All of us at Air America and Civil Air Transport (CAT) are very familiar with the CAT crash that claimed the lives of Robert Snoddy and Norman Schwartz 52 years ago in China. They were piloting an aircraft that was shot down November 29,1952, while on a covert mission to retrieve a Chinese agent. John Downey and Richard Fecteau were in the rear of the aircraft to operate the aerial extraction system and survived the crash

after the shoot down, only to be captured by waiting Chinese forces. A Chinese double agent compromised the mission. Both Snoddy and Schwartz were killed in the crash of their DC-3. Downey and Fecteau spent the next 18 to 20 years in a Chinese prison and were finally released when Richard Nixon was elected President and admitted both Downey and Fecteau were CIA agents. I have known a Snoddy family member for 30 years and, just months ago, I was put in touch with Ruth Buss, Robert Snoddy's sister. Ruth and I spoke several times on the phone, and she kept me informed on the progress of the repatriation of Bob Snoddy's remains and the DNA she donated to identify the one bone fragment and three teeth that were recovered from the crash site. Unfortunately, no identifiable remains were found from Norman Schwartz.

Ruth called me the day before the memorial service to say someone from "back east" would be attending the service and wanted to meet with her and the family. Ruth had no idea who this person was but asked if I would be there with her for the meeting. As we walked into the office, there stood none other than Judge John T. Downey, one of the CIA Agents that survived the crash, only to be imprisoned for the next 20 years in a Chinese prison. Ruth had met John Downey several years prior at CIA headquarters during a ceremony honoring the stars on the wall in the lobby of the headquarters building. It was a very emotional reunion, to say the least, and after the dust settled, a man stepped forward dressed in the formal whites of a United States Navy Admiral and introduced himself. The Navy Admiral turned out to be a three-star Vice Admiral named Bert Calland, who is the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Ruth Buss and Roberta Cox. Bob Snoddy's sister and daughter, along with family members, were overwhelmed and honored that these gentlemen had taken the time to attend the memorial service for their beloved family member.

As the memorial service was concluding, Ruth and Roberta were escorted to the lawn, and you could hear the whine of a jet engine approaching from the west. Moments later a lone Navy A-6 Intruder flew directly overhead in a final salute to a fallen Navy comrade, Robert Snoddy. The A-6 Intruder made a slow climbing left turn northbound and disappeared into the misty overcast afternoon sky. There was not a dry eye in the group, including me.

After the memorial service, we met at the Buss family house, and it was here I presented Roberta and Ruth with the Air America Medallions and copies of the CIA Unit Citation awarded to Air America by CIA Director, George Tenet, in 2001. Both Roberta and Ruth were very moved by the awards and wanted me to extend their thanks to the Air America Association for their kindness.

# Boots Begone

**by Jim Gordon** (Missoula '59)

I'm a great fan of *Smokejumper* and wanted to share a little story. My fifth fire jump in 1959 was from the Ford on the Bitterroot N.F. My partner and I were dropped in a clearing just below the fire.There were several snags to avoid, but I managed to steer my candy stripe away from the snags only to miss seeing some boulders in the drop area. My partner landed safely, but I hit a rock with my left shin. The fire was spreading, and we were anxious to get on the fire line. I walked about 20 yards and fell to the ground in pain. My partner signaled for help while I managed to remove my jump suit. My leg, between my ankle and knee, had swollen to the size of a grapefruit.The line chief declared it was broken and called for a helicopter.

During the flight to the Missoula hospital, the medics cut my pants up the leg and tried to remove my boot. The swelling had increased to my lower leg and ankle, and they decided to cut away my White boot. Being in pain, I accepted their decision. After X-rays at the hospital it was determined that I had only ruptured the sheath around the leg muscle and that no bones were broken. I was more upset about losing that White boot than anything else. We did cherish those boots! Fortunately the insurance, or the hospital or the AFD replaced my boots with a brand new pair, and I still have them to this day. I remained at the base for the rest of the summer, but made no more jumps.

That same summer I missed the opportunity to jump in Yellowstone Park after the earthquake of '59. They only wanted seasoned jumpers, so the rookies stayed behind. I recall the quake, as I was on project work near Flathead Lake clearing a heliport and was knocked out of my cot. There was no real damage near us, but later at the base we found out about the damage and the number of people left stranded in Yellowstone and about the jumpers being called on to assist.

Just some great memories to share. Keep the magazine coming!

# A National Fire Plan

**by Karl Brauneis** (Missoula '77)

They built a brand new policy in Washington last year
To save our trees from demon fire more money did appear
Will thin and burn and then will add more safety regulations
That will affect the deficit to record tribulation.

She's roped and tied and packaged
As "***A National Fire Plan***"
A good idea at the start, but tortured none the less
By bureaucratic leadership and centralized intent.

If truth be known it's all about increased responsibility
With less authority *by plan* for those out on the land
Which all equates to "***take more risk***" for rangers in the field
Make one mistake you're history; that's zero tolerance.

They took a pinch of Storm King and a scoop of Thirty-mile
Then covered it with Cramer; as **OSHA** stood its guard
Clangged the evening dinner bell; force fed it to the troops
With fire shelter recalls – and acronyms to spare
Like **NFMAS**, **WUI**, **MEL; WFSA** and the like
A ***"Healthy Happy Forest"*** soon to sprout before your eyes.

No jumpers – No air tankers – But bureaucrats to spare
300 new in Washington (1) for fires that happen there
But most of all there's paper work controlled all from the top
What happened to initiative and individual thought?

Do not aggressively attack that little smoke you see
Until your checklist clears the path to Washington, DC.

You're still not cleared until the crew is briefed and "quals" are checked
That little smoke has grown and grown; but you're not ready yet.

Inspect the crew for safety's sake; they're all so young and green
That little smoke is blowing up; now running through the trees.

Now IC's turn their red cards back and FMO's resign
They're jumping ship like sea born rats; this outfit's in a bind.

I guess this fire thing don't work; but there's always prescribed burning
Six years of drought and rampant weeds; "***I fail to see the problem.***"

And so the "Brass" they figure out to double all the targets
The "Supervisors" all agree and pledge to one another;
"***We will obtain deliverables; the troops must meet the outputs!***
***We all need feathers for our hats and rewards for; …our exemplary service.***"

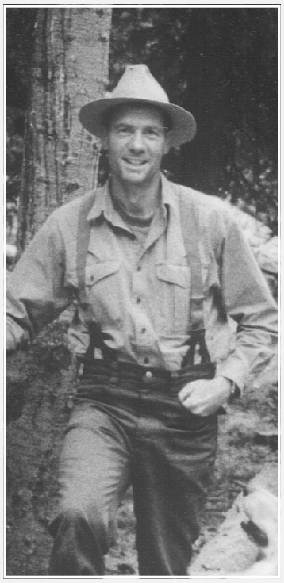
If one of these planned prescribed burns escapes its burning boundaries
A detailed inquisition must find guilt so heads can roll
For to the lowest level, the guillotine applies
The field it now is wondering; why should we even try?

What was that flash across the deck? The Burn Boss just jumped ship
They are quite rare in these here parts; can't blame em, not a bit.

That "Early Out" ten years ago foundered this horse to "hurtin"
We lost the men who always called the "***bullsh#t***" that's for certain
On all these new "Initiatives" and paperwork inflation
Will toast their passing from our midst and hail their dedication.

The "Old War Horse" (2) is broken down, to ride he's almost worthless
It's time to turn him out to graze; reward for years of service.

And yet, this outfit was at once, one right fine piece of work
Those were the days, militia reigned; but don't you get me started.



*Karl Braunels (NSA file)*

(1) Douglas R. Leisz / "A Curmudgeon's Frustration" / Wildland Firefighter – 9/2000

(2) Old War Horse: Refers to the Old Guard of the U.S. Forest Service

Red Card: A firefighter's qualification card

FMO : Fire Management Officer

IC : Incident Commander (Fire Boss)

"quals" : Qualifications

Militia : Every Forest Officer is a Firefighter as compared to a segregated fire corps.

WUI : Pronounced "WooE". Wildland Urban Interface

WFSA : Pronounced "WooFSA". Wildland Fire Situation Analysis

NFMAS : Pronounced "NifMas". National Fire Management Analysis System

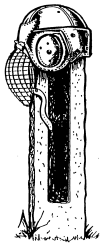
HFRA : Healthy Forest Restoration Act a "Healthy Happy Forest"

OSHA : Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Authors note: For a detailed assessment of this topic read the GAO Report of August 2003; Wildland Fire Management.



*Karl is a member of the "Cowboy Poets of Wind River" Incorporated and can be reached at brauneisfam@wyoming.com*



# 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.

**Douglas M. Dean** (McCall '85)

Doug died of Cancer May 12, 2005. He graduated with a teaching degree from Western New Mexico University and served with the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. Doug was a physical education teacher in the Bend-La Pine School District since 1991 and lived in Bend, Oregon.

**Michael Bober** (Missoula '46)

Mike died April 15, 2005. He served in the 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment in WWII, was awarded three Bronze Stars and was given a field promotion for bravery in the Battle of the Bulge. Mike jumped at Missoula for four seasons and joined the CIA in 1952 with postings in the Far East, Mideast, Europe and CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. He retired in 1975 and moved to Corpus Christi, Texas.

**William Risken** (Missoula '49)

Bill Risken, who jumped the 1949 and 1950 seasons at Missoula, died of lung cancer on May 11, 2005. He was 77 and a resident of Liberty Lake, Washington, at the time of his death. Bill was born in Chile where his father was an accountant for a copper mine. After a brief stay in New Jersey, he moved to Montana with his family when he was 12. He began work for the Forest Service as a lookout when he was 16, and at 17 joined the Marines, who used him as a scout in the Aleutian Islands. He jumped while attending college under the GI Bill, but then trained as an electrician and lineman. He worked for Inland Power and Light and as chief of maintenance for the Central Valley School District before retiring from Vera Water and Power in the early 1990s.

**Clifford McKeen** (Cave Junction '58)

Cliff died at his home above the Rogue River on May 21, 2005. He graduated from Portland State University, got his master's degree from the University of Oregon and his doctorate in psychology from the University of Portland. Cliff worked for various school districts in Oregon before taking a position with the American School in Tokyo in 1985. After returning to the states in 1987, he worked as a psychologist for the Beaverton School District until opening a private practice where he worked until retirement in 2001.

**Matt Taylor** (Grangeville '02)

Matt died Feb. 21, 2005, in Bend, Oregon, of brain cancer. He served in the National Guard from 1991-1998 where he enjoyed competing in the biathlon. Matt worked for the forest service from 1995-2003 and was a Hotshot at Union, Negrito, and Prineville. Although he had surgery for a brain tumor in 2001, he resumed work on the Prineville crew that year and in 2002 he rookied at Missoula. He enjoyed running, biking, skiing, hunting and kayaking. His wife and daughter, as well as three brothers, two sisters and his mother, survive Matt.

**Gregg Phifer** (Missoula '44)

Gregg, 87, a retired professor of communications at Florida State University, died June 2, 2005. He earned his degree from the College of the Pacific and later his doctorate at the University of Iowa. Gregg, an NSA Life Member, was with the CPS-103 jumpers and jumped two seasons at Missoula. After his discharge from Civilian Public Service in 1945, he taught briefly at Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio before joining the faculty at Florida State where he taught for 45 years. *Smokejumper* has printed many articles written by Gregg recording the events of the CPS-103 smokejumpers. We will miss his contributions to the NSA and the magazine.

**Henry O. "Hank" Jori** (Pilot)

Hank, 89, died May 18, 2005, at his home near Occidental, California. He grew up near Red Bluff, California, and started flying in 1932 when he purchased a Travelair 2000 biplane. At the start of WWII, Hank was a flight instructor and later ferried C-47s across the Pacific to Australia. In 1944 he was sent to India where he flew C-46s over the "Hump" to China and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war Hank operated Jori Flying Service in Red Bluff until he hired on full-time with the U.S. Forest service where he flew lead planes, air tankers and dropped jumpers. Hank retired from the Forest Service in 1964 and from private flying in 1980 after nearly 50 years in the cockpit.

# A CPS Smokejumper's Seven Training Jumps - "T'ain't the pilot nor the spotter but it's me, oh Lord"

**by Gregg Phifer** (Missoula '44)

*Editor's Note: During World War II, many objected to taking human life, even in war. Alternative service was an option for these men, referred to as Conscientious Objectors. The jobs were not easy and often were dangerous. These alternatives took place under the Civilian Public Service (CPS) Program. Smokejumping was one of the CPS service alternatives, and the stories of these pioneers are all part of the history of Smokejumping. For additional information on the CPS Program, go to the PBS web site:* ***http://www.pbs.org/itvs/thegoodwar/ww2pacifists.html****. Under Alternative Service, there is a description of the CPS Smokejumping Program. The following story is an account of the training of these early jumpers.*

A wire cable ran just above the open door of the Johnson Flying Service's Ford Tri-Motor. I stood in the door, holding the cable in a death grip, and chewed hard on my Wrigley's gum as I stared at the light brown panels curving above the door. I gave a less than reassuring glance at my securely locked static line and sensed, rather than saw, Nashville's **Harry Burks** (MSO-43) kneeling in the door with one foot on the step. Spotter **Karl Schmidt** (MSO-44) had his head out the window; his left hand "wig-wagging" directions to the pilot.

Suddenly the motors cut and Karl slapped Harry on the left shoulder. For an instant, the door gaped wide in Harry's departure. A fraction of a second later, my foot touched the step and I hopped off into space. I had no sense of either time or falling before a giant hand seized me by the shoulders. "I did it," I said to myself as I looked down at the fields below, while simultaneously feeling jubilant and weak.

I waited a long time for that first jump. It was over a year since I talked with three aspiring smokejumpers leaving Buck Creek Camp (CPS-19) for Seeley Lake, deep in the Montana wilderness. It was nearly six months since I filled out my application and told Wes Huss, director of CPS-37 in Coleville, California, that smokejumping was my special service ambition for the summer of '44. It was almost two months since I first introduced myself at Regional Fire Control in the Federal Building in Missoula.

I began jumper training with **Jack Heintzelman's** (CJ-43) second unit of "B" squad. Unfortunately, on my third day of training, I severely bruised my right shoulder while practicing the prescribed landing roll. My shoulder was not ready for jumping the following Monday, so Jack pushed me off to "C" squad. With it healing slowly, I soon dropped off "C" squad and onto "D" squad.

"D" squad completed the Selective Service/USFS quota for CPS Smokejumpers and it came as a lifesaver for **Charles Chapman** (MSO-44) and myself. Chuck hurt his ankle on the third of seven jumps and so he too was worked into "D" squad.

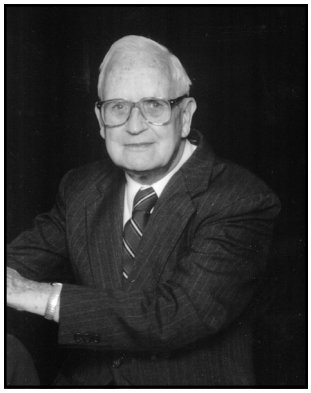
After a week's ground training, we expected to jump the following Monday, June 26. I did not sleep well Sunday night and made many jumps in my dreams, with varying success and difficulty. On Monday morning we learned that we would be delayed so that men injured in earlier training could complete their seven training jumps with us. On Tuesday it rained and we studied first aid in the morning and spent a miserable afternoon cutting and splitting firewood.

Wednesday morning dawned, and it was wet and gloomy. A heavy layer of mist blanketed the landing field some four miles from camp. We knew there could be no morning jumps and no previous squad had jumped in the afternoon. At lunchtime, we sat down to a bountiful meal of chicken and gravy, complete with chocolate pie for dessert. I had loaded my plate with second helpings of chicken and gravy when **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) stood up and rapped his cup for attention. "After lunch, "D" squad will go to the loft, collect their equipment, and we'll go to the airport to see how it is." Strangely, my appetite vanished. We had heard many stories about airsickness and I had seen its results; on his first jump **Tex Weldy** (MYC-44) lost his breakfast immediately upon landing. As we left the dining hall, Harry Burks helped soothe our feelings by dropping his index finger swiftly to the tune of a mounting "E-e-e-e-e-e! You're going to have company," he continued. "Even old corroded Burks is going to jump."

At the airfield we emptied our seamless sacks containing our jumping equipment on the ground: back pack and emergency chutes, retrieving equipment, yellow streamers, and the other impedimenta of the Smokejumper business. I was to be in the last group of jumpers.

While we waited for our plane, "D" squad paused for a group picture, with squad leader Karl Schmidt clicking cameras for many squad members. Suddenly we heard a roar and almost immediately a big plane zoomed over the ridge at our back, banked sharply on its left wing, reversed just beyond the far end of the field and came in to land.

While the first group suited up, those in "D" squad who had never been in a plane before (or perhaps had had only a short ride long ago) went up for an introduction to our new means of transportation to fires. I sat on the floor toward the front of



*Gregg Phifer (NSA file)*

the plane, fascinated. I could not say that I really enjoyed the ride. Below us drifted the bright green of hayfield and meadow, the dark green of the forest, the thin brown ribbon of dirt road. As the plane banked, I spotted the buildings of Nine Mile Camp turning rapidly on an axis of which I was the center. On all sides new peaks jutted above surrounding hills.

The first jumping unit of "old men" and a few "D" squad men boarded the plane. Almost fearing to learn my number, I looked over Karl's shoulder and learned that I was to be the second man out in the last load. **Jim Jackson** (MSO-44) spotted all the loads except ours. Karl helped us suit up and put on our chutes. Our load would carry only four jumpers, just half the Tri-motor's capacity. Two men jumped at a pass, so Harry Burks would ride the step and I'd follow him out the door. Chuck Chapman jumped third and **Herb Crocker** (MSO-43) fourth.

We boarded and scooted forward on the plane's bench seats for takeoff, then slid back along the cushioned bench as the nose of the plane tilted upward and we became airborne. The apparently lumbering Tri-Motor climbed with surprising speed. Burks smiled encouragingly and, as we circled for altitude, pointed out landmarks on the ground. He looked casually through the gaping doorway, calmly inspecting pygmy barns, roads, haystacks. I didn't want to look down and only half heard Harry's chatter. Perhaps he sensed my condition - he should have, since only a year earlier he had made his first jump. Anyway, he kidded me, asking whether I had my patented nose-scratcher handy. His nose itched and he couldn't reach it through the close mesh of his mask. "Do you know where your emergency chute's handle is? You won't have to use it, of course, but you should remember."

After a wide circle to gain altitude, we made a target run for Karl to throw out a drift chute to test both wind direction and altitude. The chute, like jumpers, fell about a thousand feet a minute. Karl inspected our harness and chutes, lifting the emergency chute to be sure all harness buckles were securely snapped, then motioned for us to hook up. Harry stepped forward, snapped his static line over the wire cable, carefully placed his right foot on the step just outside and below the door, and knelt on his left knee. I stood behind him, locked my static line over the cable and stood staring at the paneling above the door. Karl's palm dropped, the motors cut and he slapped Harry's shoulder. Out he went and I stepped off into space a moment later.

There was no time for thought or sensation. On that first jump, I could no more have yelled than I could have climbed back into the plane. Afraid? Every jumper is consciously convinced before making his first training jump that chances of any injury are small and serious injury is remote. Perhaps the most difficult problem is the fear of being afraid and freezing, being unable to take that first step. Part of our training was designed to make that step out of the plane automatic.

After the first relief of the comforting tug on my shoulders, I should have looked up to inspect my chute - as I did on later jumps, especially fire jumps. But I forgot and I looked down and all seemed strange. Fields and houses and haystacks and wooded hills formed no recognizable pattern. I pulled down hard on my left guide line. Nothing happened, so I pulled harder. Finally my chute came around but I still saw nothing familiar. Where had they jumped us - in the next county?

Finally I recognized the long rectangular pattern of our landing field. To the right stood the white tent with our stakeside truck close by. Quickly I turned toward them, pulling hard on my right guideline. Then I spotted a cluster of men two hundred yards down the field. Too late! I was too low to even turn around. I saw a fence ahead but could tell that I would fall safely short of it. Suddenly I hit, banging forward on my face, flat and hard. Nothing of a roll on jump one! Hardly breath of air stirred as my chute gently collapsed. I stood up, fumbled off my gloves and unbuckled my helmet. As I unsnapped my harness buckles I could see a solitary figure jogging my way. I had removed my backboard when Jim Jackson came up to chain the lines of my parachute. He stuffed my chute in a retrieving bag and carried it back to the truck. My first jump was history. I knew then what veterans meant when they said that the time one feels most like jumping again is just after landing successfully.

On the trip back to camp, Harry Burks patted me on the back. ""Do you realize it? You're a Smokejumper!" "Not so fast," I remonstrated. "You made this first one for me. I just followed you blindly out the plane." We didn't know when we would jump next. Preceding squads had alternated jumps with fire training. Arriving back at camp, we learned the good news from an office fink.

The end of the USFS fiscal year left a credit balance for our parachute unit. To spend money as rapidly as possible, Missoula's waffle bottoms decided that we would jump daily. I slept well Wednesday night with no jumps in my sleep.

On Thursday morning we loaded our jumping equipment and left for the airport in our stakeside truck. Karl Schmidt led morning calisthenics. As the plane came in to land, we dressed in our padded canvas jacket and pants, abdominal brace, harness, helmet with face mask, gloves, our regular and emergency chutes, and inserted the let-down ropes and streamers in the rope pocket of our pants

Several 1943 jumpers had refresher jumps with us and they begged Jim Waite to let the plane go higher than the usual 2,000 feet so that they would have more time to maneuver their chutes. Watching the first two loads jump, I could see that they were higher than the day before, but vertical distances are deceptive and I could not guess how much higher.

Once in the air at jumping height, I could tell that ground landmarks were smaller than before. With five jumpers ahead of me, I sat on the floor, chewed gum, and watched Schmidt throw out his drift chute. Finally he signaled the first stick of three to hook up, then sent them out the Tri-Motor's door. We moved back along the narrow bench while Karl pulled in the static lines with backpack covers attached, unhooked them,

and stuffed them in the plane's rear compartment.

Karl then checked our harness and signaled with a wave of his hand for us to hook up. **Roy Anderson** (MSO-44), an ex-Marine discharged for stomach ulcers, knelt in the door. Behind him stood **Leland Miller** (MSO-44), a General Conference Mennonite from Belton, pool shark, and highest "salaried" CPS Smoke Jumper - $5 a month from the Forest Service and $10 from his local church. I stood behind them and a little to the side, my static line securely locked on the cable above the door. Again the signals from the spotter, the drop of his arm, the cutting of the motors, the slap on Anderson's shoulder, and out he went, followed quickly by Miller. Mechanically I moved forward, put my right foot on the step and left the plane. Again I felt the welcome tug on my shoulder and again I forgot to check my chute. Because of a crosswind, Jim Waite warned us to hold back above the ridge facing away from our spot.

Five hundred feet up I realized that I would not make the field. Two hundred feet up I planed hard but still headed for my first tree landing. One moment I skimmed treetops; the next I crashed through small reproduction and hit the ground beside a small tree. I glanced thankfully at a large rock two yards away, and then did a double take. Only a few yards away, Anderson was getting up. Soon, earlier jumpers hurried toward us to help disentangle load lines and free our chutes without tearing them. On the field we learned that **Dick Flaharty** (MSO-44) had lightly sprained his ankle on this second jump.

On the third jump, Jim Jackson listed me as first jumper on the third load's first pass. This time I had the dubious pleasure of sitting on the end of the long bench facing the open door, watching the drift chute head downward, hooking up my static line in response to the spotter's order, and kneeling in the door. I reached the step OK, though the prop blast almost blew my foot away. Once in position I leaned back on my left foot and watched the spotter direct the pilot. Before intercoms, the pilot had to look back over his shoulder during a jumping run for the spotter's directions. As the spotter raised his hand, palm down, I grasped the sides of the doorway firmly and leaned forward. For the first time I felt the slap on my shoulder, our "get out" signal. Instead of stepping off, I had the distinct impression of being blown off the step. Somewhat out of position, I found myself being swung in a wide arc by the opening chute.

On this third jump, I was spotted well and located the spot easily. I turned toward it, and about five hundred feet up saw that I would come close. Pulling down on my front risers, I increased my forward speed and swept over the road, onto the field, and rolled forward over my right shoulder. I stood up to find my chute draped across the target, a cross of orange streamers. Sensational! But of course, luck accounts for anything closer than a hundred feet. As I took off my mask, **Ed Nafziger** (MSO-43), formerly a professional photographer, raced up to take my picture. He had landed well himself, closest until I beat him. Chuck Chapman sprained his ankle on jump three and hobbled around doing office work, eventually making jump four as we did our seventh.

On our fourth jump we benefited from a loudspeaker system to coach beginning jumpers in guiding their chutes and warning them not to forget to hit and roll on landing. This was also my first jump from the Travelair.

Before we boarded our plane, **Frank Derry** (MSO-40) called us together to explain a new method of steering. On our Derry-slotted Irvin parachutes, two slots in the rear half of the canopy spill air and give us a forward speed. Pulling load line 4 or 25 closed the slot on either side; the rush of air from the open slot turned us around, but the turn was slow. Now we were to exert our pull on either line 5 or 26, the lines immediately ahead of the slot. The rush of air out these slots became complementary and we could expect to turn more rapidly. I found this confusing, so went back to the old way for this jump. (By 1945 we had still another change in steering our chutes, one that enabled us to turn even more rapidly.)

I was the first man out and I held back too far over the ridge. Talking me down, Frank Derry warned that I was headed for a timber landing. Sure enough, I hit the side of a fifty-foot tree on the edge of the field. My chute caught and I was left dangling about ten feet off the ground. I hugged the trunk to see if my chute would let go. It did, and I slipped further down. As observers watched me squirm, my chute let go once more and I stood on the ground, fourth jump complete. There was still no need for my letdown procedure!

Before my fifth jump we were told that the Forest Service wanted some movies of a timber landing, a gentle hint that we should head that way if we wanted to be movie stars. I tried, but again hit the side of a tall tree and landed gently on my feet. Excitement came when one man in the next planeload came out with a lineover. To him it felt as though he were smoking in fast, but in fact, he dropped only half again as fast as other jumpers. His emergency chute showed white, but at first fluttered down around his feet, then rose to cover his face. So much for the help of his emergency chute!

We made jump six on the Fourth of July and jumped from the Travelair using a static line. A static line is a twelve-foot long, inch and a half wide band of webbing attached to the cover of our backpack parachute. It pulls off the cover and extends the chute before the break cord snaps, separating the backpack cover and apex of the chute. I made no free fall jumps, but a few Smokejumpers made exhibition free-fall jumps for forest rangers that might have to make an emergency jump from a plane some day.

Jump seven was supposed to feature a fire camp, but the equipment had been shipped back to the Forest Service warehouse in Spokane. We had to be satisfied with Jim Waite's verbal description of a fire camp setup. That was it. We had completed our jumper training. Now we could only wait for the call of "Fire on the Mountain," the Smokejumper battle cry taking us into action.

*By 1944 when Gregg joined the CPS/USFS smokejumpers, he had earned his BA from Pacific and his MA from Iowa. After release from CPS and two years teaching at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, he returned to Iowa for his doctorate. He joined the faculty at Florida State University in 1949 and retired as Professor Emeritus in 1994. Gregg has written many stories for the magazine documenting the CPS-103 smokejumpers. Gregg passed away June 2, 2005, at age 87. He will be missed by our readers.*