

July 2015

Meeting Minutes, July 2015

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors

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Notes – NSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – July 16-17, 2015
Missoula, MT

July 16, 2015

Meeting location - University of Montana - University Center Alumni Room on the 3rd Floor

- 8:00 Call to order, introduction to site, introductions, approval of the agenda – Jim Cherry
The U of M staff helping with the reunion logistics were introduced followed by introductions of the BOD and others attending the meeting.

- 8:20 Approval of previous meeting minutes –Tom Boatner
Brief review of last meetings minutes followed by unanimous approval.

- 8:30 Website Committee report – Larry Lufkin
Larry handed out his written website report. We spent roughly \$5000 last year on a number of different updates and projects. We have budgeted \$5000 for work for the coming year. We have talked about putting various links on our site to areas of interest, but there are problems with that for a small website like ours without full-time support, so we will limit our links to direct smokejumper sites. The decision was made not to put IRS990s, the financial report all non-profits are required to submit annually, and other financial documents on the web. Larry gets requests to add various documents or news reports to the website, but some of them go direct to the webmaster, causing confusion and stress. Please send requests only to Larry, so he can coordinate work with the webmaster, determine the feasibility of accomplishing the task, and manage the workload. The next “sprint” of web work is tentatively planned for late July, early August to be followed by another in October/November. John McDaniel has many reports of people struggling with renewing memberships on the website. Chuck says the process is linear and fairly simple, but our older membership is not real strong on general computer savvy.

- 8:50 Scholarship Committee report – Gary Baker
Gary handed out a summary of scholarship activity. Information is sent out in January and it’s posted on the website after that. By the June 15th deadline, 10 applications were received for 7 scholarships. The 7 recipients were notified yesterday. Gary has all the required paperwork with him to coordinate making payments. We need to do some coordination on setting up individual presentations and getting photos for the newsletter. Gary gave us the names of each winner and some information on their backgrounds and connections to the smokejumper world. Winners included active jumpers, and wives and children of active jumpers. Chuck points out that many of the recent winners of NSA scholarships are not members of the NSA. He thinks that NSA membership should be considered as part of the selection process. Chris Sorenson says that on the NSA Facebook page there are no active jumpers. Chuck made a motion that in the future that NSA membership would be a factor in determining scholarship awards. We also added to the motion that no repeat scholarships would be given to non-NSA members. Motion seconded and passed.

- 9:00 Good Samaritan Fund report – Jim Cherry
Jim gave the GSF report for Mike Overby who can’t be at the meeting. The fund is fairly well funded through memorials and hasn’t had many recent requests. Mike wants us to consider soliciting donations outside of NSA membership from corporate or business sources. Along with the

scholarship program, this program builds us credit with the smokejumper community, both current and past jumpers.

- 9:10 Investment Committee report – John Packard ,Bob McKean, Gary Baker

Lots of work has been recently accomplished, primarily by Bob McKean, in moving money to Vanguard funds. Some detail was shared about our various accounts, current thoughts on how to manage our various accounts and simplify the overall management of our investments and accounts. The general movement is towards streamlining our investments and minimizing the number of different accounts. This is to simplify and improve current management and to make it easier for future Board members, Investment Committee members, and Treasurers to transition in and take over. John also handed out current balances between Equities, Fixed Income, and Short Term Bonds. His general target is a split of 60% equities and 40% Fixed Income and Bonds. John suggests that that allocation is revisited once a year. Bob continues to work on ways to simplify our ability to move money between funds, accounts, and companies as we think is necessary. John distributed his new brochure that describes our programs and opportunities for members to contribute. These brochures will be handed out at the reunion. The brochure doesn't have specific information on the next steps a member can take to make contributions. *We need to add additional information on the webpage so members can take those next steps if they choose, whether it's a simple contribution or a more complex gift. A motion was made to find a broker who can handle appreciated stocks and associated issues. Seconded and passed. Follow-up will occur during the course of the reunion.*

- 10:20 Reunion report – Jim Phillips

Jim reports that 600 NSA members and 200 guests are registered for the reunion. Doug Houston has many great items included in the silent auction. Jim reports that with registration fee, food costs, and estimated silent auction funds that we anticipate being \$36,000 in the black for reunion income. This doesn't include any money Chuck takes in with merchandising sales. A round of applause for Jim and his crew for a job well done. Gino Bassette, Jim Scofield, Sandy Evenson, Jim Sweaney, and Dwight Chambers were the members. Montana Public Radio aired an interview about the reunion this morning. Jim talked about trying to coordinate with Destination Montana for funds that support economic opportunity through a grant. They gave a grant of \$2500. Schofield followed up and they said they didn't give more because they knew we were already coming without their financial support-something to consider for future reunions and looking for these types of grants. Jim Cherry brought up the topic of future national reunions and the demographic of older members and the number of deaths (250 since the last national reunion). Should we plan for future national reunions or call this the last one? Individual base reunions held in intervening years?

- 10:40 Report on 2015 Trails Program - Fred Cooper

Fred handed out a written report with specific details on the number of projects and volunteers for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015. In 2014 there were 19 week long projects involving 130 smokejumpers and 25 associates. For 2015, 21 week long projects are scheduled involving 131 smokejumpers and 29 associates. We expect to come out in the black again this year, but the amount will be low compared to past years due primarily to increased food expenses and the possible loss of a monetary contribution from the new owners of Johnson's Corner in Colorado. Bill Ruskin submitted a grant request to the American Hiking Society, but it was denied. *Action Item: Fred will follow up with Bob Marshall Foundation Executive Director for possible partnerships.* This year we are going to give insulated coffee mugs for thanks. Should we keep giving these little gifts? Fred has worked with the Helena National Forest to coordinate on work in Mann Gulch and the NSA did a little project in there this year. Hopefully there will be a long term plan to keep assisting in preservation and maintenance

efforts there. The FS has, after many years, issued a Historical Preservation Plan for Mann Gulch. The next step is a Management Plan. One part of this may be the NSA stepping up to adopt this site as an area we will support long term. The USFS has also issued a 40 to 50 page draft Saw Policy. Jeff Kinderman and Dick Hulla are involved in providing feedback on training impacts for volunteer groups like ours. Some of these requirements are pretty steep for us. Some of the cross-cut saw classroom training may be available online.

- **11:00 Report on the Evergreen Museum and the Smokejumper display –Bob McKean**

In the past, the smokejumper exhibit was high quality and well located. Over the years, the display has diminished in quality and location. Bob describes it as “shabby.” He has met a few times with the curator to explore solutions, but nothing has been done. Bob did a written report for the curator and us on agreements that had been made. Agreed upon tasks still haven’t been accomplished, so we sent a letter to the Executive Director of the museum. Jim Cherry read the letter we sent expressing our concerns on agreements to upgrade the exhibit that haven’t been made, and our disappointment with the commitments made by the curator that haven’t been met, and our specific request that 2 names be added to the plaque honoring smokejumpers killed in the line of duty. Bob says that if we get no positive response to this recent letter (July 8, 2015), we should at least reclaim the items in the exhibit. We’re not sure who all the equipment actually belongs to, although the jumpsuit came from the Lufkin family. It was Frances Lufkin’s original jumpsuit. We discussed other potential locations, like the FS Museum planned for Missoula, if it ever gets built, or possibly Cave Junction. At some point, if we don’t get a reasonable response, we should just go get all the exhibit items.

- **11:15 Report on addition of jump records to the website with demonstration – Roger Savage**

Roger refreshed us on his efforts to get Region 1 and Region 3 jump records posted to the NSA website. Roger got written approval and that information is now available through a link on the NSA website that Roger maintains. Bob Cushing and Gary Baker have helped Roger accomplish this. Right now, the first 50 years of jump and fire info that is posted. This comprises 58,000 records covering 13,000 fires. Roger is working on posting the next 25 years. Fred Cooper is trying to add some info from Redmond, mostly articles. Leo may be able to add the McCall information. Roger talked about all of the computer/programming help he has gotten from Bob Cushing. Bob gave us a demonstration that involved data from the Missoula Class of 1961 and its display on Google Earth. He showed us the kind of information he can display for a particular jumper and one of his specific fire jumps. The potential amount of info that can be displayed and made available is pretty amazing. We’re looking at this being part of our history records and display. Roland Fisher came into the meeting and was introduced. He rookied in Missoula in 1947.

- **11:45 Update on NSA History and introduction of Charles Palmer – Fred Cooper/Roger Savage**

Charlie Palmer was unable to attend the meeting so this didn’t occur. We found out later that we gave Charlie the wrong day to be at the meeting, Friday instead of Thursday. Charlie subsequently talked to Jim Cherry on the phone.

- **12:45 BOD vote on filling John Marker’s board position with Bill Derr – Chuck Sheley**

Chuck proposed Bill as an Associate member of the Board to replace John Marker. Bill gave us a summary of his long, varied career with the USFS, including fire and law enforcement positions. He has been active with the National Association of Forest Service Retirees Fire Committee. Chuck made a motion for Bill to join the Board as an Associate member. Seconded and passed.

- **1:00 Long-term planning – Initial stage (Mission Statement review, strategic planning, comprehensive plan for giving, succession issues) – BOD/Jim Cherry**

Jim framed up the need to discuss some of these long-term planning issues, including leadership succession and membership demographics. We are an aging organization with fewer new members joining. We discussed a number of issues associated with changes in smokejumper headcounts over the years, changes in length of time serving in smokejumper positions, and other related items. A suggestion was made that we develop a small team to think about these futuring issues. This became a very wide ranging discussion and debate over issues facing the NSA as well as current wildland fire fighting and smokejumping issues. Is it our role to propose specific policies and answers or are we better suited to pose questions and ask if the answers can be articulated? We talked about considering what we can control versus what we can't control, our right to ask questions and expect answers, and our responsibilities to ask certain questions. What is our role to act as a conscience, to meet our moral obligations? Issues discussed included the current way fires are managed on public land, the decision-making process for deciding whether to suppress fires or not, the future of smokejumping, squares versus rounds, and our role in being involved in any or all of these issues. Jim Cherry suggested that the Executive Committee works before our next meeting at developing some starter suggestions on how to proceed in reference to certain key issues such as mission statement and periodically looks for broader Board input.

- **2:00 Budget Report & presentation of 2015-16 FY Budget – Finance Committee/Brent Russ**

Brent handed out current spreadsheets for our finances. Revenues exceeded expenditures, and investments increased as well over the fiscal year. Compared to other non-profits that Brent works with, he thinks we are financially healthy, he would give us an A+. His concerns are our uncertainty about future membership, and our high reliance for so much of our work on one guy, Chuck Sheley. The donations from all sources were over \$50,000. The President's Annual Xmas letter brought in over \$27,000. We had some small losses with stocks sold last year. Income slightly exceeded expenses for the year. We didn't meet our income goal in membership. We budgeted \$40,000 in total membership income and realized \$31,651. We adjusted the 2015 budget to a budgeted amount of \$32,000. Larry displayed the proposed 2015 budget and we worked our way through it and agreed on budget estimates for all categories and made those adjustments.

Jim Cherry introduced Ron Stevens, former Missoula Smokejumper from Pensacola, FL. Ron jumped in 1946 and 1947. In 1947, the USFS had a water bomb testing program with the Army Air Corp on the Lolo National Forest. The bombs were auxiliary aircraft fuel tanks. These P-47 tanks were filled with water and dropped on fires. Fins were welded on for stabilization and a proximity fuse and small explosive were attached. Some of them blew up prematurely right under the aircraft. They were supposed to blow up 150 feet above the ground to disperse the water. Bombs were dropped in sticks of 4 from 10,000 feet. The final tests were made to forestry groups from various countries. The bomber missed the target, maybe partly due to a last minute replacement of bomber aircraft and movement of the gunsight. Ron was on the ground igniting and stoking a smoke target. He was supposed to move to a safe area with an assistant. One of the bombs almost hit Ron and his assistant and nearly killed them. One of the bombs ended up wrapped around the tree they were hiding behind, 6 feet above them. That fall, the Army Air Corp became the US Air Force and that transition may be the reason much of the history of this test program has been lost to history. Ron started his woods career at the age of 15 on a blister rust crew out of Priest River, Idaho.

3:15 Membership Report – John McDaniel

Our total membership as right now is 1627 total, 1479 jumpers, 129 associates, and 19 pilots. Two more recent life members have joined. Chuck spoke to the Redding rookies and 10 of them joined. We currently have 307 life members.

- **3:30 Report on Malvin Brown marker –Jim Cherry**

Over a year ago, Malvin Brown's gravesite was relocated. Malvin Brown was a member of the 555th Parachute Regiment, the Triple Nickels. He died in Oregon after falling out of a tree on a fire jump. Fred Donner and Dennis Symes found his gravesite location. The USFS is paying for a memorial at his grave and that will be placed on July 25th, located in outside of Baltimore, MD. It is a privately owned black cemetery. On August 6th at 10 am, a memorial service will be held. The USFS Chief and Tom Harbour will be there as well as an 82nd Airborne rep, an NSA rep, and a Triple Nickel rep. It is called the Mt Calvary Cemetery. Dennis Symes will represent the NSA.

- **3:40 Report on renewal of Directors & Officer Liability Insurance – Jim Cherry**

Jim will check with Brent to see if this renewal has been paid. We also discussed broader risks associated with NSA activities like reunions and trails projects. Our exposure isn't great, but there is some risk there. Trails projects associated with the USFS are covered with our volunteer agreements.

- **3:50 Policy for social media identified with the NSA – BOD**

Please don't connect us to any social media groups, liked Linked In, without Board approval.

Ron Stevens passed around a drawing he made in his rookie year, 1946 and a T-shirt he had made of that drawing.

Meeting recessed at 4 pm until July 17th.

July 17, 2015

University of Montana - University Center Room #207 on the 2nd Floor

- **8:00 BOD meeting with Tom Harbour**

Joining our meeting from the USFS: Tom Harbour, Director Fire & Aviation Management; Art Hannaman, Assistant Director of Aviation; Tony Johnson, acting National Smokejumper Program Manager; John Kovalicky, Smokejumper Equipment Specialist; Mike Fritsen, Missoula Smokejumper Base Manager, Pete Lannen, West Yellowstone Smokejumper Base Manager

Jim Cherry opened the meeting and introductions were made all around. Jim turned it over to Tom Harbour by saying "We don't have a dog in this fight. We can act as a conscience and our focus is safety."

Tom started on the Stansilaus NF in 1970. The USFS currently has 10,000 fire people, and a 3 to 4 billion dollar budget. Current headcounts are around 300-350 FS smokejumpers and 120-130 BLM smokejumpers. Tom has given a lot of thought to the smokejumper program. It's facing a lot of questions. Has it outlived its usefulness? The program's history was built on back-country firefighting. What is the program's efficacy into the future? The rappel fatality a few years ago led to a lot of scrutiny of that program and they discovered that a lot of non-standardization had crept in

and that needed to be addressed. Fire leadership asked if non-standardization was creeping into the smokejumper program. Also, there are increasing questions from Capitol Hill and internally about return on investment, costs, values, etc. Is it prudent to make the investment in such a small segment of the fire program? There is lots of pressure and interest in hiring more hotshots, but not the same pressure or interest in hiring more smokejumpers. So Tom felt like he needed to answer a few questions: Should there be a smokejumper program at all? If the answer is yes, what is the future of this program? Beginning with the first ADFP(Aerial Delivered Firefighter) study about 20 years ago and the ISDS(Interagency Smokejumper Delivery System) effort about 15 years ago, we began looking at these questions, but no clear answer has evolved. One clear answer is that the old “fact” that smokejumpers are so much more expensive than helitack is simply not true, that the difference is not significant. In fact, the per unit cost ranking would be rappellers, smokejumpers, helitack. It’s also been important to look at the progress and lessons learned and experience gained in the implementation of the ram-air parachute program at Missoula since 2007. Now, 80 Region 1 jumpers have been trained on ram airs and the USFS has been able to gain their own experience and viewpoint on these parachutes. Also, smokejumper numbers need to be considered in light of the aircraft being used and their capability. Building and Facilities Maintenance budget issues are serious throughout the USFS, so there are questions about the future of many older facilities. This could impact West Yellowstone and NCSB. There are big questions about what to do with these facilities. Tom used the Negrito Hotshot facility on the Gila NF as an example of the difficult questions they are wrestling with balancing old facilities, the people that live and work there, and the history of the crews and program they represent.

Tom believes the smokejumper program will continue, but there will be difficult questions about where bases will be, what platforms will be flying, etc. *The four priorities for the program are:*
1) Define and clarify the smokejumper mission-put the smokejumpers on high value fires. The 2 manner in the Bob is not the future.
2) Enhance and sustain training-deliver high quality overhead to emerging fires to provide fireline leadership.
3) Transition from a fleet of many types of aircraft to a fleet of primarily Sherpas and Twin Otters.
4) Transition to Ram-airs

Tom listed these priorities in order of importance. The decision was made and signed in the last few weeks to begin an orderly transition from FS-14s to Ram-Airs guided by a change management plan. This has been a complex decision that Tom has wrestled with. There are pros and cons to each parachute system and there is no obvious “right” answer. There has been a lot of consideration and discussion and debate to arrive at this decision, and to develop transition plans.

Chuck asked about the focus on high value fires and questions about not fighting a backcountry fire that turns into a Biscuit fire and ends up costing millions. Tom explained that jumping backcountry fires will still be important when the potential is high and they may still qualify as high value targets. This led to some discussion on how those kind of decisions are made quickly when a new fire begins. Tom explained that the forest management plans and fire management plans guide these kinds of decision, what the relative values at risk are, how these decisions are made, and who makes them. We discussed the sense of urgency required in making these decisions, and our perspective that sometimes this sense of urgency appears to be lacking.

We asked the experienced current smokejumper leaders in the room for their perspectives on the future. They are optimistic and confident about the future of the program and believe they are already accomplishing a lot of the priorities outlined above and moving strongly in that direction.

In terms of parachutes, moving into the future, is there potential for continued technological advance in rounds? The answer is probably no. We talked about other current and future technological advances that can help build situation awareness and improve decision-making. Art talked about some of the technology that aircraft will soon have and Tom talked about some of his discussions with military experts. One reality, though, is that firefighters, humans with brains, will always be required. John Kovalicky says with the parachute decision made, they can go to the parachute industry and say this is what we are looking for in a delivery system, primarily stable, steep vertical descent for the last few hundred feet. There is a lot of potential for continued technological advance in the ram air parachute world. There will be coordination with BLM. Primary needs may differ between the 2 agencies because of the general nature of the jump country. Coordination is important and it has been good. Tom said that no one at any level in the DOI or BLM has made any attempt to influence the outcome of the parachute decision.

Bob McKean asked, "What do we need to be asking that we aren't?" Tom said he hopes for our support going forward with the parachute transition, but hopes that we will consider larger fire management problems and challenges and anticipating the future and the role we can play in those discussions. Mike Fritsen said that they focus on failures that occur and how to improve, but we also have to accept the reality of human error and its inescapability. Mike asked us to recognize that mistakes will be made, but we also have a lot of successes that we need to recognize more often.

Tom reaffirmed that if we have questions and concerns, he will always try to respond honestly. Some discussion on the characteristics of the CR360 canopy and the DC-7 canopy occurred. Mike Fritsen discussed some of the general differences between the 2 canopies. The ideal canopy has a forward speed of 15 to 20 mph, responds quickly, can achieve vertical separation, and can make steep, stable descents on final.

Tom wrestled hard with this decision and thought a lot about Billy Martin, Dave Liston, and Mark Urban.

MTDC is going to fill another position to work along with John Kovalicky in managing this transition to make sure all technical issues with both parachute systems, round and ram air, are being handled. The starting point will be using the BLM ram air delivery system, but training will be adapted to recognize the differences between jump country, and opportunities to modify the system or look at different canopies will be ongoing.

Fred Cooper asked what Tom Harbour and the Chief's Executive Leadership Team are doing to addressing overall employee morale and esprit de corp. For about the last 2 years, the Chief and his staff have been trying to get out to the field more, listen more, doing more video conferences with field leaders. All Senior Executives have a performance element focused on addressing issues of morale identified in employee surveys and it is definitely an area of focus. There are a lot of outside pressures and different competing special interests and there are no easy answers. Links with local communities aren't as strong as they used to be.

Jim closed out this portion of the meeting by thanking Tom and the other current fire and aviation people in attendance for attending our meeting, sharing information, and considering our viewpoints. Tom reiterated his openness to fielding our enquiries and answering to the best of his ability. We have to recognize legal or regulatory requirements that may limit their ability to provide some information.

- 10:30 New business
 - Next meeting - Seattle Oct. 7-8, 2015 at the same Residence Inn, Tukwila we have used before

- No one from the NSA BOD can attend the August 6th memorial for Malvin Brown. Jim and Larry will work on identifying local NSA members who may be able to represent us there(Dennis Symes will represent us).
 - Evaluation of meeting and travel/lodging voucher-positive comments about the overall meeting, our ability to work through a lot of NSA business, and the value of the meeting with Tom Harbour
- 11:30 Conclude meeting

Attendees:

July 16: Jim Cherry, John Packard, Bob McKean, Chuck Sheley, Larry Lufkin, Fred Cooper, Roger Savage, Gary Baker, John McDaniel, Leo Cromwell, Jim Lindell, Tom Boatner, Chris Sorenson, Bob Cushing, Bill Derr, Harold Hartman , Dave Laws, Jim Phillips, Brent Russ

July 17: Jim Cherry, John Packard, Bob McKean, Chuck Sheley, Larry Lufkin, Fred Cooper, Roger Savage, Gary Baker, John McDaniel, Leo Cromwell, Jim Lindell, Tom Boatner, Bill Derr, Tom Harbour, Mike Fritsen, Pete Lannen, Art Hannaman, Tony Johnson, Dave Laws, Bob Bartlett, Dave Hartman, John Kovalicky, Bob Bartlett, Dave Nelson, Bernie Weisgerber, Barry Hicks