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National Smokeyumper Association

Robert L. Bartlett

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2017

SMOKEJUMPER



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|---|----|
| Enough Excitement to Fill Several Lifetimes | 4 |
| Illustrious History of the Doug | 16 |
| The First Black Smokejumper | 19 |

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Message from the President..... | 2 |
| Enough Excitement to Fill Several Lifetimes— Seethaler Part I | 4 |
| Sounding Off from the editor | 13 |
| Old Jumpers | 14 |
| The Illustrious History of the Doug | 16 |
| The Man in the Middle, the First Black Smokejumper | 19 |
| Snapshots from the Past..... | 26 |
| Lessons Unlearned - Prescribed Fire and Smoke Management | 27 |
| A Smokejumper Story | 30 |
| Off the List | 33 |
| Letter to the Editor..... | 40 |
| NSA Increases Scholarships to \$12,000 | 40 |
| The View from Outside the Fence..... | 41 |
| The Potlatch Timber Fire | 42 |
| New NSA Life Members Since January 2016 | 43 |
| Blast from the Past..... | 44 |
| Book Review: Former Jumper Takes to the Water | 45 |
| New Book Chronicles Waldron Creek Deaths..... | 47 |
| A Band of Brothers | 48 |
| An Interesting Life – From a Tail Gunner to Carving and Painting..... | 49 |
| Australian and American Firefighting..... | 53 |
| Odds and Ends | 55 |



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Message from the President



by Jim Cherry
(Missoula '57)
President

AS I PEN THIS article, my wife and I have just recently returned from another very enjoyable and successful September trail project that included a total of 18 former jumpers, spouses and associates. The fellowship was outstanding and the sense of accomplishment was heartwarming, knowing that we had done great good on the projects we accomplished.

Congratulations to longtime smokejumper and former Boise Base Manager **Jim Raudenbush** (FBX-82), who retired from a 35-year career as a smokejumper. He retired with more than 200 fire jumps.

In the October 2015 issue of *Smokejumper* magazine I had raised the issue of suicide: *"Suicide is something that is occurring among our numbers ... particularly among those who have been long-term jumpers and who have retired ... but it*

is not being discussed openly. I would like to bring it into the open so that we might begin to understand the problem and bring some help to individuals and families."

I was recently pleased to see that others are also recognizing the problem of suicide when I was forwarded a copy of the "6 Minutes for Safety" that comes out of Boise. This one sheet informational is titled "Fire-fighter Mental Illness/Suicide."

The opening paragraph states: *"Mental health is an often neglected part of firefighter safety, even as the number of reported firefighter deaths by suicide has been on the rise. Suicidal thoughts and other symptoms of depression, post-traumatic stress, and other mood disorders are not signs of weakness; rather, they are indicators of a medical condition that requires attention and treatment."*

"Awareness, knowledge, and action can mitigate emotional suffering and reduce the risk of suicide among firefighters. One life lost is too many."

Also included in the information sheet is a listing of risk factors, warning signs, a "What You Can Do" section and a 24/7 **suicide hotline at (800) 273-8255**. Are you struggling with these issues, or suspect that someone else is? Take action now. You may be saving a life.

In the July 2016 issue of

Smokeyjumper magazine I had shared a request from a former jumper who had developed Parkinson's disease to see if this was something that was impacting others as well.

There was some concern that inhaling the toxins in smoke might be a contributing factor in the disease's development.

I have received feedback from several former jumpers since that publication. I have no idea where this may lead, but I am accumulating the information and will see if the number of situations reported to me fall outside the occurrence of Parkinson's disease in the general population. If this is something you are experiencing, or if you know someone who has passed away with the disease, please let me know.

Do you ever do shopping through Amazon? If so, you can now also turn it into a way of benefiting the NSA.

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Smokeyjumper base abbreviations:

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Anchorage.....ANC | Grangeville.....GAC | Redding.....RDD |
| Boise.....NIFC | Idaho City.....IDC | Redmond.....RAC |
| Cave Junction.....CJ | La Grande.....LGD | West Yellowstone WYS |
| Fairbanks.....FBX | McCall.....MYC | Whitehorse Yukon YXY |
| Fort St. John.....YXJ | Missoula.....MSO | Winthrop.....NCSB |

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Firestarter

by Tom Decker (Idaho City '64)

Cabin In The Woods

Somewhere in Idaho's backcountry, close to the Indian Creek landing strip on the Salmon River, was a cabin nestled amidst the lodgepole pine.

The cabin was neat as a pin, with firewood stacked in straight and uniform racks, a prim chimney on the tin roof, with the appearance of a year-round residence rather than an abandoned miner's shack.

The setting was idyllic, miles from anywhere with no roads, and unburdened by the necessities – or niceties – of civilization. I wondered who lived there. A miner was the most logical, but it could have been a summer getaway, or perhaps an honest-to-goodness recluse. In any regard they were there either to retreat or retrench.

And as quickly as the cabin appeared in our flight path, it was gone. I have often wondered whether I really saw it or was it just an apparition.

No believer left alone

We all have moments when we'd like to get away from it all. Our culture values a degree of privacy, and hence we find safety in avoiding contact with others. We preserve our space and limit self-exposure to maintain some degree of personal security in a crowded society. The result is that many shop, work, and live in a community, but are basically alone, and think it's okay because experience has shown them that they can expect little else from life.

Is isolation a problem? Maybe. Maybe not. Perhaps so, if the isolation reinforces a loneliness that is born out of fear, hurt, and disappointment.

The Christian faith calls people out of isolation to

live in fellowship with God. The fellowship reinforces the trinity of meaningful living with a vision of God culminating in faith, hope, and love.

Followers of Christ have always sought to bring the good news of Jesus to outsiders so that they too can participate in this community of faith, hope, and love.

Even though the community is never perfect this

side of heaven, at best the core is God's desire to serve others.

Admittedly there is an appeal to a cabin in the woods in Idaho's backcountry!

Maybe we begin there for a picture of heaven! So be it!

Hoot! 🦉

Enough Excitement To Fill Several Lifetimes – Seethaler Part I

by **Karl Seethaler** (Missoula '55)

Almost 50 years to the day after I graduated from Whittier College in June 1956, I attended the June 2006 graduation of my daughter Tara from Dartmouth College. That was 10 years ago. My daughters Lisa, born in Saigon in 1967, and Sonya, born in Vientiane in 1969, were in attendance as well. Tara was born in 1984, more than a decade after I left Southeast Asia. I bring this up to put some perspective on elapsed time and what a different world we live in today.

Getting back to the graduation ceremony, among the events was a presentation by a Dartmouth professor based on the theme of a Yogi Berra quote: “When you come to a fork in the road ... take it.” Though I was familiar with many Yogi Berra quotes, I don’t think I had heard that one before.

The presentation was humorous and entertaining. I don’t remember the details of her message, but I think it had something to do with the ambiguities and opportunities that the future holds along the line of Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken.”

Whatever the merits of the message, I came to recognize that it pretty well described the philosophical framework directing what is now my life history. My smokejumper experience and where it led was a significant part of that.

“Earlier this year, I turned 80. If I have a story to tell, and I think I do, I’d be well advised to get right on it.”

I wrote these words almost two years ago, and



Karl Seethaler (Courtesy J. Kirkley)

now I’ve just turned 83. The sentiment behind that thought hasn’t changed. Though I’ve given this a lot of consideration in the interim, I can attest that writer’s block can be a formidable ob-

stacle to progress when it comes to summarizing one's life history.

While I am sure that is not an unusual obstacle to an endeavor such as this, at least in my case I feel a strong psychological inhibition that forces me to question whether it's proper to even proceed with this project. I don't think it would be incorrect to say that my story would probably be considered unique. But then again, whose isn't?

Where I find myself is the result of a composite of a variety of directions that I have pursued with a variety of purposes from which I may have been too easily distracted. Once again quoting (or paraphrasing) Yogi Berra, *"If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else."* Well, here is where I am and I'll try to explain it.

What It Means To Have Been A Smokejumper

Having been born in 1934, just seven years after Charles Lindbergh's historic Transatlantic Flight, aviation was still quite young in its development and in its earliest years. It wasn't every day that you would see an airplane flying overhead. What you did see tended to be small single-engine aircraft and a fair percentage of those were biplanes.

Even though I was living in Los Angeles, where aviation was rapidly developing, airplane sightings may have occurred a few times a month. Whenever the sound of one flying overhead could be heard, everyone would go outside and watch it in some degree of awe until it was out of sight.

In 1939, when I was five years old, we moved to the small town of Globe, Ariz., where aircraft sightings were even more infrequent and running out to watch them was an exciting pastime.

We moved back to Los Angeles in 1942. Quite shortly after our arrival, I saw an airplane flying overhead and excitedly ran inside to let everyone know about it. I was told that so many airplanes were now flying there that nobody went out to watch them anymore. World War II was underway and a number of aircraft manufacturers in the area were in full-scale production as part of the war effort.

Aviation kept advancing, but by the mid-

1950s, the great majority of people had never flown in an airplane.

So it was that in 1955 when I went to Missoula for my first year as a smokejumper, there were a fair number of first-year smokejumper trainees who made their seven training jumps and some fire jumps without ever having landed in an aircraft.

I regretted having missed out on that unique experience, having taken off and landed three times as a passenger of an Ercoupe flying from Albuquerque, N.M. to Needles, Calif., a year earlier. Still, at the end of the season I had taken off 15 times in my lifetime, jumped out 11 of those times and landed with the aircraft just four times. That experience was not uncommon among smokejumpers back then.

Tragedy brings first awareness of jumping

I probably first became aware of smokejumping right after the Mann Gulch Fire on Aug. 5, 1949. At the time, I was fifteen years old and living in Long Beach, Calif. I had a newspaper route with the Long Beach *Press-Telegram*. When I went to the distribution center to pick up the papers for delivery that day or the following, the first thing I saw was the front-page article with bold headlines announcing that 12 smokejumpers had perished in the fire.

I, of course, realized that this was a tragedy. I also recognized that the work by its very nature could be hazardous. But at the same time, I was intrigued with the smokejumping concept and its potential for adventure while performing a good public service.

At the time I was an active Explorer Scout with serious thoughts of making a career of forestry. This intrigue went dormant for a few years during which I decided that I wanted to engage in different scientific pursuits.

After graduating from Long Beach Polytechnic High School in 1952, I enrolled at Whittier College, where I graduated four years later with a major in Chemistry. Nevertheless, I still had an interest in the mountains and forests and needed a summer job while in college.

While a freshman, I prepared an application for summer work, which I submitted, to the Forest Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They forwarded the application to Region 1 headquarters in Missoula, Mont. I was offered a summer job doing general forestry work in the Kootenai National Forest at the Libby Ranger Station in Libby, Mont., which I readily accepted.

There I spent the summers of 1953 and 1954 involved in activities such as trail maintenance, brush piling, two short assignments on lookout towers, a couple of forest fires and an assortment of other miscellaneous tasks. All this time I kept thinking about smokejumping.

Second attempt proves to be successful

In the spring of 1954 I sent an application to the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula; that didn't work out. I applied again in 1955. This time my application was accepted and I began training that summer.

As I set out to record some of my experiences, I find myself running into the challenge of how one avoids "bravado." What is the "mentality" that makes a person want to be a smokejumper? It's true that it's a job that provides a good public service and it's mostly seasonal, which allows for flexibility with the rest of the year: going to college, other off-season employment, travel, etc.

There is the camaraderie and the opportunity to relate to the natural world in unique ways. And the pay is good. These and other good reasons motivate people to want to be smokejumpers. But most of all, I think it's the adventure.

With the adventure comes an element of risk. Through good training and prudent behavior, most of us survive, but there is an increased measure of vulnerability inherent in this line of work. Yet we take the calculated risks because we feel the benefits are worth it.

While I have some memory of some of my jumps, and they would all make good "silk stories," time has bunched them together as a generally composite memory. However, I do remember quite a bit about my first jump.

You always remember your first time

I remember the adrenalin. I never felt blasé about any jump throughout my career; adrenalin was always there. But I was especially aware of it in the early jumps. We had been well-trained, and there wasn't any misunderstanding on how to go about it. But, ironically, I have such a fear of heights that I would almost call it a phobia. Standing near the open door of an airplane without a parachute gives me a terrible case of the creeps.

However, I was able to make the necessary mental adjustments to trust the parachute; as long as I was wearing one, the phobia was under control and any sense of disquietude was significantly minimized. Still, it did seem unnatural to be jumping out of an airplane.

All in all, I was more than just a little nervous as we suited up and waited our turn to board one of the Ford Trimotors. One by one the aircraft approached, the trainees boarded, and they left. I was glad that our group was not among the first to go until the planes returned empty and oh, how I envied those who had already jumped.

Soon enough it became our turn. We boarded, hooked up, and went on our way. We jumped in sticks of two; I was the first in our stick, seated in the doorway with my right foot on the step just outside the door. I must have been numbed out, and when the slap came – out I went, just as we were trained to do.

Within two to three seconds, I felt the tug and looked up to see the open canopy of the parachute. I don't think anything had ever looked so beautiful to me. I steered my way to the drop zone, landed, did my roll, and felt really good.

Back at the base, I remembered that our supervisor, **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41), had been on the plane observing us. I asked him how I had done. He said he couldn't remember; there were so many of us. That is exactly what I wanted to hear because anything unusual enough to get his attention would probably not have been good. We had steak for lunch.

I worked as a smokejumper for five seasons: 1955-56 at Missoula, 1959 at Silver City, N.M. and Missoula, and 1962-63 at Fairbanks, Alaska. I

made a total of 115 jumps, each of which I'm sure could be threaded into a good silk story. Unfortunately, I made my last jump over 50 years ago, and I keep forgetting that my memory is not as good as it used to be ... at least as I recall it.

At the time, I thought I'd remember them forever and unwisely failed to write them down. There were fire jumps, training jumps, a few demonstration jumps, and a large number of jumps from helicopters.

The Survey Jumpers

Parachuting from helicopters was an interesting diversion from fire suppression for most of each of the two years I was in Alaska. At the peak of the fire season for both years, the four of us on the helicopter project returned to Fairbanks to help with the fires and then went back to work on the project until October.

The following is a brief description of the survey project as I am able to piece it together from my memory:

Shortly after our refresher training (we were all experienced smokejumpers) in 1962 at Fairbanks, our supervisor, **Orville (Orv) Looper** (CJ-49), called us together to say he needed four volunteers to work on a project in which there would be a lot of jumping out of helicopters for most of the season. Only during high fire times would we be called to help with the fires and then return to our project.

The prospect of being involved in a new experience of parachuting out of helicopters and getting a lot of jumps was very appealing to me, and besides that, we'd be working an extended season into the fall. My only hesitation was that the project would be relatively limited geographically, and I had been looking forward to seeing a lot of the state doing fire jumps. I think the same thoughts must have been going through the minds of others in the crew.

Still, I didn't have to think about it for more than a few minutes to decide that I would volunteer. It turned out that there were just four of us to immediately volunteer, although I think that others could have easily been convinced to do so. Besides myself, the initial crew consisted of **Bill Robertson** (MSO-57), **Dan Lynch** (NCSB-58)

and **Larry Brown** (MSO-58), with whom I had worked in New Mexico during the 1959 season.

If it's a 28-footer, wear it out

We were immediately briefed on the operation. One interesting – but a little disconcerting – aspect of the operation was that we would only be using 28-foot parachutes. Orv explained that although the smokejumper program had been phasing out of the 28-foot chutes for several years in favor of the 32-foot chutes, there were still some functioning 28-footers around that they wanted to put to some use. He said that since we would be making so many jumps, this would be a good way to “wear them out.”

Although there were safety considerations regarding this, and I wasn't favorably impressed with the rationale for using the 28-foot chutes, it didn't dissuade any of us.

The Survey operation began shortly thereafter near Tok Junction, Alaska, moving later to a camp near Delta Junction. There was indeed a lot of jumping; I think I made somewhere near 40 jumps that summer. On the whole, there wasn't a lot of difference parachuting out of a helicopter from jumping from a fixed-wing aircraft.

The main difference was that it took about a second longer for the chute to deploy because the overhead rotor was putting downward pressure on the air above us as we were dropping, and we lacked the forward speed and airflow provided by the fixed-wing propellers.

The helicopter project was quite interesting, so I'll briefly describe it. Alaska had recently become a state and large tracts of land had to be surveyed as it made the transition from federal to state control. The old method for placing benchmarks by tripod, compass, cutting a line through the vegetation and chaining the distance was extremely cumbersome and inaccurate over such a vast amount of terrain. To remedy this, a three-step process was employed:

1. A helicopter would fly two smokejumpers to the approximate location where a benchmark was to be placed. Looking at the map and reading the terrain, we would determine the closest suitable site for a heliport in the forest below, jump into it, and spend

a few hours clearing out a heliport. A line of sight had to be cut through the woods in order to see a specific mountaintop. Later in the day, the helicopter would return to pick us up at the heliport we had just built.

2. Within a few days, a helicopter would bring in a crew with a Tellurometer, an electronic distance-measuring device that sends out microwaves to the mountaintop (with an established exact location) where another device had been set up. The microwaves are bounced back, and the exact location of the Tellurometer can be measured to within a few inches of accuracy. A temporary marker is placed at the location of the Tellurometer. A helicopter returns to pick up the crew.
3. Back at the camp, the calculations are made of the distance and direction from the temporary marker to where the placement of the benchmark should be. Within a few days, the survey crew would be dropped off by helicopter with compass, tripod, chain, ax, shovel and written directions to plant the benchmark the old fashioned way. It was a point of pride on our part as smokejumpers to place the heliport as close as possible to the proper site of the benchmark. Seldom did the survey crew have to go very far to place the benchmark and sometimes it was within the heliport itself.

I describe this operation because one doesn't hear much about it and it certainly belongs within the annals of smokejumper history.

Close call could've been deadly

There was one event that was very serious – a very close call that almost certainly could have been fatal. That was 53 years ago, so I'm sure I've forgotten some of the details. I'll relate the experience the best I can as I remember it.

Our pilot was named Oscar. Larry Brown and I were preparing to jump on an area up a ridge. There was a meadow below the ridge where I think we suited up. As the helicopter took off, we climbed up the side of the ridge. When we reached the top of the ridge, we needed to bank to

the left and continue further up the ridge to reach the intended location of the heliport we were to construct.

As we made the turn, there was a sudden loud bang overhead followed by a rhythmic *clack-clack-clack* ... There was quite obviously something broken in the housing of the overhead rotor, but the rotor continued to spin and Oscar still had some control. But there was not enough lift to maintain altitude and we were losing elevation.

Oscar pointed the helicopter back toward the meadow. Between the meadow and us, there was no place to land – just rocks and trees. As we approached the meadow, the ground elevation dropped as well, but we were dropping faster.

I don't know how high we were above the ground at the beginning of the incident – maybe 200 or 300 feet and quite marginal for the deployment of a parachute if we were to jump. At a time like this, a lot of thoughts and calculations go through one's mind very rapidly.

Sizing up the situation, Larry and I seemed to be coming to the same conclusion. The likelihood of reaching the meadow before crashing did not look good and our weight wasn't helping. Further, if we were going to jump, the sooner the better considering the rate at which we were losing altitude.

I looked over at Larry on the other side of the helicopter. We did some gesturing on the question of whether we should jump. We quickly came to some non-verbal conclusion that we should and both maneuvered to do so. It was probably not prudent to both jump simultaneously, given the possibility of entangled parachutes, but time was of the essence.

Oscar was a good and highly respected pilot. When he realized what we were doing, he yelled out something to the effect of "No, no – don't jump." He later explained that we were too close to the ground.

I certainly respect his opinion on that, but I still think it might have worked. "Might" isn't normally a good basis for action and I'm very glad we didn't.

As we descended the slope, the prospects of reaching the meadow began to improve, except for one thing. There was a tall tree right in the middle of our glide path just before we would reach the

meadow. When we got very close to the tree, Oscar pulled up on the controls; we picked up a few feet of elevation, scooted up over the tree and plopped down to a safe landing on the meadow. It was all in a day's work.

Jumping authority issues verdict

Late in the summer, we made a jump on a hot day into rugged terrain. I could sense that I was dropping fast, and landed facing forward into the side of a hill. It was a hard landing, and I could feel a sharp pain as the anterior cruciate ligament on my left knee snapped.

That night, I was taken to the hospital in Fairbanks, put in a cast and was essentially out of commission for jumping the rest of the season, though I did jump once in October. I later wrote to the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula to ask for an operational comparison between the 28-foot and 32-foot parachute. Almost immediately I received a personal, full-page response letter from none other than **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40).

Referencing studies, he quite unequivocally stated that the 32-foot chute was significantly superior to the 28-foot and should be used exclusively for smokejumping activities.

I wish I still had that letter, but regrettably it has been lost. I feel confident that if I had been using a 32-foot parachute on the day of the mishap, I would not have injured my knee. However, I will accept some responsibility for this. Larry Brown pointed out to me something that made immediate sense: if I had faced the direction of the wind and landed doing a backward roll, there would have been a more favorable vector effect on my speed of impact and a more favorable landing. After that, I generally tried to do backward landings.

For whatever reason, we seemed to be using the 32-foot chutes more frequently the next year, 1963, during which I made more than 50 jumps for a lifetime total of 115.

After that, I followed other pursuits, as I will describe. I want to briefly relate where this smoke-jumper background took me later in life – a lot of places really, but two that might be of particular interest: Southeast Asia and Peru.

Southeast Asia's friendly skies

Like a number of other smokejumpers, I went to Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and other South and East Asian places to work as an Air Freight Specialist (a.k.a. kicker) for Air America. I was there from October 1964 to March 1973. We did a lot of airdrops and point-to-point delivery of cargo and passengers throughout the region. I worked on the following aircraft: C-46, C-47, C-123, De Havilland Caribou and C-130.

There were a number of kickers who came and went during the time I was there. Most had previous experience as smokejumpers or in the military. I can't say this with absolute certainty, but I believe I had racked up more flight time as a kicker than any other kicker throughout Air America history – certainly in excess of 10,000 hours, translating into more than a year in the sky. It was a great experience – educational and packed with adventure.

I started out being stationed in Vientiane, working out of Laos and Thailand until December 1965 when I was transferred to Saigon, where I was the Manager of the Air Freight Section until July 1968. In Saigon, beside my normal flight and general management duties, I trained local Vietnamese kickers. Then I returned to Vientiane for the remainder of my time with Air America.

Shortly after arriving in Alaska in 1962, I began hearing about an operation in Laos. It was a company called Air America that did "spooky" work with lots of adventure and paid very well – around \$2,000 a month. That seemed like a lot of money. Prior to that season, I had been working as a quality-control technician in Los Angeles earning \$475 a month – which was considered pretty good pay back then.

The job was OK and I was working with good people, but it was not challenging and I did not like living in Los Angeles. I was thinking that I probably didn't have to be doing that. I applied for a fourth season as a smokejumper, this time to Alaska, and was accepted.

That was a very good move: it was work I liked in an environment that I liked, and my income jumped to about \$750 a month, which seemed like very good pay to me.

I tried to find out as much as I could about the work in Laos. There were several jumpers whom

I had known who had gone over there. **Roland “Andy” Andersen** (GAC-52), whom I’d known while working in Missoula and when he was our leader in New Mexico in 1959, and **Bob Herald** (MSO-55), who had trained with me in 1955, were in Laos at that time.

What really gave me pause was that three other ex-smokejumpers were killed on the job. One was **Ted Lewis** (MSO-43), whom I hadn’t known. But the other two I had known: **David Bevan**, another 1955 Missoula rookie, and **Darrell “Yogi” Eubanks** (IDC-54), another veteran of the New Mexico 1959 crew.

Mortality rate a real concern

As intriguing as the work seemed, the survival rate was not at all appealing. I quit thinking about going to Laos. Others thought differently, however.

Among the 1962 Alaska smokejumpers were the brothers **Tom Greiner** (another MSO-55) and his older twin brothers, **Claude** (MSO-54) and **Samuel** (MSO-54). Tom had applied and been accepted; he left for Laos in November 1962.

I spent January to April 1963 in Germany and Austria and returned to Fairbanks for another season. I learned that other Fairbanks jumpers **Lee Gossett** (RDD-57), **Lou Banta** (CJ-51) and **Glen Marlow** (WYS-57) had also gone to Laos, and that **Gid Newton** (CJ-55) and **Gene DeBruin** (MSO-59) had applied.

Early in the 1963 season, Gid was accepted and was on his way. Gene began working on the helicopter survey crew with us that year, replacing Bill Robertson, who had begun a graduate studies program at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

I decided to submit an application to work in Laos after all. Then in July, Dan Lynch told me that he had bad news: Gid was dead, another casualty in Laos. Shortly thereafter, Gene was offered a job there, which understandably made him pretty nervous. He was likely Gid’s replacement. He left for Laos anyway.

Again, I was having some second thoughts based upon what happened to Gid so soon after his arrival. However, there was no certainty that my application would be accepted in any event, and I needed a backup plan, which in fact I already had. It was to go back to Europe and study

at a university in Germany.

I found out that **Ron Rockwell** (MSO-59), another Fairbanks smokejumper, had studied at an interpreter’s school in the town of Germersheim on the Rhine River, a branch of the University of Mainz. He suggested that it would be a good place to study the German language in preparation for further university studies.

It sounded good to me, so I applied and was accepted.

Former jumper shot down - Air America calls

Now I had a backup option to Laos that sounded pretty good. Then in September, there was more bad news from Laos; the C-46 that Gene was flying in was shot down in southern Laos. He and some other crewmembers managed to bail out, but they were soon captured by the Pathet Lao. Being a Pathet Lao prisoner was definitely not a good thing. Shortly thereafter I received a letter of acceptance to work for Air America in Laos.

Now, what was going through my head? I really wanted to go to Laos. I had been corresponding by mail with Tom Greiner and had told him about some misgivings. Tom encouraged me to accept the Air America offer if it came.

As much as I wanted to go, I wasn’t suicidal and the odds just didn’t look good. Besides, I had an attractive alternative in Germany. Prudence suggested that I go to Germany, but I didn’t want to close the door on Air America. I made a phone call to company headquarters in Washington, D.C., to tell them that I wasn’t yet ready to start work with Air America, but that I would like them to keep my application on file.

The person I was talking to said he would do that. Then I said that I was heading to Europe and would like to stop by and talk to him. He agreed to that as well.

So, in November, that’s what I did. We had a good meeting. He was very interested in my experience and he agreed to keep my application on file. I left for Germany, went to Germersheim and began life there as a student.

Remorse set in almost immediately. I felt I had

made a terrible mistake. Being back in a school environment was a dismal contrast to what I could have been doing. I wrote a letter to Washington saying I was ready to start work any time and to please activate my application. I didn't receive a response.

Disappointment, but lots of fun in Europe

I didn't know it at the time, but there had apparently been some personnel changes in the office. I was to remain in Germany for almost a year through two semesters at Germersheim. It wasn't a total disappointment; there are a lot of inexpensive program activities available to students in Europe.

During the Christmas break, I spent a week skiing in the Alps. In a February midwinter break, I made a very interesting journey to Berlin, then a city divided by the Cold War. In the spring between semesters, I went to Hanover in the north of Germany where I bought a bike for about \$25 and rode it all the way back to Germersheim.

I visited medieval castles and had many other interesting excursions. All the while, I must have written a half-dozen letters to Washington. None of them was answered.

I had also continued my correspondence with Tom Greiner. He told me they had been hiring new kickers. It was quite discouraging. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next. Spring semester ended around July and I easily found work near Bonn at Heitkamp, a construction company. It was something to keep me occupied while I planned the future. It paid four marks (at that time about a dollar) an hour, enough to cover expenses for the time being.

The work was OK; I drove dump trucks, street sweepers, forklifts, etc. and did other varied assignments. I didn't see much future in Germany and didn't have much hope of getting on to Air America.

I settled on a plan to go to Humboldt State College in the Northern California town of Arcata, get a teaching credential, and look for a career in Alaska teaching Native Americans somewhere far out in the open spaces. I chose Humboldt State because I was still a California resident, which would save me a lot on cost, and life in the

Redwoods seemed appealing.

In September, I returned to the U.S. While I didn't have much hope, I wanted to give Air America another try. So I stopped off in Washington, D.C., and visited company headquarters. I found out they had apparently lost my application, and I wasn't getting much encouragement.

I completed a new application and said I hoped they would consider me for the next job opening. I had put my contact address as General Post Office, Arcata, Calif. The person I talked to took the application, but seemed quite indifferent. I assumed that would be the end of it.

In beautiful college town, Air America calls again

Upon arriving in Arcata, I was quite favorably impressed. It is a town with a lot of rain and fog for most of the year. But for the time I was there, the weather was pleasantly warm and sunny. During the week before school started, I made all the arrangements for living the next year in this setting.

I registered for my classes. I found a place to room and board in the woods surrounded by giant redwoods. I moved into a small cabin next to the house where I would get my meals. I bought a good used Pontiac for \$200.

I was all set for school to start the following Monday. I enjoyed the woods and spent a lot of time picking and eating wild blackberries over the weekend. On Monday morning, on the way to my first class, I stopped by the post office to see if I had any mail. There was a large manila envelope; it was an offer to work for Air America in Laos. Once again I had to decide between Air America and continuing my formal education, in a setting that seemed very attractive. I thought it over for about two seconds and decided on Air America. 📧

In Part II, Karl follows the call to Asia but upon arrival there, immediately learns of the harsh reality of the job—hazards that resulted in high mortality rates. Airplanes flying near mountains in thick clouds, small arms fire, and other dangers are just a few of the hazards Karl faces. He later goes to Peru, the world's cocaine capital, as U.S. State Department takes its operations to battle the drug trade.



In Memoriam



James Charles Allen (NCSB-46)
March 25, 1923 - August 15, 2016

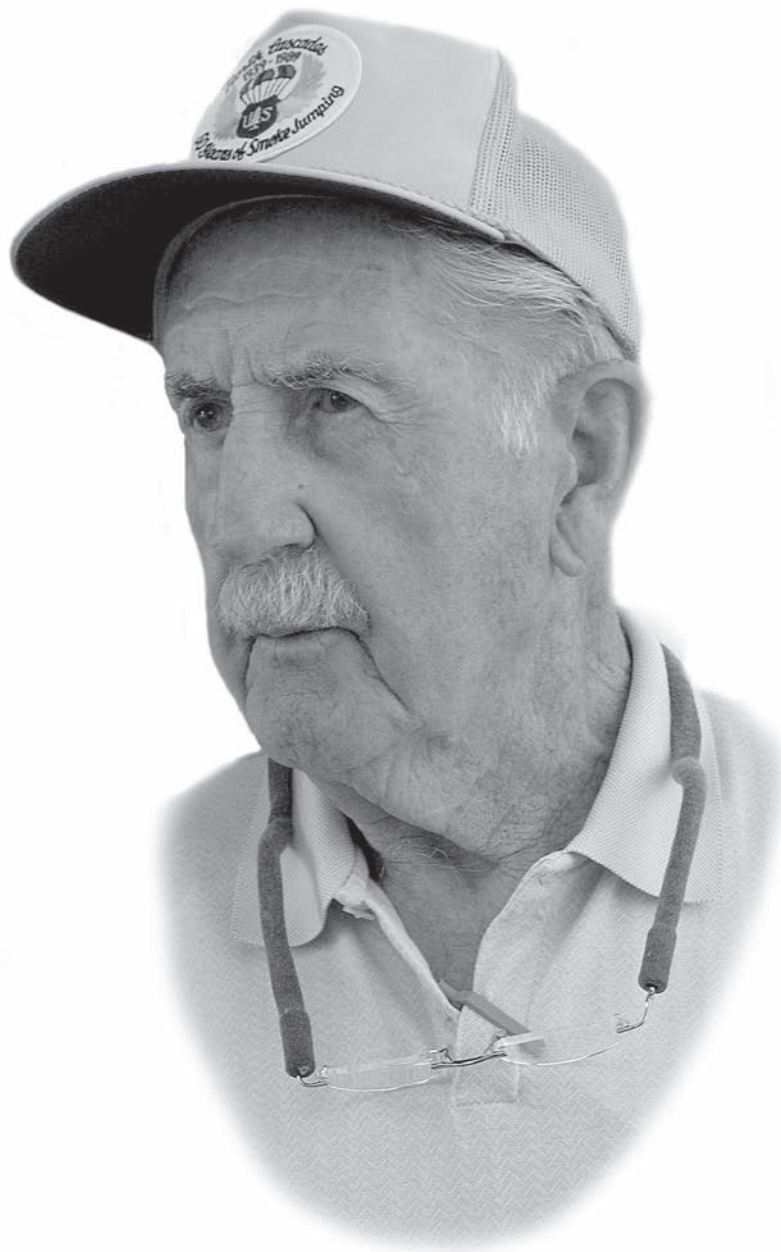


Photo & Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



SOUNDING OFF from the editor



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

The Passing of a Great Man

FOR THE MAJORITY of us NSA members, being a smoke-jumper was a small window in the years that made our lives. Once we had our college degree, we moved on to a job in the "real world." But, regardless of the number of years we jumped, smokejumping and what we did and learned as smokejumpers greatly affected how we did business for the rest of our lives. Lessons learned were not forgotten as we continued down the road to our careers.

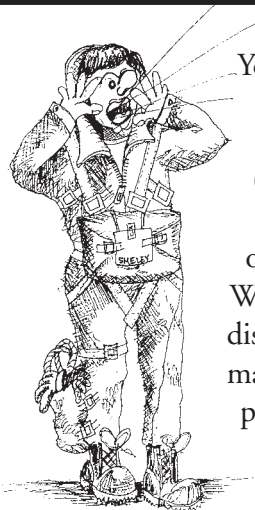
Cave Junction was a small base of only 24 jumpers, and that fostered a relationship among us that became family. We remember those we jumped with a couple seasons better than people with whom we worked for 30 years.

The attitudes and work ethic fostered at the Gobi never left me in my careers in teaching and with the USFS. The key to this attitude, in the opinion of many of the CJ jumpers, was our boss, **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46).

Jim came out of WWII, where he was a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne, and went to work for **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40). In 1953 he moved south to take over the position of Project Air Officer at Cave Junction before moving to Redmond in 1966.

I remember **Gary Welch** (CJ-60) telling of the time he went into the office being very proud of and telling Jim about his 13th jump on a fire in the big tree Umpqua N.F. Jim said that he could also vividly remember his 13th jump. It was in Operation Market Garden, September 1944, the largest airborne operation up to that point in WWII.

Cave Junction was run as a pretty tight ship. The work list was posted at 0715 in front of the Messhall for everyone to check after breakfast. You checked the list and got ready for the day. If you were working off the base, you had lunches to make, tools to gather, and vehicles to load.



You were expected to go to work at 0800, not to get ready to work at 0800.

Work performance on fires was paramount. We were hired by a district and needed to make sure we did the best possible job for the customer. All jump gear and parachutes had to come back after a fire. Once, a second

year jumper had his pack roll down into a canyon and failed to bring it back to the base. After a brief talk with Jim, that person drove back to the trailhead, hiked back in, climbed down in the canyon, retrieved his gear, and brought it back to the base. The next morning his bunk was empty, as he had gotten an early start on his drive back to Oklahoma.

My wife and I just returned (August 2016) from Jim's Memorial Service in Redmond. Even though it was a sad time, it was good to see so many of the Gobi jumpers in attendance. As we sat in a group behind the families, my mind continually wandered back to those days at CJ. I focused on the grandchildren in attendance and wished that they could have experienced the times and events of that small smokejumper base in Southern Oregon. Those days were long past by the time the

grandkids came along, and that part of their grandfather's life is probably little known to them.

I looked around at the group of Gobi jumpers at the memorial and thought about where they went in later life. A pretty impressive group: a professional forester/private businessman whose father was one of the 1939 experimental smokejumpers; a squadleader/foreman at CJ who retired from the FS; a dentist from Oklahoma who married the prettiest girl from Cave Junction; a leading banker in the state of Nevada and on the board of directors of many large organizations; a PhD in chemistry now in private business (as a squadleader, always impressed me by doing pull-ups with bar behind his head); a professional pilot who flew for Air America and the agency; another pilot who was Chief Pilot for Region 5; a businessman from the Redmond area; the first head of the Redmond Smokejumper Base and a businessman from Washington who jumped for Jim at RAC.

Looking over the jumpers who sent remembrances but were not able to attend: a jumper/smokejumper pilot who flew FAC in Vietnam; the Head Pilot for Bechtel Corp.; a Navy carrier pilot and air wing commander; an airline pilot; a US Marine Corps Captain; a teacher; three professional foresters; an owner of a Helicopter business in Hawaii and a Navy helicopter pilot.

To us, who jumped the Gobi during the years 1953-66, that time set guidelines for the rest of our lives. The attitudes, friendships developed, and working under the management style of Jim Allen

was worth years of education and work experience. It was a life experience.

The Gobi was closed in 1981 and now our Boss has passed on. The memories still remain. 🙏

Old Jumpers

by Toby Scott (McCall '57)

I'm an old wore-out jumper, who's been there and back
Don't know where the time went, musta fell through a crack.

Been a kick in the ass, boys, had one hell of a time,
But I don't think it's far now, to the end of the line.

Damned right I'm an old jumper, and proud as can be,
And if you make the cut you can stand here with me.

Cheated death a few times, got shot at and missed,
Flipped off the Grim Reaper, he really was pissed.

We lived on excitement and drank lots of beer,
Lost a few partners who we'll always hold dear.

It's not like the old days, you'll hear someone say,
When we put out the fires 'stead of just let 'em lay.

We can't fight that fire, it's too dangerous I fear,
Said the incident commander as she shed a sad tear.

There's no structure involved, don't fight fire at night,
The way they fight fire, boys, it sure is a fright.

The danger's sure there, now, yessiree Bob,
If you don't like your chances, then get a new job.

You could die from the fire or a snag or a rock,
If you don't like the odds, then you'd better take stock.

'Cause when you're on a fire working hard, digging line,
You need someone you can count on, not one who will whine.

Now the people in charge are politically correct,
That's why this great country's in such a hell of a wreck.

We need people running things who have common sense,
Know when to pull the trigger, when to jump the fence.

People like Big Andy, Max, Pete, Shep and Hess,
Jerry, T.J. and Alfalfa, we all passed the test.

In the fifties the old Forest Service paid its own way,
T.S.I. and trail work, hey, that was the day.
Now volunteers do that work and without any pay.

Back then when the fires were no longer in doubt,
They salvaged the timber and hauled those logs out.

Don't harvest that fire kill and bug kill they say,
Leave it alone, it will soon rot away.

Lose an engine on takeoff, there's no time for fear,
Get rid of that load or you've drunk your last beer.

You need a partner you can count on if you stay in the air,
Not frozen in fear with that cold, scared blank stare.

Put people in charge with good common sense,
Or else this great country will soon be past tense.

I've loved a few women, but it all came to pass,
I guess that some things just weren't meant to last.

Old Buddy don't care how much beer I drink,
If I cuss and raise hell and get throwed in the clink.

Take my advice if love comes to an end,
Get a good dog, boys, he'll be your best friend.

I'm not really sure when, and guess I could be wrong,
But I think that I'm nearing the end of my song.

I'll call Buddy and Curley and head up to that space,
On the side of my mountain, what a real special place.

Wrapped in my blanket with my whiskey and glass,
I'll toast all the good times that have now come to pass.

I'll toast all the good friends I've worked with and known,
And all those old stories that are now etched in stone.

Big Andy in that sailboat in the South China Sea,
Plane crashes at random by Hessel and Pete.

Cheating death in Laos with Jerry and T.J.,
Shep in Korea, and his rodeo days.

Max with his stories of old World War Two,
His nicknames passed round, there were more than a few.

Most of my heroes have all up and died,
Now it's time to cross over, what a hell of a ride. 🕯

Percent Of Containment: Watching LA Fires And American Politics

by Tom Decker (Idaho City '64)

The fire's smoke rolled high
over the San Gabriels,
and into yet another fire
somewhere north,

In the Santa Barbara range,
the columns of smoke –
separated by miles –
made the two seem as though

They were one, sisters
who hadn't spoken in years
until some spark
ignited the thick underbrush,

Setting off a conflagration
of old grievances, deadfall
fuels whose time had come,
predicated by long-ignored conditions.

The L.A. neighborhoods watched with
worry as heat and smoke thickened
the air, knowing that nothing
escapes the drifting ash.

The two fires
seemed like one,
and at the head of the column
grew a cumulus cauliflower of
superheated air,

A cauldron of white,
cancerous in its own right,
capable of its own weather
patterns, and destructive

Behavior if unchecked,
as reported on the evening news
by those who manage fires,
and project fire growth and behavior.

Not unlike the pollsters taking
the pulse of the spot fires
for what it will take
to make America great again. 🕯

The Illustrious History Of The Doug

by Gary M. Watts (McCall '64)

What an amazing airplane! The Douglas DC-3 was the first airplane I ever flew in, and it began my infatuation with aviation. It was in the mid-1950s and, as a paperboy for the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City, I “earned” the ride by selling subscriptions to the paper.

A little boy with his head in the clouds climbed aboard a Frontier Airlines DC-3 one afternoon and found a window seat.

My heart was halfway up my windpipe as the airliner rumbled down the runway. The rumbling and bouncing suddenly turned into silent floating. I knew I was really flying, for the first time.

We climbed and circled the valley and people and cars and houses grew smaller until they were insignificant. The view was breathtaking. We circled over the Great Salt Lake, and it seemed vast, disappearing over the western horizon. A toy train track ran on a trestle from the eastern shore out to Antelope Island, where the buffalo still roam.

Saltair, a popular resort at the time, sat on the southern shore like a tiny fairy castle.

We headed south and soon were circling over one of the largest open-pit copper mines in the world – the Kennecott Copper Company’s operation at Bingham, Utah.

Its true size could only be appreciated from altitude.

Then we headed east over Utah Lake, turning north in the shadow of Mount Timpanogos, the sleeping Indian maiden. We flew over Point of the Mountain, the site of the new state prison, then passed near Mount Olympus, looking up at her lofty peak.

We flew over Sugarhouse and the old state prison, my future high school being built on the old prison grounds, and I spotted our house a block north of the new high school.

The Doug started off as the DC-1, Douglas Commercial No. 1. The DC-1 first flew on July 1, 1933; it could carry 12 passengers and was almost lost on its maiden flight due to a faulty design in

the fuel system.

Once the fuel system was fixed and because of the success of the initial performance tests, TWA ordered 25 Douglas airliners, which with improvements became the DC-2.

The DC-2 had a wider fuselage, its length was increased by two feet, and the seating capacity increased to 14. Payload, service ceiling and speed were increased and in-flight movies were added to the package. The DC-2 was, at that time, the most luxurious airliner in the world.

With the DC-2 “flying the line” – a total of 193 were built – at the request of American Airlines, Douglas went on to design two larger versions of the DC-2: the 14-passenger sleeper and a 21-seat “daytime” airliner. The larger versions resulted in the designation of DC-3.

The Douglas Commercial Model No. 3 prototype first flew on Dec. 17, 1935 – more than 80 years ago! Commercial service began in June 1936.

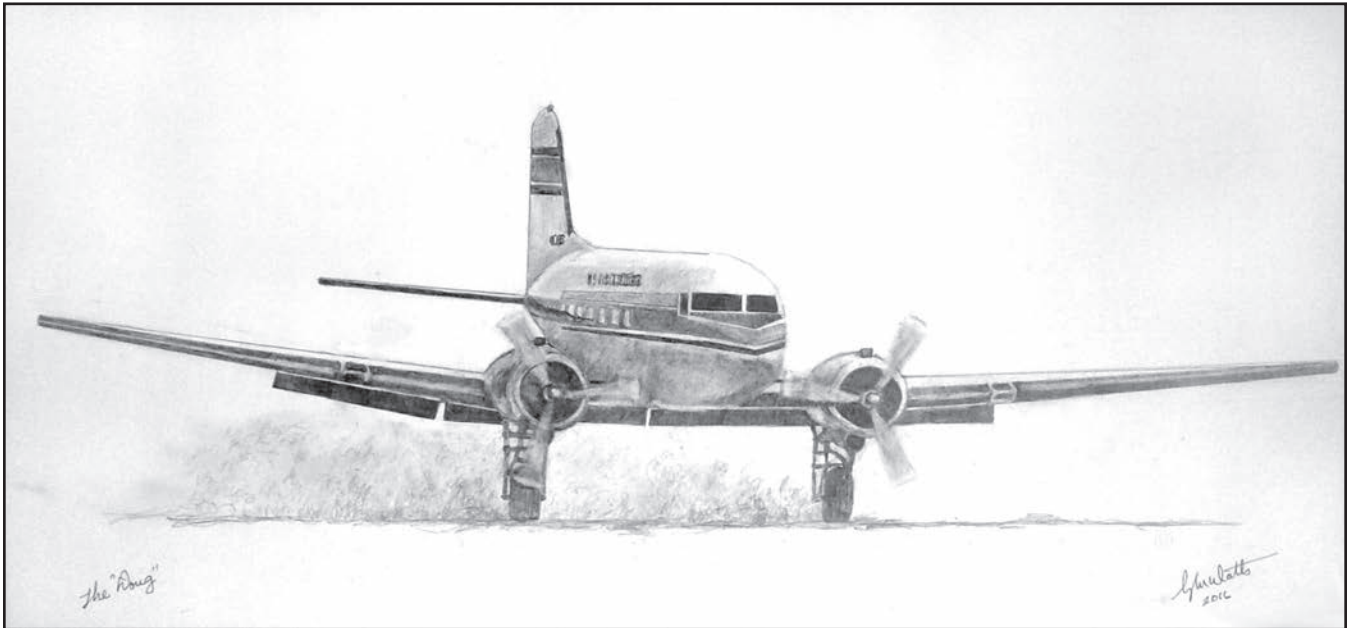
The specifications of the DC-3A were: Wing span, 95 feet, 2 inches; length, 64 feet, 8 inches; height, 16 feet, 11 inches; empty weight, 16,865 pounds; gross weight, 25,199 pounds; maximum speed, 230 mph; cruise speed, 207 mph; service ceiling, 23,200 feet; power plant, two 1,100-horsepower Wright R-1820 nine-cylinder radial engines.

More than 10,000 DC-3s were eventually built.

As the Doug settled into commercial service, the winds of war were blowing across Europe and Asia. Seeing the need and a market for a military version, Douglas went to work developing the Skytrain, which was used extensively by the allies during World War II.

Modifications on the DC-3 included a cargo door, a strengthened flight deck, a hoist attachment, a tail cone equipped with glider-towing shackles, and an astrodome. And, of course, an olive drab paint job.

The military version was designated C-47 by



(Courtesy Gary Watts)

the U.S. Army and R4D by the U.S. Navy. The RAF dubbed it the Dakota, and it was also called the Gooney Bird. It was licensed in Russia in large numbers as the Lisunau Li-2.

The C-47 played a major role in many of the allied campaigns in World War II:

At Guadalcanal, New Guinea and Burma, it moved allied troops to counter the mobility of the Japanese army. The Dakota airlifted supplies to the embattled U.S. troops at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

Possibly its greatest role in military aviation was flying supplies from India to China over the Himalayas – known as “flying the hump.” The C-47 was involved in flying Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle out of China after his historic carrier-based B-25 attack on Tokyo.

The Dakota dropped 4,381 allied troops into Sicily in 1943 during that invasion.

During the Normandy invasion more than 21,000 paratroopers were dropped in the first 24 hours and numerous gliders were towed into combat during the first few days of the operation.

Thousands of C-47s were sold as surplus after World War II and went into civilian airline service.

During the Vietnam War the C-47 returned to combat service in several variations. There were three versions for advanced electronic warfare, sometimes called “Electric Gooneys”; they were

designated the EC-47N, EC-47P, or EC-47Q depending on the engine installed.

The most interesting model of the Doug was, by far, the AC-47, a gunship designated “Spooky” and often affectionately nicknamed “Puff the Magic Dragon” by the ground troops for its ability to rain down fire and destruction from the sky.

Spooky was a C-47 retrofitted with three 7.62-millimeter General Electric mini-guns, mounted on the port side of the aircraft to fire through two rear windows and the open cargo door. The pilot could aim the guns using markings on the left-side windscreen and fire them by a control on the yoke.

Cruising for hours in a left-hand orbit at 120 knots at an altitude of 3,000 feet, Puff’s three mini-guns, firing 100 rounds per second each, could put a bullet or tracer into every square yard of a football field-sized target in less than 10 seconds.

What an amazing airplane!

Spooky’s first major success occurred in December 1964. Called into a Special Forces outpost in the Mekong Delta, Puff fired 4,500 rounds of ammunition into an attacking Viet Cong force, preventing the post from being overrun. The gunship was then called to protect a second outpost 20 miles away. Spooky again blunted the attack and forced a Viet Cong retreat.

In February 1965 in Vietnam’s Central High-

lands, Puff again demonstrated her amazing capabilities by blunting a large Viet Cong offensive. For more than four hours, she fired 20,500 rounds into the enemy's hilltop position, killing an estimated 300 Viet Cong.

Of the 53 aircraft converted to the gunship configuration, 41 served in Vietnam. Nineteen Spookys were lost, 12 in combat action. Official reports indicate that no village or hamlet under Puff's protection was ever lost.

The superb work of the two AC-47 squadrons, each with 16 aircraft flown by pilots younger than their aircraft, earned the 14th Air Commando Wing the Presidential Unit Citation.

What an amazing airplane!

The U.S. Forest Service began using the DC-3 shortly after the war.

Besides dropping smokejumpers and cargo, the Doug ferried hotshot crews to and from their fires and carried supplies and heavy equipment to outlying areas. It was on one such flight to reposition a small Caterpillar tractor from McCall, Idaho, to the Indian Creek Ranger Station, that I gained firsthand an added appreciation for the Doug.

Posted at the bottom of the jump list, I was tasked to accompany the tractor and provide whatever manual labor required by the pilot, Bob Fogg, or the ranger, who was babysitting his new toy.

The ranger backed the yellow tractor up a ramp to the DC-3's cargo door, then positioned it under the careful guidance of Capt. Fogg. Then Bob and I went to strapping the Cat securely to the flight deck. When we were finished, I was sure that even if the Doug did an aileron roll the tractor wouldn't budge.

It was a short flight to Indian Creek, and I chose to ignore the fold-up seats in back and took a position standing behind and between the pilots' seats. The view was panoramic and I was unencumbered by such nonsense as seat belts.

My first view of the small airfield came as we descended into the Salmon River canyon. The 4,600-foot dirt strip sat on a plateau above a bend in the river. The field's elevation of 4,718 feet put it about 100 feet above the river bottom.

Steep canyon walls rose on all sides to peaks in excess of 9,000 feet that surrounded the valley.

It was a sobering view, and my adrenaline

surged as I tried to figure out how Bob was going to get that great, huge airplane down on that tiny patch of dirt.

Seemingly unconcerned but highly focused, Bob made a circling, left-hand approach, slowing down and lowering the landing gear and flaps on the downwind leg. As we turned on final approach, I mentally lifted my feet to avoid the tree tops we were skimming over. The Doug touched down hard, and we hurtled toward the deadly drop-off.

Finally, the tail dropped and in a cloud of dust we came to a stop. Wide-eyed, I looked down at the Salmon River, 100 feet below.

The last two Forest Service DC-3s retired recently after more than four decades of service. The McCall Doug was put out to pasture on Oct. 24, 2012, in Ogden, Utah. The Missoula Doug followed suit on Dec. 10, 2015.

What a great airplane! 📌

Get *Smokejumper* One Month Earlier

NSA members are signing up for the electronic version of *Smokejumper* that is delivered via email. It is sent in a PDF file that contains everything that is in the hard copy issue.

The advantages are: early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings. If you like the hard copy, you can download and print it at home.

NSA Director **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) says: "I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct \$ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing. I think I mentioned in an earlier message that I'm having other magazines/newsletters delivered electronically. It takes less space to store them electronically and if I do want a hard copy, it is easy to print using the *Fast Draft printer option* which allows printing 48 pages in less than two minutes on my printer and uses a lot less ink."

If you want to be added to the electronic mailing, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59): cnkgsheley@earthlink.net. 📌

The Man in the Middle

The First Black Smokejumper

by Robert L. “Bob” Bartlett

Many thanks

I am going to start the way I would normally end. I owe a great deal of thanks to Tony Wood of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and Fred Donner (MSO-59)—the pair who found the gravesite of Triple Nickle PFC Malvin L. Brown (PNOR-45) and for their earlier efforts to track down the story of “the man in the middle,” Wardell “Knuckles” Davis (MSO-45)—a CO reportedly from the Philadelphia area. Also, a big thanks to Fred for the electronic copy of the NSA Master Action Report. The Master spreadsheet proved invaluable in discovering Wardell’s story and continues to be a researcher’s goldmine.

Thanks to Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) for his willingness to answer my countless probing smokejumper history questions; for his CPS knowledge, sharing of contacts and leads; and, for his constant encouragement. And, a huge special thanks to my colleague and fellow researcher Nancy A. Bunker, an Associate Professor at neighboring Whitworth University in Spokane, WA, for her excellent research skills—in finding what others had tried and failed to find. To all of you, I am in your debt.

The photo

I have seen the picture a number of times: three men, two white and one black, standing next to a Ford Tri-motor. When it appeared on the cover of the April 2016 issue of *Smokejumper*, I tore through the pages looking for an accompanying article. Finding none, I immediately called Chuck Sheley. “So Chuck, did the cover article not make the final cut?” “There is no cover article, Bob. As a matter of fact, Jim Burk, the one on the left who knew the black guy well, just died.” Unfortunate!

Chuck knows me well. For the longest time he has known that I have been deeply interested in the story of the man in the middle. Who was he? How did this black guy end up in Missoula or

wherever, posing next to a Ford Tri-motor? This time my curiosity was kicked into high gear, and I had some time on my hands. Behind every face is a story and I believe this is his.

Little to go on

I had little to go on and I know other NSA members have tried and failed to learn this man’s story. My turn had come, and my research colleague, Nancy A. Bunker, agreed that the story of the man in the middle needed to be found and shared.

Cooley

I immediately pulled Earl Cooley’s book *Trimotor and Trail* off the shelf. Cooley gives a detailed, first-hand account of his experiences with jumpers out of the Missoula area before and during the War years, including a chapter on the Civilian Public Service (CPS) volunteers and Japanese balloon bombs. The first time I read Cooley’s book I was interested in what he had to say about the 555th. This time I was looking for any mention of the man standing in the middle of the photograph. I was fairly certain that Cooley would have not only noticed him but would have mentioned something about the only “Negro” in camp, who was also a smokejumper. Nope, not a word!

As a black Westerner

As a black Westerner, passionate researcher, member of the Triple Nickle Association and the National Smokejumpers Assoc., and a relative newcomer to smokejumper history, I am particularly interested in early “trail blazers”—the “firsts”, and this black guy was apparently both. I was told some time ago that the man in the middle was/ is Wardell “Knuckles” Davis, a reported Golden Gloves boxer from Philadelphia, PA, who rookied in Missoula in 1945—most likely the first black smokejumper. Imagine my surprise when I also



Missoula 1945: Jim Brunk, Wardell Davis, Wayne Kurtz (Courtesy Jim Brunk)

learned that he was a conscientious objector, a CO, a devout pacifist!

If the person my colleague and I found is the man in the middle, well, some of the mystery is solved, and we are excited to share his story and to add a lot more detail to smokejumper history. Unfortunately, some of the pieces do not match up perfectly, so, if he is not our man in the middle, well, I'm just about to tell you another amazing story of a black conscientious objector from Philadelphia.

The Man in the Middle

The man in the middle would have experienced life in the west and northwest at the awkward intersection of race and pacifism, a young, lone black man, living in isolation in an overwhelmingly white place, involved in an overwhelmingly white line-of-work—a man hard to miss. It is fitting the photographer, whether by design or happenstance, captured him the way he did—as the man in the middle, an outsider within.

Wardell A. Davis and Family

Wardell “Knuckles” Davis was actually born Wardell Alfonzo Davis on February 11, 1926, in Lynchburg, VA, to Gilbert Allen Davis and Mary Isabell Davis. Gilbert and Mary were both born in Virginia in the late 1800s and married around 1915 at the ages of 21 and 17, respectfully. Both had a 6th grade education. All four of Wardell's grandparents were also born in Virginia. The 1920 census shows that Gilbert was working for himself, farming on rented land.

Gilbert and Mary had 12 living children, according to the 1940 census: four daughters and eight sons. Gilbert is listed as a paper bailer in a junk shop. The two eldest daughters worked as servants in a wholesale bakery and the oldest son as a bottle washer. Wardell was the fifth oldest child. Even though he was 14 in 1940, he had only completed the 4th grade. The two older sisters had completed grades 7 and one older brother grade 6. His younger siblings 11 and 12 had completed grade 3.

The family moved from Virginia to Philadelphia probably early in 1935, based on one child born in Virginia and the next in PA. The 1940

census reports they were in Philadelphia on April 1, 1935, but not at the same address as 1940. Their 1940 address of record shows 3736 N. Syderham St., Philadelphia, PA, and their church of record shows, First Century Gospel Church of Philadelphia.

The CPS Program

Peace Church representatives submitted a program to President Roosevelt in early 1941 that would fulfill the requirement of “work of national importance.” The Civilian Public Service Program (CPS) called for Conscientious Objectors (COs) to be assigned to work camps in soil conservation or forestry projects and to begin their service with the idea that after a number of months, they could volunteer for other programs.

COs first reported to Base Camps. There they received orientation to their particular “work of national importance” by the government technical agency; induction into CPS by the church operating agency, including orientation for living together in a pacifist community, time for spiritual and personal development; and introduction to camp governance.

Afterwards, many men opted to perform “Detached Service,” where they volunteered for special project work in units including smokejumping. Men who belonged to historically pacifist religious groups had guaranteed access to conscientious objector status.

Black COs

It is *not* hard to imagine individual black men and women being conscientious objectors during the War Years. There have been a number of famous ones, both during and since WWII. Bayard Rustin, also from Pennsylvania, was one. He combined the pacifism of the Quaker religion (the religion of his grandmother), the non-violent resistance taught by Mahatma Gandhi, and the socialism espoused by black labor leader A. Philip Randolph. However, unlike Wardell and his brothers, Rustin would spend two years in prison for his pacifist beliefs during the War. The opposite is the story I am most familiar with, coming from a family of war veterans dating back to the Civil War.

Throughout our nation's history, black men

and women have served as scouts, soldiers and spies. They volunteered by the hundreds during the American Revolution, the Civil War, the Indian Wars, and every war and conflict—against enemies both foreign and domestic. They volunteered, served, and died at a time when they were considered not fully human, not worthy, not smart enough to be pilots, or brave enough to jump out of an airplane. They were not the only nonwhite combatants to serve bravely and honorably from the margins of American society. But they did, and blazed a trail for the rest of us to follow!

Political vs Theological Objection

Wardell and his family were not members of a “Peace” Church. They would not have “automatically” qualified for CPS service. Their objection or opposition to the War would have been political and not theological. In those days, it would have been difficult, but not impossible, for a non-Mennonite, Quaker, or Brethren to receive protection or help under the CPS program.

Three Davis Brothers Join CPS Program

The three oldest Davis sons—Gilbert R. Davis (b.1920), Buford R. Davis (b.1924) and Wardell (b.1926)—joined the Civilian Public Service. How they did it remains a mystery. The five younger sons would have been under 18 during the war. They are all listed as being from the *Full Century Gospel Church*. That church was founded in 1925 in Philadelphia and later moved to New Jersey. Of the 32 *Full Century Gospel Church* members listed in the CPS program, nineteen were from Philadelphia, the home state of Quaker founder William Penn.

Gilbert R. was listed as a junk dealer before entering CPS on Nov. 7, 1941. He served in a unit in Kane, PA. Buford R. was listed as a laborer but did not join until January 5, 1945. He served in two units: one in Big Flat, New York, and the other in Mancos, CO. Wardell was listed as a carpenter before he entered in 1944.

CPS Worker 002053-Davis, Wardell A.

According to the Mennonite CPS records, Wardell entered at age 18, drafted from Philadelphia on April 23, 1944. He left CPS service July

26, 1946, three years and a day before I was born. He served in four camps during his two year stint. One of the units was CPS Camp 20 at Wells Tannery, PA. This camp dealt mostly in contour farming. It was run by the Mennonites and closed in Oct. 1944. He served at CPS Camp 28, a Forest Service base camp at Medaryville, IN, where they mostly planted trees on former strip mines, and CPS Camp No. 46, a Soil Conservation Service base camp at Big Flats, NY, where they worked on soil erosion control. Most significantly, Wardell served at CPS Camp 107, a National Park Service camp at Three Rivers, CA, where they dealt with fire suppression.

CPS Camp 103-01 Huson, MT

Wardell is on the list of workers in each of the other camps; however, he is not listed on the Mennonite site as serving at CPS Camp 103-01 at Huson, MT, operated by the Mennonite Central Committee in cooperation with the Brethren and Friends Service Committees. Thanks again to Chuck, I have a list of other CPS jumpers not listed on the Mennonite website but are listed in the records of Camp 103 Administrator Roy Wenger and his wife Florence. Camp 103 opened in May 1943 and closed in April 1946. It is obvious that Wardell applied and was accepted into the smoke-jumper program and most likely from a camp in CA. Wardell is listed on the Wenger Camp list.

The first Black Smokejumper

Wardell reported to Camp 103 at Huson about thirty miles northwest of Missoula. Men in that unit are reported in the 1940s as “. . . highly trained,” parachuting into rugged country and putting out forest fires. “When not fighting fires, the men at this camp spent much time putting up hay to feed pack mules that carried supplies and equipment to guard stations and to and from fires.” All the camps Wardell is listed in, and the one at Huson, were closed by July 1946.

We have yet to confirm Wardell’s Golden Glove status. The nickname and reference to Golden Glove status comes from an interview with CPS jumper Wilmer “Bill” Carlsen (MSO-43), recorded by Steve Smith (Associate) for the NSA history documentary “Firefighters From The Sky.” What we do know is how common nick-

names are among “jumper bros.” **“Jumper bro” Wardell ‘Knuckles’ Davis**

The Master Action Report (MAR) for Region 1, 1945, lists Wardell Davis as (MSO-45) and as *“perhaps the first black smokejumper.”* In spite of *no* Mennonite paper trail, the MAR confirms that 19-year-old Wardell Davis completed seven practice jumps (standard) and jumped at least three fires that fire season—making 10 total jumps.

Wardell’s Fire Jumps

His first fire jump entry is dated July 11, location—Lolo’s, Weir Ridge 6-36N-12E. Wardell reportedly jumped that fire with CPS jumpers **George H. Robinson** (MSO-44) and **Edwin A. Vail** (MSO-44). He later jumped fires on July 29 and August 1, location—forests unknown. Five days after Wardell’s last jump entry, 555th medic jumper PFC Malvin Brown made his first and last fire jump. On August 6th, 1945, Brown made history as the first smokejumper to die on a fire jump in Southwestern Oregon near Roseburg.

I wonder if Wardell ever heard of the death of Malvin Brown, Operation Firefly or the 555th? According to the MAR, the 555th did jump a few fires in Region 1 alongside CPS jumpers. The following is one such account told by CPS Jumper **Wallace “Pic” Littell** (MSO-44).

CPS and 555th Team-up

July 19, 1945, CPS Jumpers and Triple Nickle Team on Peavy Creek Fire, (*Smokejumper* magazine, July 2002). This was a fire south of the Salmon River, in the “River of No Return Primitive Area.” “Pic” describes 20 jumpers including himself on this fire that grew out of control when,

“To the rescue came 47 black paratroopers from the 555th Triple Nickles. They came from Pendleton, Oregon, and dropped from C-47s. Francis Lufkin (NCSB-40) was their spotter. The next day 25 more jumped bringing the total of Triple Nickle jumpers to 72.” This fire is officially listed as the Nez Perce, Meadow Creek Fire 25-28N-10E.

Another fire involving CPS jumpers and the 555th that happened around that same time is mentioned in Robert C. Cottrell’s 2006, *Smokejumpers of the Civilian Public Service in World War II* (pg. 7). According to **Earl Kenagy** (NCSB-45), the fire was along the Canadian border and

involved CPS jumpers and “Some 97 paratroopers (555th) . . .”

Far from complete

The story of Wardell “Knuckles” Davis is not complete, and I have my own specific questions. For example: What motivated Wardell and his brothers to choose to be CO’s, and how did they enter the CPS program? What was his experience as the first and only black CO smokejumper living in rural Montana? I cannot help but wonder what, given a chance, a black CO and black Army jumpers trained for war, but denied, would talk about?

Wardell was unquestionably a “Trailblazer,” the “First,” and his story is still incomplete. Sadly, it would be nearly thirty years before **Milford Preston** (RDD-74) would become the next black smokejumper.

The Final Word for Now

According to the Social Security Death Index, Wardell A. Davis died in January 1977 at 51. His final resting place or obituary is yet to be found. He may have married an Earlene Edwards in 1948-1949. The hunt continues for living relatives and for anyone living or interviewed who knew Wardell as a CPS Jumper in Region 1. We are combing the University of Montana’s Mansfield Archives, *Smokejumper Collection* as this article goes to print.

His story is incomplete, but we are much further along than ever before! Thanks to everyone who helped along the way. *God bless the trail blazers, especially those who volunteered to blaze the roughest path.*

Addendum to the October 2015 article, *A Tale of Two Coins*: For those in the Baltimore/D.C. area who would like to visit the gravesite of 555th PFC Malvin Brown, the actual location is the Mount Calvary Cemetery in Anne Arundel County near Baltimore.

Thanks Chris: I also failed to thank Associate NSA Member and magazine contributor **Chris Sorensen** in that same October article mentioned above for his kind words regarding my Triple Nickle presentation in Missoula last summer. The welcome and kindness I received in Missoula and continue to experience is the impetus behind my membership in both associations. Thank you all! 🙏



High Desert Museum Travel

Photos Courtesy



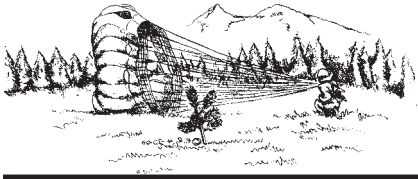
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Modeling Smokejumper Exhibit

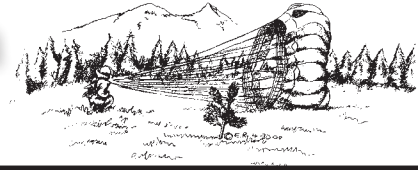
by Damian Fagan



by Jimmy Kirkley (CJ-64)



Snapshots from the Past



by Jeff R. Davis
(Missoula '57)

Snow Jump

IT WAS THE WINTER of 1966. I was a foreman and working year round at my home base in Missoula, Montana, at the Aerial Fire Depot.

The Top Brass decided to make search and rescue experts out of us. I thought that was taking the phrase in our job description, "other duties as assigned," too damn far, but my voice didn't count.

One of the exercises they ginned up was to jump on top of the nearby Bitterroot Mountains, into as much snow as we could find, pitch tents for an overnight stay, then pack our gear down the mountain in the Stokes litter dropped with us as training for packing out the victims of a fictitious rescue jump.

This sounded like a fine new version of a "picnic in the woods," as we called some of our summertime practice jumps. I could hardly wait for my turn.

It came on March 1st. Three of us were scheduled for the jump: **Fred Cavill** (MSO-54), **Roger Savage** (MSO-57) and myself. We loaded the Stokes litter aboard the AT-11 Twin Beech. The Stokes carried the tent I had designed and built in the loft from balloon cloth and the rest of the camping gear.

Our jump spot was five miles off Deep Creek, high on the ridges just northwest of the base. It was cold on that short run to Deep Creek in the open-door Beech, and the Air Force parkas we'd donned in place of the regular jump-jackets did little to keep us warm.

The spot was in an open meadow covered with four feet of snow, with nearby drifts of over twice that much. We jumped one-man sticks. I was last man out. I jumped out into a world suddenly turned completely white. I couldn't tell the horizon from the ground. The meadow was large and there was no drift, so I quit trying to see the spot and concentrated on my landing.

But I had no frame of reference as to how far below me the ground was. I made three landing dry runs in mid-air before I just assumed a landing position, looking straight out at what I thought was the horizon, staying limp with both feet together until I hit. When I landed, I was immediately buried in snow as I rolled down a gentle slope and

came to rest.

We constructed a snug camp with the small tent I'd made and sat happily around a blazing campfire, drinking the booze one of the guys had thoughtfully provided. We felt like school-boys on an outing, enjoying our picnic in the snowy woods.

The next morning we were supposed to pack the gear into the Stokes litter and guide it down the mountain, following on snowshoes. We took one look at that vast snowy open slide down the mountain and immediately discarded the notion of playing mountain rescue experts. That damn Stokes looked like a toboggan to us, and toboggans were made to ride, not plod slowly behind them.

Two of us piled on top of the load, holding onto the sides for dear life, and the third man pushed from behind until we started down the slope and piled on, and the fun began.

It was a wild ride down that mountain. We overturned and crashed at least three times before we skidded to the valley floor. They were actually paying us for this!

In my career I made a hundred and eighty Forest Service jumps, but I'll never forget the jump on Deep Creek that started out as a serious exercise and ended up as nothing more than a pleasurable romp in the snow. 🐼

Lessons Unlearned - A Historical Perspective Part V

Prescribed Fire and Smoke Management

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

Historic Background

For those following this series, you will remember my generalization concerning the National Forest land base. In summary:

30% = Commercial Forest Lands / Timber Harvest and Activity Fuel Burning

40% = Rangeland / Livestock Grazing and Prescribed Fire

30% = Back Country and Wilderness under Fire Plans

For this installment I would like to focus in on the Wilderness Fire Plans. What they can and cannot do for us, plus some of my personal Lessons Learned.

In my hometown of Lander, Wyoming, we are fortunate to live surrounded by three great land ownerships: The Shoshone National Forest, Wind River Indian Reservation, and the public lands of the Bureau of Land Management's Great Divide and Red Desert. I have been blessed in my career to both fight and manage fire on all three of these units. By far, the most interesting and challenging fire management occurs on the Wind River Agency within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Wind River Agency

Firefighters on the Wind River Indian Reservation will "roll" on both wildland and structural fires. They suppress fire within a complex of dispersed interface with heavy natural and the urban fuel loadings often found along stream courses. They will most often use engines and helitack for transportation to and from the fires.

Like any well-run fire program, the individuals involved make or break the outfit. The agency is blessed to have an outstanding Fire Management Officer in Robert Jones. Bob was one of many who left the Forest Service for the BLM, Park Service, and BIA when the bureaucracy in the Forest Service

became unbearable.

The Wind River Agency has a backcountry, wilderness-type fire plan for much of the Reservation. Fires have been successfully managed to re-introduce fire into the ecosystem and allowed to burn to their natural conclusion or into areas that are easily suppressed. The type of large-scale fire re-introduction seen on the Reservation would be almost impossible to implement on the National Forests due to a number of dynamics.

Let's look at just one large scale "prescribed natural fire" on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

The Alpine Lake Fire

Alpine Lake began as a lightning ignition in July of 2012 within the Wind River Roadless area and burned over 46,000 acres until its conclusion in November. During this time period, only a handful of individuals managed the fire. The key positions included the Fire Management Officer, Incident Commander, Fire Behavior Officer or Long Term Analyst (LTAN), and the Public Information Officer along with a field monitoring crew. At specific points in time, suppression actions were taken using the local Fort Washakie Helitack Crew. At one point a Type II Team was ordered and used for short duration to bolster suppression and give local resources a break and to re-affirm the management of the fire and dispel rumors. The Type II Team (Richardson – Rocky Mountain Region) proved to be a tremendous assistance and asset in promoting the local fire plan and obtaining long-term management objectives.

Costs for the fire were minimal and would have been almost nonexistent if not for the requirement to protect the Saint Lawrence Basin for recreational use. Many of the local Shoshone and Arapaho wanted us to actually hand ignite adjacent lands to burn into the main fire. They knew that this fire

would prove to be a tremendous benefit to the local elk population.

The Alpine Lake Fire was unique in that it gave us the opportunity to observe a wildfire in an almost pre- Lewis and Clark setting. The fire burned through all ecological zones, from high alpine down through a variety of timber zones and into the high plains grassland. At the time, the Forest Service had suspended all such fire use on National Forests due to the severity of the fire season. I fielded a multitude of calls from the media as to how we could still be allowing our fire to burn when the Forest Service suspended all such burns. First, I explained that we were not part of the Forest Service. Second, to one reporter in Denver, I said, “Look out your window to the mountains. Now imagine that the town of Denver sits along the South Platt River and has only about 6,000 people in population. There are no homes or buildings outside of town except for the isolated ranch and outbuildings. Bill Cody just rode up with the Pony Express mail ... and that, ma’am, is the main reason why we can still manage this fire in the Wind Rivers to its natural conclusion.” I still don’t think she got it.

Take Home Lessons - Smoke Management

Smoke management is key to the success of any fire-reintroduction project. On the Alpine Lake Fire, we pumped our smoke out over some of the most remote areas of Wyoming. On specific days we smoked in the local towns of Fort Washakie, Ethete, Riverton, Hudson and Lander. I can tell you from experience that we could not politically survive more than occasional days of “smoked in” for population centers. Others experienced in this same type of fire have re-affirmed that three smoke-filled days in a row can often lead to a career-ending event. This overlooked reality of the management of fire in wilderness and backcountry is the “Achilles Heel” of the entire program.

On the adjacent Washakie Ranger District of the Shoshone National Forest, a large-scale wilderness fire plan is in place for the Popo Agie Wilderness. Using Lessons Learned on the Wind River Reservation, I concluded that the Forest Service’s wilderness fire plan is simply a “Paper Tiger.” Why? The natural southwest wind flow carries all smoke down and into Lander, Hudson and Riverton. Operationally,

the fire plan holds little chance for success under the confines of the Wilderness Act of 1964 for large-scale fire re-introduction.

That is why I have preached for years to modify the Wilderness Act based on the historic fact that Cultural Fires were set by American Indians. News Flash – “Untrammelled by Man” should have been written as “Untrammelled by White Man” for the congressional act to hold any truth or lack thereof (See Fire Use in Great Sioux War – Brauneis published in both *Smokejumper* and Fire Management Today, Vol 64, No 3).

At present we must wait for natural ignitions to occur within wilderness to manage fire. In reality, we must be able to ignite fire in wilderness at the right place and at the right time to achieve wilderness objectives and reduce risk. The key burn window for this action is often September and October when the Energy Release Components are High and the Risk to Escape is Low due to short-term fire duration before the snow flies. A fall burn also mimics those burns initiated by American Indians to maintain aspen stands for elk populations.

Fire Ecology

The key observation I made in watching many of these large-scale fires burn is that we can only generalize as to how fire behaves in different habitat types. Only under controlled weather, slope, and aspect conditions can we make any kind of accurate historic reference as to fire and its effects on a given habitat type. In other words, we have seen fire behave at times according to generalization and replace an entire stand of lodgepole pine. On a different day, under different conditions, the fire will act simply as a thinning agent and or just about every imaginable variant in between. We have seen whitebark pine stands undergo large stand replacement on hot and windy days when factors come into alignment – contrary to the book generalization of a small group or patch stand replacement.

Years ago, I wrote down these words following a conversation with Paul Gleason on fire ecology. He simply stated, “Generalize with humility,” “detail counts,” and “it depends.” I believe that if you studied a single mountainside through time, you would find remnants of every type of fire intensity, size and effect ... or so, I generalize with humility.



Alpine Lake Fire (Courtesy Lance Robinson BIA)

Politics

The Wind River Indian Reservation is a dream to work on in part because the politics remain local. If you propose a project, you get final concurrence within the agency by the superintendent. You then take the project to both the Shoshone and Arapaho Tribal Councils. If they buy off on your project, then you are good to go. The key upon implementation is to continually update the tribal councils and the agency superintendent. In this process you can modify the project using local input to better achieve the agreed upon management goals. There are no appeals and court cases brought by outside special interest groups. Imagine that!

Conclusion

The Wilderness Act of 1964 must be amended to take into account the dominion and stewardship expressed by American Indians to modify their environment through fire to meet their needs. This will allow for the use of cultural fires that will enable

the wilderness resource to flourish as intended and to reduce the risk of an escaped fire and reduce the impacts of smoke to health and welfare.

I have often thought about how productive the National Forests could once again become if we simply interjected the County Commissioners for the Tribal Councils with respect to the Wind River Indian Reservation example above. We are a representative republic and not a democracy. As such, we elect fellow citizens to represent us. The environmental acts of the 1960s and 1970s in essence short-circuited our republic and began to instill a democracy based on majority rule and lawsuits. The entire process has been corrupted by power and money.

If we want to restore our public lands, we must first begin with the restoration of congressional acts that violate the essence of our representative republic and ignore the fact that other nations lived and thrived here on American soil before there was a United States. 🇺🇸

A Smokejumper Story

by Dick Kersh (La Grande '76)

I have always considered myself a part of the smokejumper family, having grown up around it from the age of four. This is a smokejumper story that took 20 years to happen and could just as easily not have happened.

Not only did it happen, but through a series of events, it resulted in unique opportunities and an experience that I may be the only smokejumper in the history of the smokejumper program to have accomplished. I would be interested to know if there are others who may have shared this accomplishment.

My father, Bob Kersh, became the loft foreman of the Redding Smokejumpers in 1956, the first official smokejumper employee in California. He started a year before the official smokejumper program started in order to prepare the loft and base for the crew the following year.

I started school in the fall of 1956 in the afternoon session of kindergarten. At that point in time, I actually had no understanding of what a smokejumper even was. That was going to change, however, in the spring of 1957, when my mother drove me to the Redding airport before school and I watched a practice jump of the smokejumpers.

The impression on the mind of a 5 year old witnessing such an amazing and exciting event was significant. What I did understand was that this was definitely something I needed to experience. I wanted to be a smokejumper!

As one might imagine, I grew up watching dozens of practice jumps through the years, as well as hanging around the jumpers. As I got older, in addition to hanging around the loft, I played softball and volleyball with them and attended an occasional beer bust.

What an exposure for a teenager to have. I became all that much more determined to become a smokejumper.

At age 18, in 1970, I went to work for the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska, working for **Don Weter** (RDD-66), an old Redding jumper. When I started work, they actually issued me a

parachute rigger's logbook, and I started practice rigging parachutes. They also started me studying the Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) related to parachuting, with the intent of me earning my senior parachute rigger's license.

I was able to rig the requisite number of chest-and back-type parachutes that summer to take my written test. I passed the written test and moved on to the practical. My practical was administered by **Bill Bowles** (RDD-57), who put me through my paces.

I passed the practical exam and became a licensed senior parachute rigger at age 18. My first summer working away from home, having an exciting job flying around Alaska and earning my rigger's license, I was very proud.

The next task I needed to accomplish was to get some fire experience. I went to work on a fire crew on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in 1972. **Larry Boggs** (RDD-63) was the fire control officer on the Coffee Creek Ranger District who hired me.

"I passed the practical exam and became a licensed senior parachute rigger at age 18. My first summer working away from home ..., I was very proud."

After working on one of Larry's BD crews in 1972, I went to the Weaverville helitack crew in 1973 and was again hired in 1974 by Larry on an engine crew to the Plumas National Forest. I received a permanent position that fall.

I was sent on detail in the fall of 1975 with the newly formed Plumas Hotshot crew to the San Bernardino National Forest. During this assignment I decided I was going to ask my boss, Larry Boggs, for a detail to jump the following summer.

A short while after my return to Greenville, I mustered up my courage and went to Larry's

office. After I entered his office and we exchanged courtesies, I asked Larry about a smokejumper detail.

Larry looked me in the eyes and said, “God-dammit, Kersh – we’ve had this talk before and as long as your dad is at Redding you can’t jump there!”

I told him I was aware of that, but asked what the possibility was of an out-of-region detail. Larry stated, “I don’t think so, but I’ll check into it.”

A man of his word, he did check into it. A fellow with whom Larry had jumped at Redding by the name of **Lee Walton** (RDD-63) was the manager for the La Grande Air Center in La Grande, Ore.

La Grande had been a satellite base for North Cascades for years and, in 1976, was going to become its own smokejumper base. A detail was set up.

As part of the deal, I was to be sent to Redding first to be recertified as a senior parachute rigger, and then on to La Grande to begin rookie training. Having been an accomplished athlete in high school and college, having four seasons’ fire experience on hand crews, engines and helitack, I was well experienced for my trial.

We started with a rookie class of 16 candidates, and I was shocked to actually have people drop out the first day!

There was no way I wasn’t going to make the cut. I trained hard to prepare for the rookie training and I finished in or near the top of every run or physical test. Over the two weeks of rookie training, I got seriously broken down physically but began to build back strength by the second week. I was determined to succeed.

Upon the completion of rookie training, the candidate pool had gone from 16 to eight. When a spot on the crew was certain, I approached **Jon Foland** (MSO-68), the loft foreman, and asked if I could rig my chute for the following Monday morning practice jump.

He said he didn’t see why not, so on Friday during lunch he called me into the loft and I rigged my main up for my first jump.

We eight rookies all made our first jumps the following Monday. I remember going out the door of the DC-3 and not leaning far enough

forward and turning upside down. As my chute opened the feeling was so good as my body straightened out and the total silence was amazing.

Twenty years after watching my first practice jump, I was realizing a lifelong dream – a dream many others helped come true, not realizing their part in it.

Including my training jumps, proficiency jumps and fire jumps, I only made a total of 19 jumps that summer – as all smokejumpers know, not nearly enough. I returned to the Plumas after a long season that lasted until almost the end of October that year.

As one of the only bases with an aircraft on contract, elk season across Oregon and Idaho kept the fire calls coming until the weather finally closed it out.

I could certainly be mistaken, but I believe I may be the only smokejumper in the history of the program who actually got to make his first jump with a parachute he rigged himself. I would certainly love to hear if there are others, and if there are, I suspect they are pretty few in number.

I feel it may be a note of distinction – and what could make a better smokejumper story than that? 🍄

Are You Going To Be “Temporarily Away”?

As more of our membership moves with the weather, we are getting an ever-increasing number of *Smokejumper* magazines returned by the post office marked “Temporarily Away.” Since we mail the magazine via bulk mail, it is not forwarded, and we are charged first class postage for its return.

If you are leaving your mailing address during the months of March, June, September and/or December, please let Chuck Sheley know. He can hold your magazine and mail it upon your return *OR* mail it to your seasonal address. Please help us save this triple mailing expense. Or join our electronic mailing list. Chuck’s contact information is in the information box on page three. 🍄

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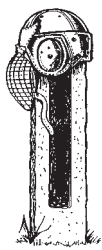
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| | Shep Johnson (MYC-56) |
| | Tom Uphill (MSO-56) |
| Heather DeGeest..... | Jim Phillips (MSO-67) |
| Sharon Scott..... | Jim Phillips (MSO-67) |
| Jim Lee (MSO-77) | Jim Phillips (MSO-67) |
| | Bob Gilman |
| Richard Neher (RAC-70)..... | Jim Phillips (MSO-67) |
| | Tony Percival (NCSB-54) |
| Doug Barkley (IDC-65) | Shep Johnson (MYC-56) |

Contributions since the previous publication of donors October 2016
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Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:
 Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926



Off The List

Remember and honor fellow jumpers with a gift to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund in their name. Hard times can fall on many of us at any time. The NSA is here to support our fellow jumpers and their families through the Good Samaritan Fund. Mail your contribution to:

Chuck Sheley
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Chico, CA 95926

James C. "Jim" Allen (North Cascades '46)

Jim died August 15, 2016, in Redmond, Oregon. He grew up in Camas, Washington, and joined the 101st Airborne during WWII. Jim's combat jump was during Operation Market Garden on his 21st birthday. He was later wounded in the Battle of the Bulge and landed in a plane for the first time on a medical transport to London. Later, when asked why he joined the airborne, he replied that it was the tall, shiny boots.

Jim went to work for **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB-40) in 1946 and continued at North Cascades until he became Project Air Officer at Cave Junction in 1953. In 1966 he was promoted to manage the Redmond Air Center, where he stayed until his retirement in 1976. After retirement Jim became manager of the Juniper Golf Club in Redmond and continued his passion for the game.

All of the jumpers who were fortunate enough to work for Jim at Cave Junction remember him as the best boss they ever had. His management style was carried on by many of the Gobi jumpers as they went on in life in the real world.

Al Pappenhagen (Missoula '47)

Al, 87, died June 20, 2016, in Pleasant Hill, California. He graduated with a BA in Chemistry from the University of Idaho and received his PhD in biochemistry from Purdue University in 1959.

During the next three years in Chicago, he was involved in human plasma research. After moving to California in 1962, he began his research on Hemophilia at Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley. His big breakthrough came in 1964 when research that he developed resulted in the creation of the medicine that hemophiliacs use today. Al's work was patented.

Al jumped at Missoula during the 1947-48 seasons.

Terry D. Lewton (McCall '56)

Terry died July 14, 2016, in the Boise VA Medical Center. He graduated from the University of Utah, where he played football on a full scholarship, with a degree in business. Shortly afterwards he joined the Army where he spent most of his enlistment in Germany. Terry spent over 20 years with Boise Cascade before pursuing other interests. He jumped at McCall 1956-57, 59-60, 64-65, and a year at Idaho City in 1958.

Merlyn G. "Mike" Flom (Missoula '57)

Mike, 78, died July 27, 2016, at his home in Sartell, MN. He received his university education at Concordia College and the University of North Dakota. Mike worked as a research chemist for several companies until his retirement in 1998. He was active in scouts and was a Boy Scout leader for many years. Mike jumped for five seasons at Missoula 1957-61.

Gary R. "Sam" McNeill (MSO-57)

Sam died August 9, 2016, at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center. He grew up in Nampa, Idaho, where he graduated from high school. Sam graduated from the University of Idaho working his summers as a smokejumper at Missoula where he jumped the 1957 and '58 seasons. He spent his career working for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. After retirement he continued to work on projects for Fish and Game and land management, especially in the Craig Mountain Area.

Robert L. "Bob" Sanderson (Pilot)

Bob died August 17, 2016, in Afton, Wyoming. He joined the Marine Corps after the Korean War and served in Okinawa. Bob used his GI benefits to obtain his private and commercial licenses in 1957. In 1959 he moved to Alaska and started Yukon Airways, which he operated until

1961. He then joined the Johnson Flying Service flying slurry bombers and dropping smokejumpers. Bob remained with JFS until they sold in 1975. His favorite airplane was the DC-3. At the time of his retirement from flying, Bob had logged over 25,000 hours of flying.

Otho Black (Missoula '50)

Otho, 87, died August 16, 2016, in Morgantown, W.V. He graduated from Southern State University in Arkansas and served in the Army during the Korean War. Otho was employed by Texas Eastern as a Measurement Technician working over the pipeline from Texas to the east coast. He finished with Texas Eastern as an accountant in the Pennsylvania office. Otho jumped at Missoula during the 1950-51 seasons.

Paul A. "Smokey" Wilson (Missoula '50)

Paul, 90, died August 11, 2016, in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. After graduation from high school, he enlisted in the Navy serving 1943-47 with a Seabee company in the South Pacific. He went to work as a miner in Kellogg until he started jumping in 1950 before being recalled into the Navy during the Korean War. In 1951 he returned to smokejumping and began a long career with the USFS. Paul jumped at Missoula 1952-56 before retiring from the USFS in 1980 after 32 years of service.

After retirement he took part in the NSA Trails Program and also took up running where he participated in many runs, including several marathons. He took a tandem parachute jump on his 75th birthday and other jumps with his grandsons with his last jump at age 85. 🇺🇸

JIM ALLEN (NCSB-46) REMEMBERED

Norm Pawlowski (CJ-57): It is difficult for me to repeat things that have been said before or repeat tenets that others have been saying for years, but I am now compelled to say them again. **James C. Allen** (NCSB-46) was the finest man I have ever known. In 1953, he became "Project Air Officer" at the Cave Junction base. There, he was a like a father figure to many college-age young men. By acclimation and without question, all who knew Jim will say he was the most respected person and leader to have ever resided at the Cave Junction smokejumper base. When CJ guys would visit other bases as booster-crew, overhead and jumpers there would tell us of their respect for Jim.

Whenever I remember Jim, the question that always pops up is what was it that made him such a great guy and magnificent leader?

Flamboyant, Jim was not. He was always polite and when tested, he retained a calm, factual voice. He stayed focused on what was important. Jim cut people lots of slack, while maintaining high standards.

Besides leading by example, Jim had a knack for making his subordinates feel important. In setting out work, he would lead by asking questions: "What do you think we should do here and how would you do it?" Then Jim would attentively listen, giving his subordinates high importance. If advice was needed

or when facing choices, his input included things like: "We are going to do it right." or, "if those are the rules, we are going to follow the rules."

For many younger jumpers, their first fire jump was the toughest, raging inferno in the most primeval wilderness they had ever experienced. To the older guys, their jump stories were the same old humbug. But Jim would intensely listen to their recitals (jump stories), giving them 100% attention. He made everyone feel important. Jim's respect for his subordinates is just one example of the many things that earned him respect and made a great leader great.

I don't recall Jim every raising his voice, yelling at anyone, or dressing down anyone. His disciplinary style was typically a low, calm, but stern voice, maybe a little more rapid than normal. The most devastating words coming from Jim were along the lines, "You know better than that." Whenever I try to analyze what made Jim great, a story involving **Dick Groom** (CJ-59) often pops into my head. Everyone liked Dick Groom, a large, soft-spoken, amicable jumper. During his 2nd season, Dick had done something to attract Jim's displeasure. After a corrective word from Jim, Dick told **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) and myself about the incident. All I can remember about the incident, after Jim had spoken to him, is Dick's soft, slow talking voice: "I could

have sat on the edge of a newspaper and dangled my feet.” Jim was so respected, we felt like failures if we let him down.

In these testimonials, we often fail to mention Jim had a wonderful sense of humor and laughed frequently. His laugh is ingrained in my memory, although I cannot remember most of the episodes that made him laugh. During lulls in conversation, Jim would wiggle his ears, keeping his subordinates at ease. Occasionally he would tell newer jumpers that “it’s going to be tough sledding for you around here.” Then exploit the tension with “**no snow**,” letting everyone know that communication with Jim would be light and easy.

Jim set policies and procedures to harmonize with the ranger districts and how they function. He was aware of the “Big Picture.” Our job encompassed the districts’ needs, both fires and project jobs. Jim’s addressing of issues typically included a description of the consequences to the ranger district. He would describe how one’s actions either caused or saved the district extra work, time, and/or expense. Jim was factual, not emotional. He was all about principle, and running the base efficiently to a high standard. He was always open to and looking for “a better way to do the job.”

Jim’s job in the office was always done right and on time. In the office, he was a perfectionist, and that is what he expected from his office staff. I specifically remember that about him. He was competent, which, without us knowing it, created an expectation for us to become competent elsewhere.

For me, outside the home, Jim Allen was the most significant and influential person in my life, and other jumpers have said the same. When making decisions and choices in life, I relied upon my experiences with Jim Allen. His examples and counsel taught me how to get along with people. He is a model for life. I shall never forget him.

John Twiss (RAC-67): Jim was our Redmond Air Center Manager the years that I was a smoke-jumper. He was a tremendous Forest Service leader and example for all of us. Jim was experienced, calm, ethical and led by example. He always made the time to counsel any of us who needed it, and I did a number of times. I think patience may have been Jim’s greatest virtue. We were young, independent, and thought we had all the answers. Jim managed

with a long leash and gentle hand. We knew he cared about us and would support us even if we screwed up.

Jim made the Forest Service a stronger agency, and he positively influenced many people during his life.

Garry Peters (CJ-63): I have to say he was the best person I have ever had the pleasure to work for. He also saw through my brother’s and my flimsy applications and hired us anyway. Then fought to keep us on, when the big guys wanted to send us down the road. What a guy.

Larry Peters (CJ-63): Garry and I owe our careers to Jim Allen. First, for hiring us and then, for not firing us because we didn’t have enough previous firefighting experience.

By getting a chance to jump at the Gobi, we were able to solo an airplane, thanks to the flight instruction of smokejumper pilot Ralph “Crash” Williams. From there we both went on to have great careers in aviation.

When you have worked at a place that you still say was the greatest job you’ve ever had, it really says a lot for our boss, Jim Allen. Jim was a great person to work for, and he will be greatly missed, but remembered.

Pete Landis (CJ-62): When I first drove onto the Siskiyou Aerial Project in June of 1962, little did I know I was about to meet the first of two great leaders I have known in my life. Leadership is much talked about yet seldom demonstrated. It is a skillset that few master. Jim Allen was a great leader. He created an environment for us to understand what was important, how to evaluate risk, and deliver a work product that was distinctly superior. Suppressing fires was important so the timber and the whole forest would be available for the future. No matter how good we thought we were, we could and should be better. Our work was intrinsically dangerous, but, if we executed flawlessly, we would be ok. So we learned to execute flawlessly.

Great leadership is more than the work task at hand. It is about life itself. Jim knew about our after-hours softball games and challenged us to be the best in the league. He knew what each of us was trying to do with our life. He was also the best snooker

player I have known.

After more than 53 years, I find myself thinking about him when working out how to handle life's inevitable issues. I always will.

John McDaniel (CJ-57): I remember Jim as a calm, quiet, and very personable project manager who never raised his voice and who gave me every opportunity to further my time on the Gobi.

He saw to it that whenever there was a chance to further my experience as a forestry student, he made sure that I had that opportunity. Once in 1958 he called me at the University of West Virginia, where I was about to finish my junior year, and asked when I would be available to get to Cave Junction. There was a project in Baker City where two jumpers were required to participate in a forestry bug-spraying project from the air on the Malheur Forest. I remember he said I needed to get to the Gobi as soon as possible for refresher jumps and then fly to Baker. On return I was put through a series of jumps, as many as three in one day, and then went on the "jump list" for fires.

While a calm and rather quiet person, he would not hesitate to fire anyone who did not measure up. He was a leader who had extensive combat experience jumping in WWII where he was wounded. However, he never talked about it except to tell me he was in the Engineers and jumped on Operation Market Garden and was wounded in Bastogne.

I shall miss him greatly and will always call him my friend. The jumper community was blessed to have him.

Ron Price (CJ-56): Jim Allen, the Boss, is off the Jump List but continues looking over us as he drifts under a large comfortable canopy of nylon. His shiny Corcoran jump boots are a sharp contrast to the dusty, scratched, high-arched Whites that he wore up and down the barracks at 0600 on crisp cool mornings. His calm voice only a whisper as he prodded sleepy, hung over, young smokejumpers, "We got a fire call from all that lightning last night, I need you suited up in ten minutes."

That was Jim's style, no stomping, not shouting. Just get up and go to work.

For me, maybe more than other young jumpers, Jim Allen changed my life and sent me down a many-tracked trail that determined whom I mar-

ried and who was to be my Daughter.

Starting with a one-year trip, Squadleaders **Jack Harter** (CJ-51) and **Bud Macatee** (CJ-55) let me tag along aboard a 110-foot sailing schooner to Micronesia and New Guinea to search and adventure on a mining claim. Jim had hired both of those stalwart, wandering jumpers.

My hiring process started with a borrowed phone on a dirty beaten couch in **Wayne Schrunck's** (CJ-57) grim, dark and shabby Corvallis apartment. Jim sensed my gloom mood and anxiety.

I had no fire experience and began a long 15-minute, pleading call to Jim. The Boss listened with quiet patience and finally said, "Aw hell, come on down." Maybe he thought I could be a weak-hitting shortstop for the softball team?

Jim had quiet, steel-like intuition. Jim Allen changed people and changed lives. Keep guiding us, Boss. You have done it for a long time. Some memories never die.

Jimmie Dollard (CJ-53): All ex-smokejumpers have lost a great friend and mentor, and the world has lost a true WWII hero and a wonderful leader. I worked for Jim for only two short summers (1953-1954), but he had a profound influence on my life. Under his leadership I changed from an insecure teenager to a confident young man. After a 50-year working career, I still considered him the best boss and leader I ever had. For 63 years I have enjoyed his friendship and in recent years our exchange of emails. We will miss him a lot but remember him fondly.

Mike McCracken (CJ-60): By early July of 1961, the fire season was shaping up as one of the most severe in recent years. Dry conditions and intense heat had brought firefighters to a state of high alert. All that was needed was lightning.

With that backdrop, Cave Junction base manager Jim Allen ordered all of us to remain close to camp after regular working hours as Missoula had indicated they might need backup from our unit. However, I as a "second year rookie" had a hot date lined up with a Cave Woman, one of the seasonal NPS college girls employed at the Oregon Caves National Monument.

As darkness settled, I determined that it was now safe to slip out of camp and make the 30-mile

drive up to the Caves. With hormones raging we stayed out late, real late, and I snuck back into camp around 3:00 a.m.

After three hours of restless sleep, I sat up in bed very much aware of the total silence within the barracks. A quick glance at my bunkmate's made-up bed gave me the first of what would be many alarming signals that morning. Quickly, I walked down the corridor glancing in each cubicle with the sinking realization that the entire unit had been shipped to Missoula during the night. It didn't take a rocket scientist to determine that my night of prowling would no doubt cost me my job.

I lay back down on my bunk to try to "work out a story." At that moment Jim Allen walked into my room. There I was lying on my back with a very displeased base manager standing over me. I expected to be read the riot act and fired on the spot.

Instead, I received a strong talking to about such matters as trust, reliability, responsibility, and the importance of a man's word. Jim didn't fire me. He gave me a second change making certain I understood there would be no 3rd or 4th chances.

That compassion and vital lesson became a cornerstone in my teaching career, what I came to think of as my Jim Allen Principle. My students would always get a second chance with me, no matter how grievous the offense.

My Jim Allen Principle served thousands of students well over my 37-year teaching career. I had the wonderful opportunity to share this with Jim at a Cave Junction reunion some 10 years ago. He was pleased and gracious as always.

When I think of important father/son lessons learned in life, I think of my Dad, of course, and right there with him are the lessons learned from my other father figure, Jim Allen.

Larry Welch (CJ-61): A very few men have had the respect of those under his leadership than did Jim as our boss at SSJB.

Ron Lufkin (CJ-60): When I was about 8 or 9 years old, I happened to drop by Allen's house where a few jumpers were having a couple of beers, or more. The conversation came around to Jim's experiences in the Airborne during the second war. He mentioned being wounded during the Battle of the Bulge, so needless to say he was requested to show

where he was wounded. He dropped his Levis and there on his lower abdomen was the biggest brownest round scar I had ever seen. I was impressed!

Jon Klingel (CJ-65): After jumping at Cave Junction in '65, I took a summer off to attend a field biology station in MN, which was required as part of my degree. I returned to jumping the next year in 1967, and Jim Allen was moving to Redmond to take over the new Air Center. I had a tremendous respect and admiration for Jim, a wonderful person to work for. I wanted to see some new country, so I followed Jim to Redmond. Early in the season I remember standing in the Day Room with Jim during a torrential rain. I remember Jim saying 'looks like that's it for this fire season.' The moisture apparently did a lot for the growth of fuels. Later in the summer, the fire season turned into the hottest since the fires of 1910.

Doug Stinson (CJ-54): I knew Jim was hurting or he would have been at the CJ Reunion. I really liked working for Jim in my two seasons at Cave Junction. He was great guy, a good leader, not the screamer/yeller type but a good listener, concerned with your well being and future. He had a way of just looking at you and you knew if you're meeting his standards. Just a topnotch person in my opinion.

Jack Harter (CJ-51): I have only the fondest memories of Jim, who was truly a superior human being.

A Eulogy in Memory of *Jim Allen*

As we pursue a path in life that crosses
with a friend

The greatest sorrow must always be to
lose them in the end

My path once crossed that of a splendid
man whose memory will not dim
There was a special zest for life so
manifest in him

No one loved the forest more or saved
more from wildfire
Every jumper's life he touched knew
how he could inspire

Jim attained his highest goals before

his spirit departed
He left no task undone that he had
ever started

Jim's spirit has now flown, a loss our
hearts must share
We can only feel great sadness and
offer just a prayer

Now we must commit his soul to
Heaven, the best that we can send
Jim's time on Earth was fruitful, and
his memory will transcend.

Bill Knight (CJ-60): I just took in the streaming Remembrance Service, very nice. Thought I could recognize some familiar figures there.

Besides Jim's impressive presence at the Gobi, I have a particular recollection.

As I was approaching the end of my last season of jumping in '63, I had 49 jumps. It meant a lot to me to reach what I considered a milestone in my Smokejumping career to reach 50. With some trepidation I mentioned it to Jim in August (of a miserable fire season), and he said he'd be sure I'd get number 50. As my departure day drew near, I began to despair of getting that last jump. I dared to ask Jim about it and was embarrassed when he said, I told you you'd get the jump!" And I did, on my last day. Got the pin! I was left with the impression that he actually cared about how I felt and came through when he surely didn't have to.

John Manley (CJ-62): I first met Jim in the summer of 1961. Charley Moseley (CJ-62) and I worked for the USFS out of the Gold Beach Ranger Station in 1960-61. Sometime in mid-summer of 1961, a lightning fire started not far from where we were working. The survey crew was split in two, and Charley and another guy were sent on initial attack. They got to work and soon a plane flew over and started dropping streamers and then two jumpers. In a couple of days, Charley was back on the survey crew telling SJ stories. You know he was a country boy from Alabama that never met a stranger and always had his eyes and ears open for the next adventure. The jumpers invited him to stop by the Gobi sometime.

The next chance we had, we hitchhiked to Cave Junction. I think the first guy we met was Gary

Welch (CJ-60), and he took us right to the office to meet Jim Allen. That was a special day, and a new interest and direction for both Charley and me. Jim was so calm, cool, and gracious, like he was visiting with relatives or good friends. In about 30 minutes, he asked Gary to show us around the base. We had a great tour and good insight into smokejumper life from Gary.

As I remember, there weren't many jumpers around and the office was busy, but when we returned Jim took more time to explain the job application process, encouraged us to apply, and thanked us for our visit and interest in the Smokejumper program.

That was just the beginning of my appreciation and respect for the strength and character of Jim Allen. He was blessed with an abundance of both, and was so generous in sharing with everyone in his life. Charley may have said it best in later years when he commented that Jim Allen was "The Man, For All Reasons." I said, even compared to Bear Bryant. "Yup," was his response. I see Jim now, at ease and resting in peace after a long life, so well lived.

Dick (CJ-56) and Sandy Wessell: Jim (and Emily) Allen will always hold a special place in our hearts as Jim hired Dick in June 1956, (who had just graduated from Reedsport High School), and was looking for work in a town with a semi-pro baseball team (which Cave Junction had)! Not knowing exactly what a Smokejumper was, or that two rookies had not shown up for their promised jobs that day, he stopped at the Base, filled out an application, and was "hired right off the street." Lots more volleyball than baseball followed, along with a 30-year career in Smokejumping and Fire Management/Control with the USFS.

Jim always managed to find me winter work on a District if I wasn't in college between seasons, and the lure of the "Gobi" always drew us back. He also hired Sandy as the clerk/dispatcher in 1958/59, (after Orville and Charlotte Looper moved "north to Alaska"), also beginning her Forest Service career. Jim found her work in the Supervisor's Offices when I was back in college. Emily was always there with a helping hand or good advice.

Shortly after we returned to the Gobi in 1966, we were so disappointed when Jim, Emily, Kathleen, Mary Beth, Nancy and Peggy transferred to Red-

mond as Jim became Manager of the Redmond Air Center. However, Jim's yearly handwritten holiday cards have always kept us apprised of their expanding family and how he and Emily were.

We can both attest to the fact that he was the best Boss we each ever had. He was able to instill the Gobi spirit, pride and comradery in everyone and was a kind, caring, understanding Boss and friend with a great wit!

Jim Rabideau (NCSB-49): I met Jim Allen in June 1949 at the Smokejumper Base near Winthrop, WA. He was one of our three squadleaders for us ten rookies.

He caught my attention in the first week or so of training. We were being indoctrinated by another squadleader, who seemed bent on making things tough on us rookies. One day we were all hoisted up on a pulley and instructed on how to do a let-down. My brother Phil had selected a harness that was not proper for his body size and build. He was unable to detach himself from the harness and do a letdown. The squadleader just let him struggle hopelessly. After several minutes of struggling, Jim Allen, who was nearby, walked over, let him down and checked his harness. He then took him to the loft, got him another harness, hooked him up, and then hoisted him up for the letdown. Worked perfectly. It became obvious over the summer that Jim was not only a leader, but one who really looked after his charges.

I wasn't able to come back for 1950 due to my Navy Reserve commitment. Didn't see Jim again until I returned to visit upon release from active duty in late July 1952. The next summer I was back at NCSB for retraining. Shortly after that, Jim Allen was flown to Cave Junction to take over as head of that Smokejumper Base.

From visiting with other jumpers at reunions, it was a common thread of their relationship with him that he was a caring leader. We've lost a wonderful companion, leader, friend, and a personality with a great sense of humor. The U. S. Forest Service and the Smokejumper gang were most fortunate to have him.

Ron Thoreson (CJ-60): Sorry that we lost Jim. His was truly a life well lived. I have never known a man with more friends and admirers. In

the greatest generation, he stood out as one of the greatest of that wonderful group.

Jerry Schmidt (CJ-62): In Tom Brokaw's 1998 book *The Greatest Generation* he wrote, "It is, I believe, the greatest generation any society has ever produced.... these men and women fought not for fame and recognition, but because it was the right thing to do. Their remarkable actions, during times of war and peace, ultimately made the United States a better place in which to live." Mr. Brokaw goes on, "Born and raised in a tumultuous era marked by war and economic *depression*, these *men* and *women* developed values of personal responsibility, duty, honor and faith. They have given the succeeding generations the opportunity to accumulate great economic wealth, political muscle, and the freedom from foreign oppression to make whatever choices they like. Despite these achievements, however, the Greatest Generation remains remarkably humble about what they've done."

If Jim Allen is not a perfect reflection of these great characteristics, I do not know who is. I learned a long time ago that the "boss" sets the standard for work ethics and morals of an organization. Jim did just that... and today, even though I only jumped two fire seasons during my college years, I and all of us who were fortunate enough to work at Cave Junction with Jim have sort of a "fraternity" or a brotherhood of friends who met Jim's standard for getting things done with a strong sense of "personal responsibility, duty, honor and faith."

I worked with Jim during the 1962 and '63 seasons, and he treated me like I was a good personal friend and associate who had spent many years with him in CJ. At a recent reunion we even shared a few feelings about our experiences in the Army; Jim with the 101st in WWII and me with the 1st Infantry in Vietnam.

Thank you, Jim, for your ethical standards of leadership, your great humility, and your friendship. And thank you for bringing all these good people together on the Gobi those many years ago, who are now my life-long friends.

Jim Grubs (CJ-63): The Cave Junction Smokejumper Base has lost a very dear and significant part of itself. I knew Jim only briefly – for two summers, but he "modeled" for me very clearly the

character of who and how a leader thinks and acts.

A very brief and simple story to illustrate this: 1963 was my rookie year at CJ. Jim stood out as a very firm but kind Project Air Officer. He was very affirming and encouraging in our training – personally assuring me that I was strongly endorsed and would do well in the training. With that I did make it through the four-plus weeks of training. However, shortly after being “certified,” we were in town playing “grab-ass football” on the athletic field. I had the ball and was tackled by an un-named jump buddy. The result was a season-ending ACL tear. Then the other side of Jim came rushing through when I went limping into his office to account for my injury. Hoping for compassion, his simple and clear message of accountability came forth: “Grubs! You dumb shit! What made you do such a stupid

stunt? After you did so well and we spent all this time and money training you!”

Ouch! But thank you, Jim, for teaching me accountability. 🙏

The NSA thanks and recognizes the following for their donations in honor of Jim Allen:

Garth/Linda Ziegenhagen, Norm Pawlowski (CJ-57), Dick Wessell (CJ-56), Wayne Schrunk (CJ-57), Chuck Sheley (CJ-59), Ron/Carol Sutherland, George/Tanis Stephens, Karen Hansen, Patrick/Joan Kelly, Elise/Tracy Lantz, Jerry John (CJ-62), Tommy Albert (CJ-64), Ron Price (CJ-56), Mary Beth/Bob Thouvenel, Jim/Althea Gilbertson, Ron Thoreson (CJ-60), Bill Moody (NCSB-57), John Twiss (RAC-67), Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64).

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

There are a number of reasons why fires are larger now compared to the '60s. It's not because of climate change. You can blame the environmentalist first, as they are the ones that shut down logging.

When the Forest Service was selling what they called cut blocks, each district had a hand crew which built hand lines around the cut blocks. You could say they were a small hotshot crew, as all they did was build line and run chain saws.

When it rained the burning boss would get the holding crew and burning crew together and talk about how they could burn the block without getting any slop-overs. Then the holding crew would look over the line for hazards and relocate if they had to. And the burning crew would burn the block, so the flames would be pulled away from the line.

Everyone learned line location, initial attack and fire behavior. When they stopped logging, they lost that as a learning tool.

Next a judge told the fire agencies they had to hire minorities and fast-track them to overhead positions. So now you have people that never lit a drip torch, let alone 20 acres of logging slack. They did get a lot of classes, but if you think you can learn fire behavior from reading a book, give your teenager a book on how to drive a car and

then hand them the keys. See what happens.

In the '60s we would get to a fire and figure out where the head of the fire was going to be in a certain amount of time. That's where we would construct our lines, then we would burn it out and go home. Now they start at the base of the fire and chase the head. Hell, I'm 76 and you give me a half-mile head start on my 10-speed, you won't catch me and they won't catch the fire.

Last but just as important, if they have a house between the road and the fire and it needs to be burned out to stop the fire, they won't burn it out because they don't want to take the responsibility for burning the house down. If they knew what they were doing, it would be possible to burn out without burning down the house.

—Kev Hodgin (Redding '67) 🙏

NSA Increases Scholarships to \$12,000

At the October meeting in Seattle the board voted to increase the available scholarships this year to \$12,000. There will be six \$2,000 scholarships awarded. A major change is that grandchildren of jumpers or former jumpers will be eligible. More details in the April issue of *Smokeyumper*.

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

I KNEW **Jim Phillips** (MSO-67) for 365 days. I don't know why our paths never crossed before that. I enjoyed his company and we kept in touch after the Missoula reunion.

Jim guided a group of **Lori Mesenger's** (MSO-00) English students from Seeley Swan High School into Mann Gulch in the spring of 2016. Jim told me, "If these kids are our future, we are in good hands."

Jim made his last trip into Mann Gulch with the trails crew. One of the jumpers on the crew told me that Jim "out-worked and out-hiked everyone."

Jim had to cut the trip short when he started suffering severe abdominal pain. He went directly to the emergency department at St. Peter's Hospital, where he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and given only a few weeks to live. He

spent his last days with family, friends, and his rookie bros and worked on paperwork related to the preservation of Mann Gulch.

I sure miss that guy. Hopefully others will continue his work preserving the history of Mann Gulch.

I am sure everyone who has gone through the program thinks his or her rookie class is the greatest class to ever go through. Some classes seem to be extra special and Missoula 1967 is one of those. There are a number of others.

A tip of the hard hat to Boise Base Manager **Jim Raudenbush** (FBX-82), who retired in October after a 35-year career as a smokejumper. He retires with more than 229 fire jumps and 573 total jumps. Jim jumped in Alaska 1982-2001 and Boise 2001-16.

Todd Jinkins (NIFC-98) serves as acting base manager while the BLM advertises the vacancy.

2016 was the biggest fire year in the Greater Yellowstone Region since 1988. Approximately 793,000 acres burned in 1988. Half the acres burned inside the park resulted from fires that started outside the boundary. Nine of the fires were human-caused while lightning started 42 of them.

By comparison, as of late September 2016, 62,000 acres

burned in Yellowstone. There were 22 fires in Yellowstone; four fires – the Maple, Buffalo, Fawn, and Central fires – make up the majority of the acres burned.

The Boundary Fire was held to 192 acres and the remaining 17 fires were very small, together totaling only 14.18 acres. Of these 17 fires, 12 were one-tenth of an acre or less in size; four were between one-tenth to one acre; and one was nine acres.

Eleven fires were immediately suppressed in 2016. Seven fires were the result of human activity, such as campfires, vehicles, or improper cigarette disposal. Fifteen fires were caused by lightning strikes. Five fires – the Maple, Buffalo, Central, Fawn and Jasper – were managed to allow fire to perform its natural role in the ecosystem. The largest of these fires, the Maple Fire, has burned more than 45,000 acres.

Former Tanker 10, a P2V which has been retired, is being refurbished and repainted and will be placed on a platform at the entrance to the Missoula Airport. The first Tanker 10 was a B-17; the current Tanker 10 is a Neptune BAe 146. Neptune Aviation purchased its eighth BAe 146 late last summer. It may become Tanker 15.

I am told the winning bid

on the Missoula DC-3 N115Z was a little over three million. My aviation guru disputes that number. She says the selling price for that particular airplane should be twice that

amount.

A junker with reciprocating engines ready for a museum would bring about \$3 million. I heard the plane was headed to Canada. Contact me if you

have better information on the selling price.

Speed-range-payload. Aggressive initial attack.

This column is dedicated to Jim Phillips. 🍷

The Potlatch Timber Fire

by Dick Flaharty (Missoula '44)

The year 1944 was not a very hot one, most of the fires were covered by two jumpers, but the Potlatch Timber Fire was a six-smokejumper affair.

Murray Braden (MSO-44) and I had transferred into the smokejumpers that year, from a CPS unit in Ohio, and were on standby in the Forest Service loft in Missoula, awaiting a call for our first fire jump. It was about 4:00 in the afternoon and, figuring it was now too late in the day to get a fire call, we decided to go to a store across the street from the loft to get a bottle of soda.

We were each sipping an orange soda when, through the store window, we could see a buzz of activity in front of the loft. Bags of equipment were being tossed into the back of a truck and several jumpers were climbing aboard. We chug-a-lugged our sodas and ran over to the loft to learn that we and six other jumpers were to suit up in the truck on our way to the airport.

At the airport the eight of us climbed aboard one of the old Trimotors and were soon in the air heading to Idaho. When we reached our fire, it was determined to be in private (Potlatch) timber territory. A decision was made that no jump should be made until it was determined that all fires in Forest Service territory were covered. This meant checking out two fires that had been reported in northern Idaho. The plane headed north and, after much circling, located the two fires. A work crew was already manning one. The second fire was not covered, so two men jumped to take care of it.

Now all of the circling had an adverse effect on Murray, and he soon up-chucked his orange soda. My mind kept dwelling on the thought that I too



Dick Flaharty and George Leavitt 1944. (Courtesy Dick Flaharty)

had an orange soda, and I started deep breathing to keep my stomach in check. I moved forward in the plane and found a leak in the old tin goose where

cold air was seeping in, and managed to keep my soda down.

We returned to the Potlatch Fire location, but did not have time to scout out a clearing, so the orders were to “hit the timber” just north of the fire. Since Murray was still feeling quite ill, we let him be the first man out on three two-man passes. I was the first man out on the second pass and steered my chute toward the tallest tree I could see, trying to hang it up on the top. I missed the top, and my chute rolled up behind me as I tumbled down through the branches. Suddenly, the branches cleared away and I had the feeling I was staring down an elevator shaft. The trees were about 150 feet high with the branches all in the top 20 feet. As I started falling down in the open space, I could see a log on the ground. As I braced myself for the shock, I ended up with my toes touching the log. My chute had unfurled and wrapped around the trunk of the tree, stopping my fall. I was able to shift my weight onto one foot, unsnap my harness, and step out onto the log. Oh happy day!

Not far away I could hear the voice of our crew chief, **Phil Stanley** (MSO-43), calling out to check up on us as he was making his way down out of the tree he landed in. I reported in and moved off to locate Murray Braden, and found him sitting on the forest floor, obviously in a daze: his helmet off and his signal strips out on the ground where he had been trying to signal the plane that he was all right. This was hardly the case. He evidently had had a drop to the ground of about 30 feet and had a concussion. I found a deep impression in the forest duff where he had landed. He had no recollection of how he had arrived in the forest. I related to him about the trip, how he had been sick in the plane, etc., and he said to me, “Geraldine, I know somebody named Geraldine.” To which I replied, “Know her? You’re married to her!”

Returning to report to Phil Stanley, I found that he was still up in the tree, about at the end of his letdown rope and about 25 feet from the ground. I got the climbers from the equipment pack and took my letdown rope up to Phil. The trunk of the tree was too big for the safety belt, so I had to improvise with an extra piece of rope as a safety belt to get up to Phil. How he tied my rope to his, I’ll never know, but he did manage to get down.

Phil then assigned **Ed Vail** (MSO-44) and me the

task of searching out a nearby trail so we could lead the group out once the fire was extinguished. Ed and I were about a half-mile away from the group when we came upon a tree that had fresh scratch marks at least 10 feet off the ground. A bear had been marking his territory, and we decided we had enough trail hunting that day and returned to the group.

A crew of Potlatch lumberjacks who had hiked in joined us on the fireline and the fire was snuffed out in short order. That night I rolled out my sleeping bag in a game trail, since it was fairly smooth and devoid of rocks and branches. I was about to doze off when I began to wonder if elk were nocturnal. I fell asleep anyway.

With the fire extinguished, we were invited to hike out with the Potlatch crew to where they had parked their trucks, and we were driven to the Potlatch camp where we were invited to stay for dinner. Another new experience! We were used to the dinners at the smokejumper camp where the events of the day were discussed, or the ills of the world were solved while we ate. Not in the lumber camp! The meal was eaten in dead silence except for the grunts. One grunt for bread and two grunts for coffee. We were then trucked to St. Maries and put on a train for a return to Missoula.

In my years of child welfare and camp work, I have told the story of my first fire jump many times to groups of youngsters. When telling of my stepping out of my harness onto the log, I always add: “And that’s when my hair started turning white.” 🦋

NEW NSA LIFE MEMBERS SINCE JANUARY 2016

Thanks for your support!

| # | New Life Member | Base Year |
|----------|----------------------|----------------|
| 317..... | SNEDDEN, JOHN..... | BOISE 1973 |
| 318..... | TUCKER, BILL..... | MISSOULA 1950 |
| 319..... | PHILLIPS, JIM..... | MISSOULA 1967 |
| 320..... | HALE, BILL | MISSOULA 1953 |
| 321..... | WILLARD, BRAD | MISSOULA 1958 |
| 322..... | LAMOY, MARY..... | PILOT |
| 323..... | TIMMONS, JERRY | FAIRBANKS 1962 |
| 324..... | CALKINS, DICK | REDDING 1964 |



BLAST FROM THE PAST



Jumpers Rescue Forest Ranger In 1952 Accident In Danaher Area

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)

*From the Seeley Swan Pathfinder,
April 8, 1993*

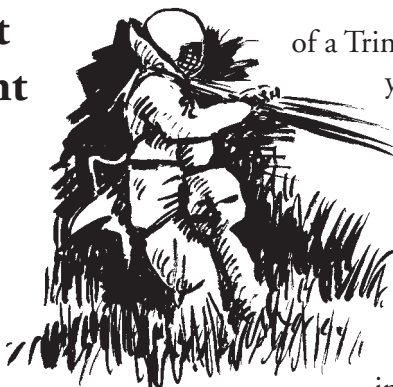
During Thursday, Aug. 14, 1952, I was with other smokejumpers, working at the Forest Service's Field Service Facility at 14th and Catlin streets in Missoula – site of the former car barns used during streetcar days. We were the closest jumpers to Hale Field and were on a standby basis, with our truck parked by the office.

A call came in at about 4:30 p.m., telling us to report to Hale Field immediately. We were needed for a rescue mission. At the field we quickly picked up our gear and put on our chutes. We were given a short briefing, telling us that we would be dropping into the South Fork area in the Danaher region to rescue an injured ranger.

The Ford Trimotor's engines were already turning over when we reached the loft in the airfield. It was a Model 5-AT-C, numbered NC-8419, with three 420-horsepower engines. It was the largest Trimotor that Bob Johnson owned at that time. (This was the plane that crashed at Moose Creek in the Nez Perce National Forest on Aug. 4, 1959, killing three people, including two smokejumpers.)

We were quickly airborne by 5 p.m. The Missoula *Sentinel* had this to say on Friday, Aug. 15: "Ten smokejumpers leaped to the rescue of an injured forest ranger in the wilderness of the South Fork ... The ranger was Doug Morrison who was injured ... when his horse fell with him ... The accident occurred about 30 miles from the nearest road. ..."

On our flight we passed close to Woodworth and almost directly over my aunt Val James DeWit's former home. Bob Johnson was our pilot and Jim Dillon copilot. Jim was killed in the crash



of a Trimotor on Tuesday, July 14, of the next year, while on a forest spraying operation near Basin, south of Helena.

The plane had hit a cable, and part of it wrapped around the tail of the plane. Dillon tried to set down at a nearby field, but the whipping, flailing cable happened to wrap around a pole, and the aircraft went into the ground and came to rest upside-down, facing in the opposite direction.

Jim and his mechanic, Dick Duffield, were both killed instantly. It was aircraft N-8400, a Model 4-AT-E Trimotor.

It was a perfect day for flying and the only rough air we experienced was a little "chop" as we crossed over the divide near what was called Danaher Pass – between Danaher Mountain and Foolhen Mountain. Our jump site was about eight miles from the Basin Creek Guard Station. There was a small grass airstrip at that location, and Bob landed the airplane there after we were on the ground, and waited into the night for our arrival.

Other men were on the game survey with Morrison. He had a badly injured leg, and we placed him in our special rescue stretcher – Stokes litter, with a wheel underneath it. With this stretcher we were able to jog along a fairly decent trail, without much bouncing action. We stopped only several

75 Years of Smokejumpers 1940-2014

This spiral-bound directory contains the names of all 5,884 smokejumpers who completed training during the first 75 years of smokejumping.

The alphabetical list contains the names of all smokejumpers. The book also features each base with their rookies listed chronologically by year trained.

The last time this listing was done by Roger Savage (MSO-56) was for the 2000 National Reunion in Redding and it sold out in a short amount of time.

All-Time Smokejumpers listing \$20/\$4 Shipping.
Use the order form on the merchandise insert.

times on the way to the airstrip, and continually changed positions on the stretcher without stopping.

At about 10 p.m. we arrived at the strip, and Johnson and Dillon had the Trimotor positioned at one end with the tail almost in the trees. One-half of the jumper crew had to stay behind. I volunteered to go back with Morrison.

The Missoula *Sentinel* said in part, on Aug. 15: "... The take-off from the primitive landing field was accomplished by torchlight, and the rescue crew reached Missoula and the hospital shortly before midnight."

By "torchlight" meant having two of the jumpers go to the far end of the strip with their flashlights to show Johnson and Dillon where the end was on that very dark night. Johnson had the landing lights on, and he really gunned the engines as we took off.

Shortly after leaving the ground, Johnson put the Trimotor in a very steep bank, so as to clear the mountains up ahead. The rest of the flight was uneventful. By 2:30 p.m. the next day, two of us who had been on the rescue jump were in a Travelair on the way to a fire in the Lochsa country southwest of Missoula in Idaho. 📖

Book Review

FORMER JUMPER TAKES TO THE WATER

by Jackie Edwards

Barge Notes, by retired smokejumper **Don Bell** (IDC-69), is the true story of his experiences as a tugboat deckhand on the Yukon River more than 30 years ago. Don wrote down what happened every day with the date on whatever was available at the time – pieces of paper or cardboard he found on deck, sometimes brief reminders on the palm of his hand when paper was not available.

He wrote some of it in a notebook while off duty in his bunk and he kept everything in his duffel bag. During the winter he transferred this journal in complete sentences to several permanent notebooks.

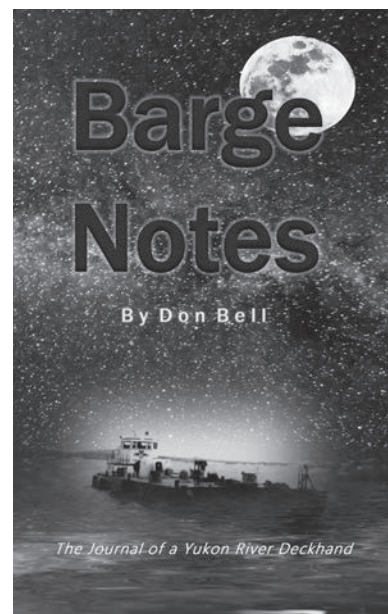
In *Barge Notes* the reader can travel down the Yukon River and experience the native villages and their people who seem from another time. There are perilous moments

on the river and quiet reflections under the northern lights.

Listen to the river and feel its power. Smell the glacial silt and soil of the great river and its tributaries that drain the north country. See the wildlife that live by the Bering Sea and the animals and birds that inhabit the sandbars, hills and timbered shores along the river.

The dangers of exposed power cables smoking in the mud and bullet holes in the floor from previous confrontations among the crew are reminders of other dangers. Lack of working equipment makes work difficult with broken forklifts and dozers along with steep, muddy loading ramps. Weather causes additional hazards with freezing fog and wind.

Don's love of wild Alaska can be felt on the pages of this



book, along with pleasures and troubles in the bars of Fairbanks on his rare nights off duty in port. His introspection, sense of humor, love of adventure, and even his youthful temper unfold before you.

Take a trip down the Yukon River delivering freight and fuel to the native people. It is not a long book but is written with honesty and clarity and is a pleasure to read again and again.

Barge Notes is available on Amazon or on order from your local bookstore. 📖

Order using
the form on
the insert!

SMOKEJUMPER MERCHANDISE



Three solid choices in our classic caps collection!

Choose from the smooth nylon of the navy blue SMOKEJUMPERS cap (top), the dignified khaki twill U.S. Forest Service Smokejumpers (right) or the Smokejumpers 75th anniversary cap. All feature attention-grabbing style and long-lasting construction!

The SMOKEJUMPERS cap offers gold embroidery and trim with a velcro strap. The U.S. Forest Service cap has a brass buckle and green-and-white "sandwich"-style bill, while the 75th anniversary cap offers a lighter shade of khaki as it commemorates the storied history of smokejumping's establishment in 1940. Why not order one of each?

• SMOKEJUMPERS cap \$20 • USFS Smokejumpers cap \$16 • 75th anniversary cap \$9 •



Compact technology: Your all-time NSA record

This handy thumb drive contains every edition of *The Static Line* (1993-99) and *Smokejumper* magazine (1999-present) ever published.

Looking for an article about the early days of jumping? Trying to find a name of a smokejumper once featured in a story? Now you have total access. Makes an excellent, environmentally friendly gift! **\$24**

Pin up this great new style

Stylish SMOKEJUMPERS logo pin with our new logo looks fantastic on a cap or lapel. Stays secure with double-post fasteners. Shiny chrome finish. *Order several ... you get FREE shipping!* **\$3**



You've been framed!

Top of this license plate frame reads "Jumpin' Fires" while the bottom reads "Smokejumpers." White letters on a black background. Buy one for each of your vehicles, and save!



\$3 each, or two for \$5

Polo shirt that brings you style and comfort! How will you wear it?

Honeycomb pique ... it offers breathability and outright comfort – combined with sharp, crisp looks – better than anything on the market. You get it all with this outstanding polo-style shirt ... with the SMOKEJUMPERS logo embroidered on the chest in gold.

Thanks to its outstanding style, this shirt looks great on the golf course, tennis court or with a pair of cotton slacks. Wear it to "dress up" a pair of jeans. You can't go wrong! M, L, XL and XXL. Navy blue only. **\$32**



Are you still hangin' around?

These high-quality t-shirts feature spectacular artwork of an "old" smokejumper dangling from a tree. Ash-gray t-shirt will withstand many years of washing. Perfect for the gym, around the house or around town! M, L, XL and XXL. **\$17**



Our most popular t-shirt!

People love this shirt ... and the quantity we've sold proves it! Shirt features stylized "SMOKEJUMPERS" on the front with fabulous artwork of jumping action on back. Hazy light blue (M, L, XL, XXL) with short sleeves. **\$17**



Movie inspired many dreams of smokejumping for young men

Loosely based on the Mann Gulch Fire in which 12 jumpers and a firefighter died, "Red Skies of Montana" fascinated many young men about life "out West." Released in 1952. **\$15**



Exhaustive DVD tells the story of smokejumping from beginning

"Smokejumpers: Firefighters From the Sky" is a definitive record of smokejumping, featuring 120 minutes of history from 1939 to 2000. Footage filmed at current bases and in the field. **\$15**

NEW BOOK CHRONICLES

WALDRON CREEK DEATHS

BY NANCY THORNTON

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A BOOK ABOUT five men who died together when they were overrun by a wildfire on the slopes of Waldron Creek west of Choteau, Mont., memorializes the 1931 incident. It also follows the author as he brings closure to the tragedy by placing headstones on the victims' unmarked graves.

Published by The History Press, *Montana's Waldron Creek Fire: The 1931 Tragedy and the Forgotten Five*, was written in 2015 by former wildland firefighter and smokejumper **Dr. Charles Palmer** (MSO-95).

The 172-page book is available on the Internet. The review copy from the Acantha will be donated to the Choteau/Teton Public Library.

Palmer, an associate professor who joined the University of Montana's Department of Health and Human Performance in 2006, learned of the local tragedy from an article on the Choteau Acantha's website in 2003. Acantha reporter and local history buff Nancy Thornton dipped into the Acantha archives to bring the "forgotten" incident to our newspaper readers.

On Aug. 25, 1931, firefighters Herbert Novotny, Frank Williamson, Hjalmer G. Gunnarson, Ted Bierchen

and Charles Allen, casually hired with dozens of other men from Great Falls, Mont., and other towns and brought to the Waldron Creek watershed, were unsupervised as they met a change in fire conditions by making what turned out to be a terrible choice.

They went upslope instead of heading into a burned area with other men and could not outrun the fire, according to what little could be gleaned from the newspapers of the day.

Palmer presents his research, done as his work schedule allowed after 2003, and his final stint of research while on sabbatical leave to finish writing the book. He is critical of the U.S. Forest Service of the 1930s era and noted that the federal agency had no record of the incident in old files of the day.

However, it was one of several wildfire-fighting tragedies that year, and Palmer outlines the steps taken to prepare and train firefighters after that.

Two men were buried in unmarked graves in Choteau Cemetery and a third man lies in Highland Cemetery in Great Falls. A fourth man was also buried in Highland Cemetery and his family placed a headstone there in 1931. The fifth man's body was shipped to Chicago.

A Great Falls native, Palmer narrates his odyssey to Choteau and Great Falls and the steps he

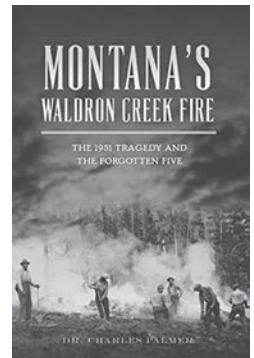
took to provide headstones for the three. He tracked down Novotny's

daughter, now an elderly woman, and a descendent of the fifth man, Bierchen, and visited what appears to be an unmarked cemetery plot in Illinois which, in all likelihood, is the man's burial place.

Palmer is the National Smokejumper Association's chief historian. He shines a light on this important story, finally honoring the heroic sacrifice that led to critical changes in wildland firefighting. At the University of Montana, he teaches and conducts research, focusing primarily on human factors in wildland firefighting and other high-risk occupations.

The five deaths in 1931 remain the highest death toll in the history of Teton County in a single incident, and is equal in the loss of life to the 1980 aircraft crash at the Choteau Airport that claimed the lives of five members of the Jim Crawford family.

Palmer said he hopes to visit Choteau to speak on the "Forgotten Five" and is planning to hold a book-signing event in the coming months. 📖



A Band of Brothers

Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74)

The only time I ever read Shakespeare was when forced to do so in High School. We read *Midsummer's Night Dream* and the experience convinced me to avoid his writings for decades to come.

Over the past few years, I began to notice quotes from his plays appearing in books and movies about war and honor and kinship. The quotes somehow struck a chord with me, maybe because fighting battles and fighting wildfires have so much in common. Soon I started reading more and more of his writings and found a good number of quotes that could have been about smokejumping or firefighting. The following are a few of my favorites.

I think the first quote by William Shakespeare to really get my attention and one most of you are probably familiar with was: "*WE FEW, WE HAPPY FEW, WE BAND OF BROTHERS*" from *Henry the Fifth*. Those nine words come about as close to describing the soul of smokejumping as any I have ever read. It is a job few have ever done. Most who have jumped count it as some of the best times of their lives. If you have any doubt that we are a band of brothers linked together for life, just attend one of our reunions and watch what happens.

This quote is probably my favorite: "*LEAP WHERE FIRE THOU FINDS*." I was amazed when I first read that one from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. To me it's like a description of smokejumper heaven, the unrestricted jumping of fires wherever you find them! Imagine how many fewer project-sized fires there would be and the cost savings if that one was ever put to use.

Here's another smokejumping related one found in *Merchant of Venice*: "*I WILL NOT JUMP WITH COMMON SPIRITS*." Shakespeare must have imagined our demand for high quality recruits when he wrote that one because those who take up smokejumping can and will be called many things, but common spirits will never be one of them.

Story telling is as much a part of smokejump-

ing as parachutes or airplanes. What does reading these words bring to your mind? "*SIT BY THE FIRE WITH GOOD OLD FOLKS AND LET THEM TELL THEE TALES*." They're found in the play, *Richard II*. They take me back to late nights after the fire is lined and the cool night air brings everyone in around the campfire. That time when food is heated up, hot drinks are in hand, and the story telling begins. Our ranks are filled with storytellers. Many are very good at it, but some have attained legendary status. They are the ones who get that far off look in their eyes when they begin to speak then paint a picture with their words that leaves you spellbound. Names such as **George Steele** (NCSB-72), **Allen (Mouse) Owen** (CJ-70) and **Steve Betlach** (LGD-74) come to my mind, but each of you know one or more of these masters of the jump story that told you tales as you sat by the campfire.

"*SLEEP SOUND ON THE DANK AND DIRTY GROUND*" is from *Midsummers Night Dream* and brings back memories of nights sleeping in the dirt and ash after long hours battling a wildfire, and how easily I drifted off to sleep, exhausted but somehow at peace with the world.

"*TO WATCH THE NIGHT IN STORMS*," is a quote from *The Taming of the Shrew*. This one elicits memories of hunkering in the dark under a thin blue tarp as the rain pores down, lightning repeatedly flashes across the night sky, and thunder tumbles down the valleys. Memories deeply etched in my brain that I know weren't all that pleasant at the time but make up that long string of experiences that define smokejumping for me.

Here's one about firefighting: "*WHERE TWO RAGING FIRES MEET TOGETHER THEY DO CONSUME THE THING THAT FEEDS THEIR FURY*" That sounds to me like a fellow from the 16th Century who knew about backfiring and burn-out, two of our best tools for stopping fires.

Ever heard of the fire triangle, the three elements that must be present to make a fire burn? It states you must have fuel, oxygen and a heat source to make a fire burn. Shakespeare wrote in,

Henry the Sixth: "THIS SPARK WILL PROVE A RAGING FIRE IF WIND AND FUEL BE BROUGHT TO FEED IT," which is as good a description of the fire triangle as you will find in any fire refresher training class today.

I can't help but like a guy who understands fire, thinks we should jump every fire we can find, is a great storyteller and appreciates the close brotherhood we share, even if he did live a very long time ago. 🙏

An Interesting Life – From A Tail Gunner To Carving And Painting

by Hilary Matheson, *the Kalispell* (Mont.) *Daily Inter Lake*

Before John "Jack" Dunne (MSO-46) gives an interview in his Whitefish home, he provides a disclaimer:

"Forgive me, but I'm a storyteller."

As a storyteller, Dunne seems to enjoy sharing the more amusing moments of his boyhood and young adulthood – stories that reveal a prankish and clever nature.

The 90-year-old adds that he has had an interesting life and he's not wrong. Dunne served as a tail gunner in the Pacific during World War II and worked as a logger, smokejumper and teacher.

Dunne was born Christmas Day in 1925. When he was 3, his mother died. Dunne was raised by an aunt until his father remarried and they moved to Butte, Montana.

"It was a rough old mining town," he recalled. "I couldn't wait to get out."

At 17 a friend asked him to take the Army Air Force cadet test with him.

"He said he didn't want to take it alone," Dunne said.

Although his friend assured him that Dunne wouldn't have to join, the military was something he wanted to be part of.

"My grandfather was an Indian War veteran. My dad was in World War I on the Mexican border and he was with a cavalry outfit. I just knew when I grew up I was going to go in the military and that was it. The quicker the better," he said.

Ironically, it was Dunne who passed the test while his friend did not. Dunne said the friend ended up joining the Marines. But before his friend found out the test results, the pair had gone

to Great Falls, Mont., for physicals.

"He said, 'You don't have to worry; you don't weigh enough; you can't get in anyhow in the cadets.' I weighed about 126 to 127; you had to weigh 132," Dunne said. "I hated to have anyone tell me I couldn't."

Dunne got in line where he said hundreds of men waited to be measured. And then he went to the back of the line three more times.

"Until I was the last man in line," he said. "This sergeant that was taking the weights and measurements didn't even look up and said, 'How much do you weigh?' I said, '134,' and he wrote it down."

He turned 18 in 1944. He finally entered the Army on New Year's Day.

"I was worried the war would be over when I went in," Dunne said with a chuckle.

Yet he once again had to get a physical, and this time he had to stand on the scale. The physician asked if he had been sick.

"I said, 'no sir, I've never been sick in all my life,' and he said, 'Well, you've lost a lot of weight.' I told him what happened," Dunne said.

Despite the weight issue he was sent to a base in Tennessee. His interest was piqued when he saw a notice that aerial gunners were needed.

"They were losing them like mad in Europe," he said.

Once again a weighty issue stood between him and his plan.

"Went up to the doctor, he weighed me – 'You don't weigh enough,' I said, 'OK,'" Dunne said.

As much as he lacked in pounds, he made up

for in persistence and returned to the doctor a second and third time.

"The third time the doctor said, 'If you have to go that bad I'll send you, but somebody along the line is going to catch up with you,' " Dunne said. "I took the chance anyhow."

Being a tail gunner was a dangerous post because whatever direction the enemy flew, "they always shoot the tail off."

"Tail gunners – I mean they didn't last at all. But I didn't know that," Dunne said.

He was sent to gunnery school in Florida, which he referred to as a "noisy Disneyland" of guns. Then he flew to Kansas and Puerto Rico for training on the B-29 Superfortress before shipping out to Guam in 1945.

"I never counted. They had me down for 30 [raids] on Japan," Dunne said. "I think they missed a couple."

Following his seventh raid, Dunne received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"On the seventh raid we had a night fighter team that shot us all to hell, and we made it to Iwo Jima and left our airplane there, got to the base on Guam, and found out our sister crew had been shot down," he said.

By the time he completed his service, Dunne had earned the rank of sergeant. Before returning home, a captain interviewed Dunne asking him if he was interested in joining the Strategic Air Command, which at the time was fairly new. Dunne said no and gave his reason.

"I haven't been fishing in a long time and until I take care of that, I'm not going to do another damned thing," Dunne said, noting the captain's unusual reaction: laughter. "He said, 'I know exactly what you're talking about.' "

When Dunne returned home, he was 19 and had been awarded three air medals and four other medals in addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross. He moved to Libby, Montana, and got a job in logging. Eventually in 1946, he and a friend went to work for the U.S. Forest Service as smokejumpers – a job he held through the 1949 season.

"They really liked us because we knew how to saw, fell timber—we were woodsy. Most of the smokejumpers were military paratroopers—tougher than hell—but no ideas of using pulaskis

or cross-cut saws," Dunne said.

While some years were busy parachuting to wildfires or other emergencies, there were calm years, too.

"1948 was a lousy year. It rained every day," Dunne said with a laugh.

Dunne recounted one of the funny moments of life as a smokejumper when the crew was stationed in barracks not far from a circus carnival that was going on. One night, some of the men spotted a baby elephant tied to a stake.

"We led the elephant into the barracks," Dunne said as if it were the logical decision to make when one encounters a baby elephant.

The men scratched the little elephant, which wriggled with pleasure when someone got an idea.

"One guy said, 'Let's turn off the lights and tie him to the door,' " Dunne said.

The goal of the prank was to confuse men returning to the barracks who had a little too much to drink.

"Well, two drunks came in from town, opened the door. The elephant was trying to get out and they were trying to get in. They were feeling around trying to figure what it was. One guy said, 'Oh hell, I'll go back to town.' It was funny. It was grand."

They later returned the elephant to its owners none the wiser, according to Dunne.

After four years as a smokejumper he got married and had "to grow up," as he put it. Dunne wanted to take up a meaningful career after his war experiences bombing cities in Japan.

"I saw myself as a teacher. I was looking for something decent to do," he said. "You know we were burning big cities, and we were burning the houses, and we were burning the people—were burning the children and infants and the old folks. I mean it was necessary. It was a necessary evil. When I got back I said, 'I have to do something decent now.' "

Teaching turned into a 33-year career—two years in Hot Springs and 31 years in Whitefish School District.

"I taught sixth grade. I enjoyed that age—it's a beautiful age," Dunne said.

His favorite days became Mondays and Fridays—"Mondays, because the kids were waiting for me," he said.

After retirement, Dunne picked up wood carving until it was too painful in one of his hands to continue. He then picked up a paintbrush using rocks as his canvas.

"I picked up a rock at Tally Lake, put it in my pocket, took it home, thought I could do something with that," Dunne said. "Eighty, ninty rocks

later, here we are."

Dunne paints a lot of things found in nature—butterflies, fish, birds, and flowers. Most of them he gives away to friends, family and people he meets on the street. To Dunne, no one is a stranger.

"I have friends from all over," Dunne said. 🐼

NSA Photo Preservation Project

An important part of our Mission Statement states that we are "dedicated to preserving the history and lore of smokejumping."

We recently teamed with Bethany Hannah (Associate), the creator of The Smokey Generation, a website dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing the stories and oral history of wildland fire. Our goal is to collect those smokejumper photos that are tucked away in your collection and preserve them for future generations.

This is a project that has been on our "to-do" list for a long time. It has always been "a good idea." Now we have found the person who is able to do the work. Bethany comes with a background that includes seven seasons in fire, six with Hotshot crews. You will see her featured in the Stihl ad on the back page of this issue.

I asked Bethany to come up with guidelines and directions for submitting photos, slides, and videos. The large part of our membership will not be doing this electronically, but the guidelines below for the photos will apply to hard copy pictures. Please read them.

Hard copy photos should be sent to:

Bethany Hannah

1008 Hanover Ct

El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

I'm sure that most of these photos are ones that you want returned. Be sure to let us know if they need to be returned. Remember that faces, names, and dates are very important. Time is short and we need to establish a good photo gallery. Our aim is to link the smokejumper gallery to our website. Don't

let smokejumper history be lost.

Guidelines and Procedures from Bethany Hannah

We ask that you go through your collection and send meaningful photos from your smokejumping career. Slides can be submitted, as well. Hard copy submissions will be manually scanned, so please be selective. General guidelines for photo and video submission include the following:

- We are looking for photos that have historical and/or cultural relevance to the smokejumping and greater wildland fire community.
- Images should be good quality, clear, and well composed.
- They should be unique with interesting content (e.g., people, places, etc.—images that have entertainment value are welcomed). Photos of people and images that really capture the culture are highly encouraged.
- Please provide as much information as you can about each image: Names of people in the photo, dates, base (if applicable), location, fire name (if you can remember), what's happening, etc.

What we don't want

- Photos that show common occurrences or subjects without identifiable people in the shot. For example, a photo of just a parachute hung up in a tree, or a sky shot of jumpers in the air during a standard jump.

- Blurry, unclear shots, or those without any historical or cultural relevance (such as pictures of a tree torching or a hillside on fire).

Instructions for submitting your photos electronically

Photos (and video clips) can be submitted electronically through *TheSmokeyGeneration.com*. Just visit the “Upload your photos and videos” page under the “Support the Stories” section and follow the prompts.

- Before you upload your images, please change the file names to include: Description of photo_Date taken_Submitter’s Last Name. For example:
—Johnny Smith on King Fire in CA_2012_Hannah
—Susan Miller and Adam Jones hung in trees_1978_Hannah
—Practice Jump at Ninemile_1964_Hannah
- Photos should be submitted at the highest resolution, highest quality possible. Large files are accepted and appreciated.

- Don’t crop or filter photos. Upload photos in their original, unedited form.
- Videos and raw clips should be submitted in HD or higher resolution.
- If you have any questions about submitting your photos electronically, please email Bethany at: bethany@thesmokeygeneration.com. Direct link to uploading your photos or video clips: http://thesmokeygeneration.com/photo_submit

Please note that by submitting your photos and videos, you assert that this material is your own, you hold all necessary rights (copyright, etc.) to the material and the content therein, and freely give The Smokey Generation, National Smokejumper Association, and its affiliates nonexclusive license to make use of the material on the website, within videos, and for purposes of promoting The Smokey Generation project (e.g., commercial and non-commercial use). You also understand that you will not receive compensation for use of submitted content and that donation of your material to a public institution for the purposes of historical archiving may occur in the future. You may view the complete Terms of Use here: <http://thesmokeygeneration.com/termsphoto/> 📄



Perry Rahn (MSO-61) in front of Trimotor Rapid City Airport August 2016. Trimotor was previously owned by Evergreen Aviation McMinnville, Oregon. (Courtesy P. Rahn)

Australian and American Firefighting

by Michael Scott Hill (West Yellowstone '95)

During the fire season of 2015, a contingent of Australian firefighters deployed to the US to help out and, during their deployment, many of them made American friends. Australian firefighters often fit well into the framework of US wildland firefighting system and, when they left to return home, a number of Americans were interested in knowing more about firefighting in the Land Down Under. I have been an Australian wildland firefighter as well as an American firefighter for many years now and can offer a brief overview of Australian firefighting from a viewpoint of similarities and differences.

Over the past few fire seasons, the lines between both countries have become increasingly blurred, as more and more interactions between the two nations on the firefighting level have been taking place. Now above the Australian firelines, it isn't too out of the ordinary to see SEATs, a Coulson C-130, or even a VLAT coming in for a retardant drop. Australia's helicopter fleet has undergone changes from being a mixture of lights and mediums to its recent addition of a few strategically placed Skycranes, Blackhawks, along with an S-61 and CH-47. Insertion into fires by the means of helicopters with hoists, hover exit techniques and, in rare cases, rappelling are possible to see in Australia as well.

More and more Australians are being organized into groups trained to take on fires burning in remote areas away from their primarily truck-based firefighting traditions, and they have been making changes in their hand tools. The configurations of handtools being carried by the individual firefighters have been changing from their primary focus on McLeod (or Rakecos), and its close relative the Rinos, to a preference of using a Pulaski on the fireline. Australian fire teams call in helicopter bucket drops, as we do, but in so doing, they have developed more descriptive target indicators to assist their pilots.

There are other differences between the Australian and American firefighting systems. These

differences can be found in terminology, such as referring to Sectors as Divisions, or in qualification systems, where an Australian crewleader is roughly equivalent to an American squad boss.

There are differences in tactics used in fighting wildfires in both nations. Australians are focused more on mopup while Americans are more focused on aggressive initial and extended attacks. Fighting fire without the use of water is much more stressed in America than Australia. Matesmanship, or stepping up to looking out for each other, is much more stressed as part of their efforts.

The main politically powerful firefighting agencies in Australia can be found located in their Southeastern States. Their wildfires, or bushfires as they are usually called in Australia, can occur almost anywhere in this country where there is vegetation. Yet for these Southeasterners, the more remote locations of Tasmania, northern Queensland, and the Northern Territory are what my fellow Australian firefighters find are the unique and very special assignments.

What I've personally found different is the types of animals it's possible to encounter in the bush. Kangaroos, or their smaller cousins the wallabies, can be seen bouncing around fires at times. While the harmless bluetongue lizards are the local favorite, there can be the world famous koalas also around. Large hairy wombats and spiky echidnas may as well be seen going about their business on a fire. Huge wedge-tail eagles can be seen in the skies competing with helicopters, or colorful parrots chirping around in the burnt-out limbs. At times there can be domesticated sheep found greatly affected by burns from the bushfires.

Firefighters have to keep a lookout for snakes. Australia is home to several species, each of which carries venom dangerous to humans. The snake species often share many of the same variations of patterns and colors, but they can be identified by the structures of their heads. The Tiger snake is by far the most famous species and is usually consid-

ered timid, normally retreating at the approach of a human. They are a beautiful, highly toxic and interesting snake.

Firefighters are instructed that if they are bitten by any of Australia's poisonous snakes, their best chance of survival is to isolate the bitten extremity with a compression bandage, immobilize themselves and call for help. If the snake did inject toxin during its bite, only the timely delivery of

anti-venom and the victim's immobilization will be of help to the firefighter. As such, snakes are respected in Australia.

Our countries similar cultural histories are a large part of the reason why Australian and American firefighters find they often share many commonalities. Any of their differences are not insurmountable when our teams collaborate on international emergency responses. 🐍

A Simple Fire And Enjoyable Trip To Eskimo Culture

by Tom Butler (Missoula '61)

During one of my four summers in Alaska, I got on a two-manner at the edge of the small village of Shaktoolik, northeast of Kotzebue.

I always liked to get out to the Bering Sea areas. I enjoyed looking at the country below as we made our long flights. There is an interesting culture there, being in the Eskimo country, and we always spent the night at the North Star Hotel in Nome before going back to Fairbanks. The hotel and the town all seemed historical to me, and I always enjoyed the short time we got to spend there.

When we got over the village and the fire, we could see quite a few people already fighting the fire. It wasn't a real small fire, but a slow burn in the tundra and brush.

When we got on the fire we could see that the brush was actually the village's raspberry grove. That is why all ages were out there in force. It wasn't that hard to get the fire out with all the help we had, but it took a considerable time to move around the fire edge, feeling for warm areas.

I asked for the head of the village – or maybe the village chief found me. We talked and went into his house. He said there had been 53 of his people fighting the fire for several hours before we arrived.

We had been told when we first got to Fairbanks that the Eskimos were generally honest and could be trusted, but not necessarily so for the Indians who were residents of interior Alaska.

We sat at his kitchen table in his small house, and I took out the book of time sheets. I wrote in the name of each person he said had been on the fire, as well as the hours each had been on the fire as he remembered: "She came about 2 o'clock; he was one of the first about 12:30; they didn't come

until about 4:15."

There were so many sheets to put names on and hours worked that he probably helped me.

As the village chief and I did the paperwork, I periodically saw a couple of girls through the doorway in the next room. When the chief and I were finished, I went outside with the other jumper and walked through the village. The light had faded, so it must have been getting late.

We soon noticed the two girls I'd seen earlier, but they had changed clothes, put on some lipstick, and looked really pretty. I never thought of Eskimos as having very pretty facial features, but these girls and their chief dad must have had some Russian colonial ancestry.

Girls of mixed ancestry are often more attractive than most. They were strikingly pretty and were showing some interest in us two. We might have talked to them some, but not long. We estimated their age was about 16 at most and possibly less.

Our thoughts quickly changed from girls to setting on an ice floe in the Bering Sea and looking forward to dying from exposure as soon as possible. We weren't about to get a village in the middle of nowhere mad at us.

We walked up the beach some distance to camp out of town. There was a lot of driftwood, so we built a three-sided lean-to in order to get out of the cold ocean breeze; we also made a fire in front. I remember the cold but enjoyed watching the ocean waves come to shore. We don't have many ocean beaches in Oklahoma, so I just watched them for a long time before hitting the sack.

It was on to Nome the next day. Nothing like smokejumping! 🐍



ODDS AND ENDS

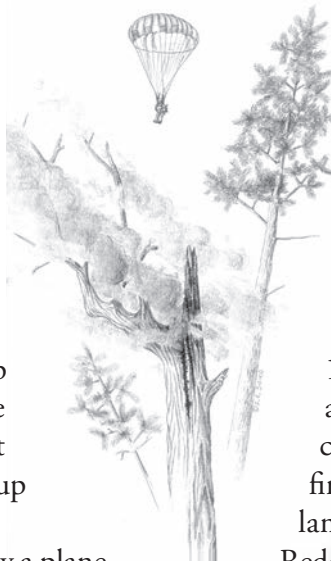


by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Dick Calkins** (RDD-64) who just became our latest Life Member.

From bio information on **Al Pappenhagen** (MSO-47) whose obit is in this issue: During the summers from college, Al worked a lookout and would hike to put out fires and keep a single phone line in repair. His hike to bathe or fish in the river took about 20 minutes down and two hours back up to the lookout.

One morning he looked out and saw a plane dropping two men on a fire and immediately knew what he wanted to do the following summer. Al went on to become a very successful researcher at Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley



and was involved in the discovery of medicine used to treat hemophilia.

From *Wildfire Today*: "Until yesterday (8/31/16), smokejumpers have never parachuted into a fire on the Cleveland N.F. This was the only National Forest in California that had not yet inserted jumpers in this manner. The 16 jumpers were dispatched from Redding and Porterville using a USFS Sherpa and a contract Dornier aircraft, each with eight firefighters. The jumpers from Porterville landed at approximately 18:30, while the Redding squad all completed their jumps by 19:50."

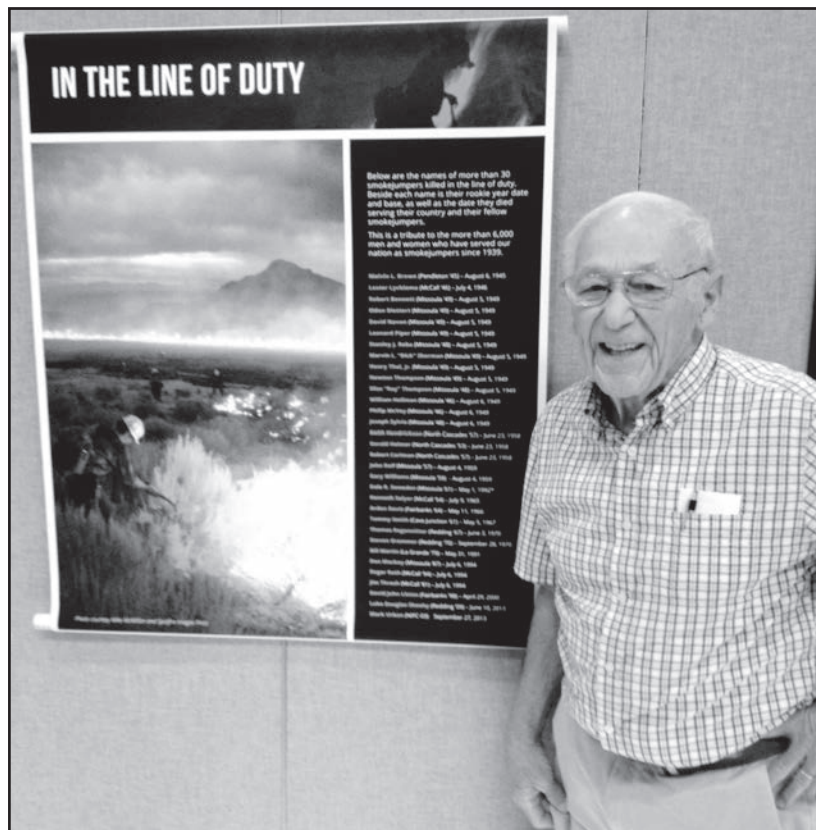
Dave Provencio (MSO-77): "The US Hotshots Association (USHA) website is open for membership.

Please stop in and visit, share, collaborate, set up an account, and more importantly, join the association. It's taken two+ years to get to this point thanks to the BOD and the hard work of the web development team. *USHotshots.com*."

Roger Savage (MSO-57) has just finished entering the 2016 rookie smokejumpers into the NSA Master Database. We are now at an even 6,000 men and women who have been smokejumpers in the U.S. since 1940.

Roy Korkalo (MSO-61), a University of Montana '66 graduate, has been appointed to the U of Montana Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Davis Perkins (NCSB-72) was sent to Haiti (Oct. 2016) to treat Hurricane Matthew victims. Congratulations and thanks to Davis who continues to volunteer his service around the world to help people in need. 🇹



Don Heinicke (MSO-51) Traveling Smokejumper exhibit Wenatchee, Washington. Thanks to Don for making contact and setting up the exhibit

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BETHANY HANNAH
CHAIN SAW INSTRUCTOR

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When Bethany picked up her first chain saw at the age of 20, she was immediately hooked. Now, as a chain saw instructor, former Hotshot firefighter and sawyer, her appreciation for STIHL has only grown stronger.

"Having a reliable tool, like a STIHL, is critical. When you take off the bar to replace the chain, you can do it under a minute. Being able to quickly maintain your tools in the field is paramount for safety and productivity."





– Bethany



MS 461 | 4.9/5 STARS



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