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Smokejumper Magazine, October 2016

National Smokejumper Association

Allen Biller

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2016

SMOKEJUMPER



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1956 (Courtesy *Shep Johnson*)



Message from the President



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

PRESIDENT

As I WRITE this epistle to you, I am a few days away from my appointment to take this aching bag of bones into the body shop to get a new ball and socket for my suspension system (translation: a new left hip joint).

I'm looking forward to it, since the right hip replacement 12 years ago gave me back my life. I'm guessing that there are a number of you who have had (or will have) similar experiences. Modern medicine is a wonder! We are becoming a bionic society.

In watching the news coverage it is obvious that we are having another hot, fire-filled summer and it doesn't seem as though any region is being spared. In driving back from Helena, Mont., where my wife and I visited **Jim Phillips** (MSO-62), we spotted what appeared to be three new fires on mountainsides in the Black Hills. There had been a light-

ning bust the night before.

Good time to be offering a prayer for all of those on the fireline whether they be in the sky or on the ground.

The NSA Life Member roster continues to grow. We now stand at a total of 323 Life Members, with 16 having hooked up in 2015 and another four so far in 2016. The Life Members, through their donation of \$1,000 each to the NSA, are the backbone of financial security for the NSA and support our ability to carry out our mission statement. Those donations have all gone into an endowment fund which provides earnings that support our annual operating expenses.

The NSA Board of Directors has been working diligently to fulfill our mission statement. The **Good Samaritan Fund** is continually standing ready to provide financial support to jumpers and pilots and their families in times of crisis.

The NSA **Scholarship Fund** provided \$6,000 in financial support to jumpers and their direct family members in 2015 and will be doing the same in 2016.

The **Trails Program** has continued to expand into new states and regions of the country with work on restoration projects on buildings and trails (including the long-envisioned Mann Gulch project).

The **Historic Preservation** also continues to grow through our partnership with the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana in Missoula and through our collection and preservation of photos through our contract with Bethany Hannah. We continue to keep you informed through our quarterly **Smokejumper Magazine**, the NSA website at **Smokejumpers.com** and **nsatrails.com**, and we are spreading the word about the work and history of smokejumpers through our new **Traveling Smokejumper Exhibit**.

We thank you for the ways you have supported your Board of Directors and the NSA's mission. Your input is always welcome and appreciated. We want to serve you in the best way possible. As many of you have expressed in the past: "Smokejumping was the best job I ever had" ... and this is just a way of paying back a little bit.

The following is the fourth in a series of "Fire

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Smokejumper 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	MissoulaMSO	Winthrop..... NCSB

Starters" by **Tom Decker** (IDC-64):

Working fence

The fence didn't look like a fence with the wire all down on the ground. The Forest Service called it a "drift fence," used to separate the cow range from the sheep range, and it ran for a couple miles through chaparral, buck brush and ponderosa. Our job was to pull the wire, tighten it, patch it, cut the brush, and reset the fence wires. It only took four men a couple days to do it. It was an annual job to put the fence up in the summer before the livestock were on the range, and take it down again in the fall before winter storms buried fence and brush under 6-8 feet of snow.

Somebody invented the drift fence. The wire ran between trees and a post here or there, only loosely attached between two staples tacked into the tree. A third staple dropped into the other two and securely held the wire that ran to the next tree.

Economics probably mandated that the fence be cheap to construct and indestructible. But it was politics that drove its erection in the first place. The sheep and cattle wars of the West are the stuff of legends, and the fence is evidence that the legend lived on in the mountains of Idaho.

Boundaries are important in life. Neighborhoods have physical boundaries, while marriages have emotional boundaries, markers beyond which it is improper to go or where strangers are not welcome. Boundaries have become more important than ever in recent years as a new sense of nationalism has gripped nations and peoples of the world. Identification cards become markers as to who belongs and who doesn't, who's safe and who might be a threat.

The Christian Church has an important role in moving boundary markers with the good news of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is about acceptance, forgiveness, and opening up, the action of freeing people to be neighbors one to another. It centers in what God did in Christ, and what He still does through the work of the Holy Spirit. Where the good news of Jesus is proclaimed—and believed—the boundaries of fear are pushed back by the boundaries of acceptance and love. Good boundaries make for good communities and healthy environments in which families thrive. The message is an old one, but one that still sets straight

Super Cub Fire Jump

by Allen Biller (Fairbanks '82)

The fire had been reported late in the day, the result of a lightning strike. I was working as the Assistant Fire Management Officer in the Galena Zone of the BLM Alaska Fire Service. The Galena Zone encompasses roughly the western third of Alaska. Six other fires had been reported earlier that day and the previous day throughout the Zone. All were manned with smokejumpers or ground-based firefighters transported by helicopter. There was one remaining firefighter left at the station when the new fire was reported. I approached one of our dispatchers, a former smokejumper who had maintained his fire qualifications, and asked him if he was willing to initial attack the new fire. The dispatcher, **Walt Folker** (MYC-81), agreed and with Karl Franke, the sole fire suppression technician remaining at Galena, flew out by helicopter and began suppressing the fire.

I left the station shortly afterwards to fly the other ongoing fires with pilot Dave Weintraub in an Aero Commander. We obtained fire updates, sizes, needs and other information from the IC's. On the way back to Galena, we flew over the new fire, located about 30 miles southwest of the field station. The fire was long and skinny, being pushed by a stiff wind. Karl and Walt had their hands full, but they knew additional help was unavailable until the following day. Dave and I continued on to Galena, landing at about 2300. As anyone who has fought fires in Alaska knows, you are not limited by darkness in the summertime. It's light 24 hours a day.

While flying back to the station, I thought that there was one other person who could assist Karl and Walt on their fire. That person was me. But how do I get to the fire? The helicopter pilots were out of flight time and duty day. Upon landing I walked over to the fueller's shack. Joe Jones (ficti-

tious) worked fueling BLM aircraft during the summer. Joe owned a Piper Super Cub, that he kept at Galena and used to explore the Alaskan bush when he was not working. I asked him if he was willing to drop me by parachute to help Karl and Walt. Always eager for a new adventure, Joe said yes.

I was no longer an active smokejumper, but I was a sport skydiver and I had my skydiving rig with me in Galena. While Joe pre-flighted his plane, I put on Nomex pants, shirt and work boots. I also donned a light windbreaker and zipped it up. The windbreaker not only provided additional warmth, it would help streamline my body for the upcoming freefall. I placed personal gear in a daypack and put the pack, a sleeping bag, a sheet of visqueen, and a waterproof sack into a burlap bag and taped it shut. I walked out to the plane and tossed the burlap bag inside. I put on my skydiving rig, tightened the chest and leg straps, and climbed into the rear seat of the Super Cub. Joe climbed in the front seat, and we went over the procedure I would use to exit the plane.

We double checked everything and took off. I think both of us were excited and a little anxious, due to the unusual nature of the upcoming enterprise. But we were confident we could do it safely and successfully. Joe immediately began gaining altitude on takeoff. I had asked him to obtain at least 5000 feet AGL before I bailed out. I wanted to have enough altitude to comfortably get stable and to do a quick size-up of the fire before landing, and to also enjoy a little bit of freefall before opening.

We arrived over the fire. Joe slid his seat as far forward as possible, and reaching across the cockpit, opened the door. I squeezed past him, being careful not to snag my pilot chute or parachute



Allen Biller (Courtesy A. Biller)

container flap on the airplane. Once even with the door, I stepped out onto the big, oversized tundra tire, grasped the strut and pulled myself out of the plane. The force of the wind pushed against my body, and the rushing wind partially drowned out the sound of the engine. We were on a long final so I just crouched on the tire and viewed the spruce forest and meandering sloughs and lakes below. When we came over the fire, I made sure that I was clear of any obstruction, nodded toward Joe, and simply released my grasp on the strut and fell backwards away from the plane.

Everything went as planned. I exited into the subdued twilight common at this time of night in Alaska. I quickly stabilized, and after about a 10 second freefall, threw out my pilot chute. The Falcon 190 gave a reassuring tug on my shoulders as it opened. After circling to get a better picture of the work ahead of me, I landed where Karl and

Walt had deposited their gear. Shortly afterwards I heard the roar of the plane engine and looked around to see Joe make a low pass and drop the burlap bag containing my gear.

Upon seeing me jump, Karl and Walt had walked back to greet me. They were a bit surprised, but we didn't discuss the jump. We had a fire to put out. I took off my harness and container and put it with the parachute into the waterproof bag. I grabbed my PG bag, water and a tool, and the three of us walked to the fire. We cut spruce boughs to use as brooms and used burlap bags to beat out the flames. As we suspected, and hoped, the wind died shortly after midnight and the humidity came up. That made beating out the flames in the tundra and willow brush a lot easier. Within a few hours, we had the fire contained. Our suppression efforts were helped greatly when the left flank of the fire burned into a swampy area with a small stream running through it. We returned to camp, ate a quick bite, and then walked around the perimeter, mopping the hot spots. We were able to get a couple hours of sleep before rising the next day and continuing to patrol and mop. By midday the fire was out.

We had direct radio contact with Galena and after double checking the fire, called for a helicopter to pick us up. The helicopter pilot must have wondered where the third firefighter came from, but he didn't say anything.

I have no way of knowing for sure if my assistance made the difference in catching the fire that night. But I do know that if I had done nothing and the fire burned into the following day and required a lot of additional resources, I would have regretted it. As all smokejumpers know, rapid, aggressive initial attack can often mean the difference between catching a fire when it's small and a large, expensive resource-sucking fire that continues for days or weeks.

A couple days later, I called **Jim Raudenbush** (FBX-82), crew supervisor for the Alaska Smokejumpers, and asked him to record an additional fire jump for me in the jump records. I don't know if he ever did.

I never mentioned my Super Cub fire jump to anyone else, other than a few close jumper buddies. 🦋

Have You Ever Done “The Kip”?

by **Ron Lund** (Fairbanks '64) and **Don Havel** (Fairbanks '66)

For the smokejumpers who jumped in Alaska, doing the kip meant the procedure for exiting the door of a Grumman Goose. The Goose was one of the planes used by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to transport jumpers to fires.

There were several Grumman Gooses used in Alaska by the BLM, but we will limit our story to just one, N644, which was a Fairbanks aircraft. Let us talk a little bit about the history of this craft.

It was somewhat difficult to find a complete trail of where this plane spent its life but let us

“The first Grumman Goose made its initial test flight May 29, 1937, and Grumman gave it the designation G-21. With WWII looming on the horizon, the military realized that the Goose could be quite useful to them.”

start, well, from the start. The Grumman Corporation initially designed the craft as a commercial transport plane that could land on water or an airstrip. The first Grumman Goose made its initial test flight May 29, 1937, and Grumman gave it the designation G-21. With WWII looming on the horizon, the military realized that the Goose could be quite useful to them. Soon, both the United States Navy and the United States Army Air Force placed orders for them. The Navy gave the plane a designation of JRF and the Army used OA which stood for Observation- Army. In 1942 the cost of a Goose was \$62,180.

During the time of its production, 1937-1945, a total of 345 planes were produced. There were also several variations built depending on specific

uses for which it was needed. For example, as a patrol plane for the Navy or Coast Guard, the variation G-21B was outfitted with 30 caliber machine guns in the bow and dorsal areas. It was also built to carry either two 100-pound bombs or two 250-pound depth charges, which were affixed under the wings.

Here are a few of the characteristics of a Goose: length 38 ft. 6 in., wingspan 49 ft., height 16 ft. 2 in., useful load 2,575 lbs., maximum speed 201 mph, cruise speed 191 mph, range 640 miles, powered by two Pratt & Whitney R-985-AN-6 Wasp Junior nine-cylinder air-cooled radials at 450 hp each.

Our Goose, N644, was built in June 1945 and carried the factory serial number B-130 and a military number BU87736. It was assigned to the United States Navy. According to Navy records, on Sept. 30, 1952, it was released from the Navy and in 1954 it was listed in the FAA registry as N644. Later, in 1976, it was reregistered as N644R. We are not sure why the R was added, but it may have been used to designate it as a radial engine plane, as many, or even all of the remaining flying Gooses were converted to turboprops. One source stated that about 50 Gooses still exist with about 30 being airworthy.

In 1954 it was transferred to the Department of Interior and given to the BLM. Then in 1997, in a political deal between states, it was given to the National Park Service and transferred to Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, New York. Floyd Bennett Field is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area, which is managed by the National Park Service. It has gone through some restoration and been painted with colors representative of the NYPD, which at one time used a Goose to patrol the city's shoreline. It is stored in a Bennett Field hanger.

As a smokejumper aircraft, BLM smokejumper **Roy Percival** (NCSB-57) recalls that we manned the plane with four jumpers and a spotter, and at a speed of about 80 knots we could jump two-

man sticks. The jump door was a two-piece affair and with the bottom section in place, it could land on water without the top section. With both sections removed it was still a tight squeeze to get out. Just to the top of the door was a metal handle built into the frame on each side. A jumper would grab these handles with their hands and bend way down, as if in a sitting position with their butt nearly hitting the floor. When the spotter slapped you, you raised your body off the floor as if doing a pull-up, and while retaining that crouching position, you flung yourself out the door; hence, you “kipped out.” While the first jumper was crouching in the door, the second jumper placed his left hand against the fuselage just above the first jumper’s left hand. Then when the first jumper went out, the second jumper quickly grabbed the handles, crouched and flung himself out too.

We do believe most, if not all, BLM jumpers were trained to jump out of the Goose. One such jumper, **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59), checked his jump logs that indicated he made several jumps out of the Goose during the years 1967 to 1968. Chuck stated one of the jumps was a fire jump and one was as the second man out.

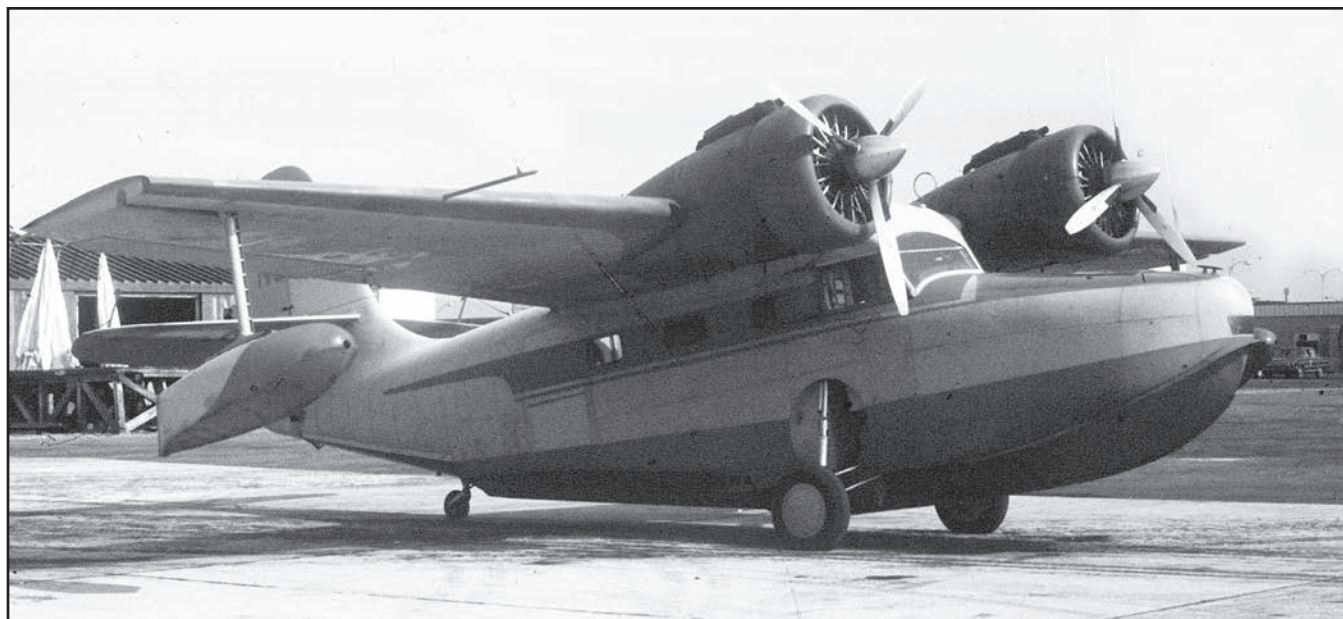
What is the fate of our N644R? Well, it looks like its been lost to its home in Fairbanks and, somehow it doesn’t seem a place named Brooklyn should be its permanent resting place. But it is what it is in the country’s political merry-go-round. One caretaker of the craft, Lincoln

Hallowell, told us it is still airworthy but they will never fly it again. He said they do fire up the engines once in awhile, following the Smithsonian Institutions guidelines to preserve aircraft in flying condition. Perhaps, too, they just want to hear those engines howl, a lupus in Brooklyn.

We hope you enjoyed our recap of this very unique smokejumper aircraft and the unique Alaskan jumpers who soared in her through the Last Frontier chasing smoke. 🦋



Grumman Goose (Courtesy Don Havel)



Grumman Goose (Courtesy Don Havel)

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 Asso-

ciation, 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/> 

County Residents Blame Poor Fire Management, Environmentalism For 2014-15 Wildfires

by Marcy Stamper, *Methow Valley News* (Twisp, Wash.)

They had a new audience, but it was a familiar refrain as Okanogan County residents still reeling from the wildfires of the past two summers argued for better forest management—in particular, through logging and grazing, but also thinning and prescribed burning—to reduce fire risk.

U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse brought his congressional colleague from Pennsylvania, Glenn “GT” Thompson, to Okanogan County March 31 to see and hear—firsthand—the impacts of the state’s two largest wildfires in 2014 and 2015. Thompson chairs the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry.

Frustration and anger were still evident as people described traumatic experiences during the Carlton and Okanogan complex fires. Several speakers charged that firefighters had waited too long to respond, had watched as fires burned homes and fields, and had prevented them from fighting the fires.

Many speakers said the solution is to have more control so local firefighters can put out fires while they are still small. **Fire managers should send in large aircraft and smokejumpers as soon as a fire is detected, they said.**

“We’ve got to go out and fight fire, and quit

managing the stuff,” said one attendee.

Several speakers suggested that firefighters and incident commanders with highly trained national teams don’t care because they don’t have a connection to this area. One suggested that some fire managers are not aggressive in initial attack because having larger fires will “fatten their pockets” by creating more work.

Okanogan County Commissioner Ray Campbell emphasized the need to beef up response with more local resources and training “so we can put the fire out without waiting for the big guns.”

County Commissioner Sheilah Kennedy listed three basic demands: to “untie the hands” of local fire districts for initial attack, **to fight fire 24 hours a day**, and to require state and federal agencies to manage their lands effectively.

Panelist Mike Williams, supervisor of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, agreed that the solution is forest restoration. “We need to increase the pace and scale of restoration—more thinning, more acres, more prescribed burns—so that fire won’t be as severe,” he said.

County Commissioner Jim DeTro (NCSB-67) said smokejumpers should be sent out on a fire as soon as it is detected instead of having “to wait for a piece of paper.”

Williams reminded people that the North Cascades Smokejumper Base, while very important, is managed as a national resource.

Better communication

More than one speaker said communications for residents and first responders must be upgraded. “Firefighters had better communications [between engines] 20 to 30 years ago,” said veteran firefighter **Carlene Anders** (NCSB-86).

Newhouse, Thompson and Williams were joined by Thomas J. Dargan, federal coordinating officer with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the state’s Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark.

After 40 minutes of opening remarks by the panelists, a frustrated audience member said, “Are we going to get to Q&A, or just listen to speeches?” In the end, the meeting was extended by an hour to give everyone a chance to speak. About 100 people attended the meeting in Okanogan.

As at previous post mortems on the past two forest seasons, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), headed by Goldmark, drew considerable criticism for what many called lax firefighting. Although some had hoped to question Goldmark, the commissioner left after opening remarks to catch a plane, prompting cries of irritation from some audience members.

Goldmark said he requested \$24 million from the Legislature for firefighting resources for DNR and for local fire districts, but lawmakers appropriated only a fraction of that—less than \$7 million.

While firefighters extinguish 98 percent of fires in the national forest, the acreage that burns annually continues to grow, said Williams. Fires in the past two years alone consumed a quarter of the 8.8 million acres that have burned across the country in the past decade, he said.

The Forest Service already spends more than half its budget on firefighting and Williams said the agency expects that to reach two-thirds, further diminishing the budget for maintenance and facilities.

Several speakers attributed recent wildfires to policies intended to protect the environment and endangered species.

“It’s basic common sense. The Endangered

Species Act is the mother monster of all the problems in Okanogan County. We have to figure out a way to abolish or rewrite it, so environmental terrorists don’t have that weapon,” said one speaker.

Rep. Thompson also blamed forest management. “National forests are not national parks. Trees are a crop,” he said, criticizing “decades of misguided environmental activism in the name of saving the forests.”

Several speakers complained that environmental groups have halted salvage sales of burned timber using lawsuits that create such a delay that the timber loses all value. In the past year, several lawsuits filed in Okanogan County have claimed that logging in steep burned areas could cause erosion and mudslides.

Ranchers whose grazing allotments burned said they need to know right away where they can graze their cattle. Williams said the Forest Service realizes how much fencing was destroyed and will not issue citations to affected ranchers. “If cows get out, they get out. We have to figure out a way to get them back,” he said.

FEMA was the one agency to get kudos. Jon Wyss, chair of the Okanogan County Long Term Recovery Group, said FEMA has maintained a local presence since the Carlton Complex Fire. 📍

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. 📍

2016 NSA Scholarship Winners

by Terry Egan (Cave Junction '65)

The National Smokejumper Association is pleased to announce five \$1,000 scholarship awards, with recipients including two smokejumpers and three smokejumper immediate family members.

One of the recipients is smokejumper **Amy Duning** (NIFC-07). In her application, Amy noted that as “a 29-year-old smokejumper rookie, I faced one of my most challenging and rewarding accomplishments. I had graduated (in Anthropology) from Iowa State University six years prior, yet becoming a smokejumper was what truly made me most proud and happy.”

Now, this mother of two boys is looking forward to the challenge of nursing school. She states the reason for this is that “in July of 2014, my husband Eric was seriously injured on a practice jump in McCall. After we spent three weeks in the hospital in Boise, the seed of nursing was planted.”

Caleb Rothwell is the son of smokejumpers **Kirk Rothwell** (RAC-92) and **Tara (Townsend) Rothwell** (RAC-92) who met at Redmond. Caleb will be attending the University of Wyoming where he hopes to prepare himself for a career in petroleum engineering.

His teachers, coaches and employers describe him as

highly motivated with an outstanding work ethic and having natural leadership qualities. He notes that his mom has taught him the importance of community service, which is why he volunteers for a variety of service activities, most recently in his church's food bank.

In his application, Caleb stated: “I plan to use my education to discover new, safer and environmentally conscious methods of petroleum production.”

Melissa R. Tenneson is the daughter of Boise BLM smokejumper **Melvin James Tenneson** (FBX-86). Melissa is currently enrolled in Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho, pursuing a master's degree in Social Work.

Her goal in pursuing this degree is to become a hospice social worker “to help people nearing end of life to plan and cope with the changes associated with that life transition. I want to provide these people with the love and support they deserve during their journey out of this life.”

Jamie Foland is the spouse of Alaska smokejumper **Randy Foland** (FBX-01). In her application, she notes that “I am just over a year into my 18-month education program with the Center for Guided Montessori Studies to become a certified primary Montes-

sori instructor for the primary (ages 2.5 to 6) level.

“This coursework, which is intense and rigorous, has transformed me by renewing my love of learning, my connection and commitment to inner peace, and my ability to observe, implement change, reflect and grow through the whole process.”

Redding smokejumper **Christopher Warnock** (RDD-14) is the fifth recipient of the 2016 scholarship. This third-year smokejumper stated that “after sidelining my educational goals to service to my community and support for my family through the military, wildland firefighting, and my wife's pursuit of graduate education, I am finally making the decision to go back to school and complete the bachelor's degree I started years ago.

“I will be attending Oregon State University and completing my bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Science online. I also intend to continue my education with graduate studies and research.”

The National Smokejumper Association can be justly proud of the quality of the 2016 scholarship recipients, particularly in light of the fact that this year, applicants were subjected to a more rigorous application and selection process. 🧑‍🔧



SOUNDING OFF from the editor



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

RECENTLY THE NSA Board of Directors was asked to sign on to a document to be sent to the Presidential Candidates from each party. The document covered a lot of issues dealing with forest management and fire control. The majority of the board did not feel comfortable with the document in that many of us do not have the knowledge and background on all of the issues. Even though I personally agreed with many of the points raised, I felt that this is something that can be better addressed with a written personal opinion piece in *Smokejumper* magazine.

One board member thought that since our Mission Statement includes "maintaining and restoring our nation's forest and rangeland resources," we should consider modifying our Mission Statement. Are we knowledgeable enough to deal with that

part of our Mission Statement? He has a good point.

I feel comfortable with my knowledge of smokejumping and fire, not with forest and rangeland management. This is a complicated issue with many viewpoints, and no one seems to be reaching a middle ground.

One day in late 2012, I was listening to an interview over National Public Radio (NPR) of an author who had just written a book, *The Tinder Box-How Politically Correct Ideology Destroyed the U.S. Forest Service*. The book had to do with the Bernardi Consent Decree of 1981 requiring the Forest Service to hire the same proportion of women into the workforce as existed in the civilian workforce. Under the decree, women had to make up 43 percent of the Forest Service workforce over five years. The agency also had to increase the number of women at the GS-11 through GS-13 pay grades. The book dealt with a subject that I was familiar with and have some strong opinions about.

Most certainly there were, and still are, many cases where women are discriminated against in the workforce. At the time, in addition to teaching, I was in charge of the Mendocino N.F. Type II Crew Program and



handled just about all aspects of recruiting and training 300+ firefighters a year.

I have always been for opening windows for the advancement of women and minorities. No one should be held back because of race, color or sex.

In the Type II Crews that I trained, we had a significant number of women in leadership positions. The majority of the young people came from Chico State University and the University of California at Davis. The UC Davis people were among the top five percent of the students in the state.

The Type II Crews were contract employees and called when needed. I insisted that the crewleaders be able to assemble a full crew within two hours of a fire call. Most of them had other part time jobs as students do during the summer.

In comparing the Type II Crew Program and the USFS, it was a real contrast in seeing how women advanced. The women from the UC Davis crew were absolutely opposed to any female being hired or advanced on the basis of sex. They wanted it emphatically known that they were there because they had the ability to fight fire and lead a crew.

Being a coach, P.E. teacher and firefighter, I encouraged

and established very strong fitness standards for these crews. They ran daily PT on their own time - no pay. I thought that the female crewleaders/squadleaders would probably cut some of the females some slack since it was known that the USFS wanted to increase the number of women employees. Not so – you met the requirements or looked for another job. I always told the kids, during the roughest part of field training, that McDonald's was hiring.

On the other hand, the USFS had a different approach to advance women and minorities. Soon it seemed like a large number of the administrative positions at the Supervisor's Office (SO) were filled by women. This is a logical step as the physical requirements are not as important as working in the field.

But, then I started seeing it spread to firefighting positions. The Hotshot crews were hiring some of my women firefighters with a single season of fire experience and passing over males with three-four seasons. On fires there would be the Hotshot crews that started the hike ahead of us at a rapid pace. After about 45 minutes, we would pass them as they rested by the trail, taking a break for their less than fit crewmembers.

Each year we kept losing highly experienced, male engine foremen to Cal Fire. When you lose people with all that knowledge and background, who will mentor the new, younger generation of firefighters?

I met with Christopher Burchfield, the author of *The*

Tinder Box several times. Since I had worked on the Mendocino N.F., there were minor corrections that I wanted to give him for a second printing of the book. I had Chris do a review of the book in the January 2013 issue of *Smokejumper*.

I feel that the Consent Decree has a lot to do with the way we currently fight wildfire. The lack of experienced mentors provided a situation where people learned on the job and established different methods of controlling wildfire opposed to, in many cases, what had been

successful in the past. No night shifts—wow.

In any case, there are many sides to the story. I'm going to bring up the Consent Decree at our October NSA Board Meeting in Seattle and see how many people around the table know how it affected the wildland firefighting profession. Have an idea that there will only be three-four of us who have any knowledge or background. Just shows how hard it is to be "knowledgeable," even dealing in areas in which we have experience. 🧐

READER COMMENTS

(RE: Mike Fitzpatrick's submission in the July 2016 issue of *Smokejumper* concerning the change to the square parachute.)

I need to respond to this Round vs Square debate because much information is left untold, and I will no longer sit on the sidelines and watch the ball go back and forth as most do not really know what those of us experienced from a malfunction. I went through much abuse and turmoil from fellow comrades, the insecure ones who have to prove themselves, and the question you raise of who's ultimately accountable? Furthermore, this debate is a moving map with no clear direction and no sound resolution.

To answer your first question, on whose desk does the "Buck Stop Here" sign belong? That is easy, on the desk of the National Director of Fire and Aviation that pushed this decision just before retiring. In addition, he's probably sitting back watching this debate go on as we do ourselves in because we cannot pull our act together and stand together. Isn't that what bro's do? Or are we becoming accustomed to throwing each other under the bus instead of pulling one to safety? That's my perception. I do need some clarification from your submission though, since I experienced a high speed, spinning malfunction on a fire jump. Many questions were never asked of me, I would like to answer them here.

One fact I will clarify that might skew your facts on mathematical analysis, I was NEVER asked what was I thinking prior, during, or after my malfunction. The only time I was questioned was the second day in the hospital for about 30 minutes and no follow-up after that day. I sustained a high speed, spinning malfunction dropping at approximately 120 feet per second. I don't recall that made

it to the investigation report. Can you imagine jumping at 3000' with a high speed, spinning malfunction while dropping at 120 feet per second? That's a whole lot of g-force and descent while maintaining situational awareness. When I pulled my reserve, which I did, it collapsed as I hit that 130-foot Douglas Fir tree below. I did tell myself to do a good roll as I was coming in hot and did not want a leg fracture. This was my first fire jump in the lower 48 and in Northern California. Can you put yourself there? Many cannot.

My situational awareness began in the loft 10 days prior to that fire jump. If you only knew how many times I tried to re-rig that parachute before that jump, it might tell you something I could never say before. I am still reluctant; however, I will not roll over anymore and listen to this debate and know that critical information about my malfunction never made the report. That was the fastest investigation, and no investigation on the rigging was conducted. I kept my mouth shut.

I witnessed a rigger (not from AK) who seemed hell bent on rigging parachutes faster than the master riggers. I had major issues with that since he was not a senior rigger. The issues I had with this came a few days later when I got called to the lower 48. This parachute was front and center on the shelf. I found a different row of chutes to take. My gut was letting me know. Well, ten days later, we know the storyline now.

No one knows what I was thinking as I had this parachute strapped to my back while flying Initial Attack from NCSB all the way to Redding. Let me tell you what I thinking.

I made three attempts to remove it, but we were on lunch standby, had other practice jumps, and no other chutes were rigged at the time. This is the hand I was dealt and the hand I played. Just one problem during the investigation, not one individual asked me any of the pertinent questions as to what might have been going through my mind prior, during, and after the jump. I wanted to protect my bro, so decided not to tell the story. I decided my career was more important and I pretty much kept quiet for 18 years. So, I semi retired, and like a good soldier, took one for the team.

However, I am very much disgusted with the

debate taking place today. The stats on injuries left out the injuries of those on a perfectly good day, a perfectly good canopy, a perfectly good jump spot, under fairly perfect operations, and have, unfortunately, suffered injuries. Yes, there have been fatalities on malfunctions.

My point is that you cannot compare abnormal events to the more normal everyday operations. Hence, the 1:1000 ratio you mention of those making decisions in extreme abnormal situations cannot be compared to those that have completely no relation to the statistics being analyzed. You mention the Navy conducting studies on this, however, this is pure conjecture as, again, no one ever spoke to me about my malfunction. And the fatal malfunctions, we will never know.

I am with you that accidents will continue to happen and, yes, we are very much human operators in a dynamic environment. Nothing linear about it, so I am sorry to inform you that the stats you quote are skewed. I semi-retired after 26 years, much of my success came after my malfunction. I graduated with a Forestry degree from the University of Montana, spent eight years as a Division and an Air Attack on a National Type 1 team, ran more half marathons, ran Pikes Peak Ascent, before semi-retiring as the Regional Aviation Training Specialist. But you know, in the end, what really matters is that we have each other's backs. I said it before and will say it again, if we don't, we may watch the smokejumping program come to an end and it will be because we could not come together as comrades.

Overall, in the end my injuries were of the mental type, not physical. I made a good decision not to return to smokejumping. I beat myself up more that I care to remember. I took a hell of a lot of abuse from some folks that knew absolutely nothing about my incident and still don't. It took much guts and grit to get my life back. My priority was for my comrades, not me. Yes, I broke my lower back, but I came back full capacity. So, let's get over this part of the debate and take it to a new level of how to make it work. How about solutions instead of beating up on one another. I suffered much pain. My advice, we need to get over it. I did.

—Paige Houston
(Fairbanks '95) 🧠

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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**

Jim Phillips 2016 NSA Trails Program Volunteer of the Year

by Bob Whaley (MSO-56)

Jim "Doc" Phillips (MSO-67) has been selected as the 2016 NSA Trails Volunteer of The Year.

Jim has been a stalwart in the program since near the beginning in 2001 when he first volunteered on the Blackfoot Divide Project, serving as chief cook and "Doc." He has been an absolute unstoppable participant every year since, having volunteered for multiple projects, not only as our "Doc" but also as cook and squadleader. His efforts have had him ranging from Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, and all the way out to West Virginia. I think he even had his sights on Maine this year.

Jim graduated from Ronan H.S. in 1961 and joined the US Navy, volunteering for the medical corps as a corpsman. Upon graduation he was assigned to the Fleet Marine Forces. It should be noted that only the top corpsmen were given this assignment due to the extreme physical requirements and stamina attendant to this duty. That came easy to Jim and he loved his Marines. They must have been very fortunate to have him as their "Doc," judging from the caring manner in which he tended his trail crew bros with their leg cramps, heat exhaustion, owies, blisters, and other health related maladies.

Jim always checked with everyone at the conclusion of each work day, not satisfied with his responsibilities until getting a thumbs up from everyone, sometimes displaying a little disappointment when he didn't have the opportunity to crack open his well stocked and very heavy medical kit. Hemorrhoids were infrequent, but it was one such malady that he declined to personally treat other than offering the suppository, which it is alleged was given to one of the older crew. When queried the following morning about how he was doing, the gentleman reluctantly responded, "It did not work and for all the good it did

me, I might as well have stuck it up my butt!" Apparently the gentleman ate it. Jim, needless to say, has a great sense of humor.

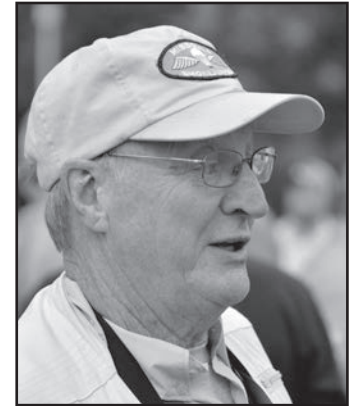
On many hot, summer days when trudging out of the wilderness after a tiring week of hard work, about the 7th

mile of the 10-mile hike and with morale slightly flagging, he would burst into song and the pace would pick up and all was well once again.

He started his fire experience as a member of several Hotshot crews after returning home from the Navy. Jim embarked on his jumping career that he pursued all through college and after, as he began his teaching career in the Helena High School System. Upon retiring, he then went with the Montana Department of Transportation for his second career.

Jim has been an integral part of the NSA Trails Program Committee and when our leader, **Jon McBride** (MSO-54), died just weeks before the 2010 projects were to begin, he stepped up and helped ensure that the projects got completed and all the after action details and reports were submitted on time.

He continued in the role as Operations Director for several years, ensuring that quality and continuity were in good hands before embarking on other NSA trails program initiatives. One of these involved the Mann Gulch Project that he took on almost singlehandedly. Through his dogged determination and numerous years of visits to the site and many meetings with the USFS District Office and Helena Forest Supervisor, he won their support and endorsement. The dream



Jim Phillips (Courtesy F. Cooper)



Jim Phillips (Courtesy F. Cooper)

of getting official recognition as a place that is to be revered well into the future is finally becoming a reality, thanks to Jim's foresight and persistence to see this through.

Dr. Theodore Hesburgh, former President of the University of Notre Dame, once said, "The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision." Jim most certainly demonstrated that tirelessly and unrelentingly.

Not satisfied with just volunteering for multiple projects each year, Jim volunteered to take on the enormous task of organizing and leading the highly successful celebration of the 75th anniversary of the first fire jump in 1940. This celebra-

tion also served as our National Smokejumper Reunion.

As our NSA Trails Program "Doc," Jim worked very hard in procuring and assembling our project medical kits for all trail crews, an undertaking that was several years in the making. He also took extra time and training to become crosscut saw certified, which enabled him to conduct that training for district crews for their work in designated Wilderness Areas.

Jim's untiring dedication and motivation to be a part of the NSA Trails Program has been vital to its continued growing success from the initial two projects in 1999 to the more than 20 that are now routinely completed wherever there are former smokejumpers who have the ability and desire to participate. The Trails Program is one of the most successful

programs in the country and carries on the tradition of giving back to the American public the wonderful experience to enjoy the great outdoors. Thanks, Jim, you have been a huge part of this and we acknowledge and recognize you for being such a significant part of it. Our nation is better off for having citizens in it like you. And thanks also to Jim's dedicated wife, Illa, for sharing him through all these years. You, too, are a part of it all. We'll see you down the trail. 🌲

Related Communications

Jim Phillips (MSO-67) in June 30, 2016, email to NSA President **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57) and others: "It is official. The oncologist said it



Jim Phillips (Courtesy Bob Dayton)

is pancreatic cancer. It is terminal. I have a few weeks. Not much to say having so bluntly said I'm dying. But, I am and soon. You have been wonderful to me and that is what makes the going difficult. I am, though, in your debt for your loyalty and friendship and trust. Sorry for the bad news and thanks for making my life full." *Jim died July 17, 2016.*

Bob Dayton (MSO-65): "Jim Phillips was one of a kind. Last year, on the Mann Gulch project, I heard Jim give the best oral presentation of the Mann Gulch Fire and the events leading up to it that I've ever heard from anyone. It seemed to be his passion, that we never forget, and the presentation was truly eloquent. He agreed to give the same presentation to our Church and Society Sunday class next fall. So sad and an outstanding spokesman for all Smokejumpers. His presence will be missed."

Jack Sisco (MSO-60): "He's been a great man and amazing contributor to the Smokejumper Association."

Lee Brissey (MSO-65): "The news about Jim Phillips came as a most sobering note and a shocker indeed. What a magnificent human being. I didn't know Jim well, although we jumped together MSO '67. In 2013 he hiked in to the North Shore Cabin of the Bob Marshall Wilder-

ness Area just to bring to those of us working on the NSA Trails project a "bit o' scotch" to quench our thirst. He was a fit, energetic, passionate, and inspirational man. His is most certainly a life very well lived."

Gene Hamner (MSO-67): "This breaks my heart. We were all going to live forever."

The following have donated to the NSA in honor of Jim:

John McMahon (MSO-58), **Jim Cherry** (MSO-57), **Doug Stinson** (CJ-54), **Ron Thoreson** (CJ-60), **Stephen Henry** (MSO-65), **Rob Sterling**, **Don Whyde** (MSO-66), **John Packard** (RAC-65), **Mark Lennon** (MSO-67), **Jack Sisco** (MSO-60), **Lee Brissey** (MSO-66), **Gene Hamner** (MSO-67), **John Manley** (CJ-62), **Jack Sterling** (MSO-66), **Richard Danforth** (MSO-59), **Bob Hewitt** (MSO-567), **Richard Trinity** (MSO-66), **Bill Ruskin** (CJ-58), **Lonnie Dale** (MSO-69), **Frank Fowler** (MSO-52), **Charles Hull** (MSO-67), **John MacKinnon** (MSO-57), **Bill Mills** (MSO-65), **Sue DeBree**, **Larry Edwards** (MSO-02). 🔑

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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.

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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): cnkg-sheley@earthlink.net. 🔑

USFS Ignored Information From Hotshot Leaders About Granite Mountain's History Of Bad Decisions

by John Dougherty

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The first of 19 hearses carrying the bodies of the Granite Mountain Hotshots passes through Peeples Valley, Ariz.

The Yarnell Hill Fire investigation, conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, deliberately ignored information provided by a former hotshot superintendent that the leader of the Granite Mountain Hotshots had a documented history of making bad decisions in violation of basic wildfire safety rules, federal records and interviews reveal.

A second former hotshot superintendent also contacted the Forest Service investigation leader, Mike Dudley, and reported that his conversations with Yarnell Hill wildfire supervisors immediately after the fire pointed to human error by the crew's leaders as the only plausible explanation for what happened.

The communications are among 2,400 pages of records obtained by *InvestigativeMEDIA* from a 2014 Freedom of Information Act request. The records were released earlier this year and are heavily redacted even though the investigation was completed in September 2013.

Granite Mountain Hotshots Superintendent Eric Marsh's decision-making was called into question by men who had directly worked with Marsh, or were aware of his reputation with other hotshot superintendents, in the weeks following the June 30, 2013, tragedy when Marsh and 18 members of his crew were overrun by fire.

Rather than contacting the hotshot superintendents to gather more information to determine what might be relevant to the Yarnell investigation, Forest Service investigators never replied to their emails that raised questions about Marsh's competence.

Instead, senior Forest Service personnel derisively

dismissed the emails and warned others who were copied that questions about Marsh's leadership "tend to lead to a place they should not go."

Following up on Marsh's history of questionable decision-making could have provided insight into what remains today the fundamental unanswered question about the single largest loss of life of an interagency hotshot crew.

Why did Granite Mountain leave a burned-over, safe zone on top of the Weaver Mountains and descend into a box canyon packed with chaparral at the hottest time of day, without a lookout, with a rapidly moving wildfire approaching and a thunderstorm bearing down?

The Forest Service investigation concluded that nobody did anything wrong and that all actions taken by Yarnell wildfire supervisors and the Granite Mountain crew were reasonable and appropriate.

Other information that has surfaced since the report's release indicates Marsh ordered the crew to move from its mountaintop safety zone and head to a ranch house in the valley that was considered a safety zone because there was cleared vegetation around its perimeter.

Moving to the Boulder Springs Ranch would have put the crew in position to re-engage the fire that was sweeping through Yarnell and forcing mass evacuations of elderly people. The crew was about 600 yards west of the ranch when it was overrun by 2,000-degree flames.

The Arizona Forestry Division contracted with the Forest Service to conduct an investigation on the Yarnell Hill Fire, which was ignited by lightning on state trust land on June 28, 2013. The forestry division released the Serious Accident Investigation Report in September 2013.

The investigation's conclusion stands in sharp contrast to the assessment by other hotshot superintendents.

“These (Granite Mountain Hotshot) guys really messed up and paid for it with their lives,” retired Payson Hotshot Superintendent Fred Schoeffler wrote Dudley in a July 27, 2013 email. Schoeffler led the Payson crew for 26 years, the longest-serving hotshot superintendent in history.

In his email, Schoeffler told Dudley that he had talked with the senior Yarnell Hill Fire commanders and had been to the fatality site located at the base of the Weaver Mountains, west of the small retirement community of Yarnell.

“This was absolutely a tragedy, no doubt – however, it was one that was clearly avoidable,” Schoeffler writes. “I come to no other conclusion that (the deaths were caused by) human factors and human error on all this ... but it’s hard to make heroes out of those who messed up fatally.”

Schoeffler’s email raised concerns that the structural firefighting philosophy, focused on putting out fires and saving structures, is creating dangerous situations in fighting wildfires and that Yarnell Hill is a tragic example. Wildfire crews typically construct firebreaks to encircle a wildfire and allow it to burn out.

The Granite Mountain Hotshots were the only hotshot crew in the country that was part of a structural fire department – in this case, the Prescott Fire Department. The structural firefighting mentality “is dangerously seeping into the wildland realm and needs to be stopped,” Schoeffler warned.

A few days later, Dudley received another email about the actions taken by the Granite Mountain crew and Marsh.

Former Geronimo Hotshots Superintendent **Dave Provencio** (MSO-77) sent Dudley an email Aug. 5, 2013, raising concerns about Marsh’s decisions on previous fires.

The Geronimo Hotshots are based on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation east of Phoenix and frequently worked with Granite Mountain on fires.

“As you may know there are many of us Hotshots, past and present IHC superintendents that are not very happy with the decisions made at Yarnell Hill,” Provencio wrote.

“Yarnell Hill, although tragic, does not come as a surprise to me and many of us. To me this was just part of a trend that ended with this tragedy,” Provencio stated.

Provencio told Dudley that he had worked directly with Marsh on several assignments between 2010 and 2012, when he was the Geronimo superintendent, and that Marsh had made recommendations to do work that was dangerous and there was no choice but to turn down his requests.

“If you would like to discuss those particular assignments, I have them well-documented in writing, and in my mind,” Provencio wrote.

Moments later, Dudley forwarded Provencio’s email to other members of the investigation team, including Steve Holdsambeck, the Forest Service’s firefighting safety program manager.

Dudley, however, didn’t forward Provencio’s email to Brad Mayhew, a member of the investigation team who was in charge of considering what role human factors played in the Yarnell Fire catastrophe.

Holdsambeck, meanwhile, quickly responded by issuing a warning.

“Obviously you need to be careful how you respond to this,” Holdsambeck’s email states. “My advice would be somewhere between these two options:”

The options, however, are unknown because the Forest Service redacted the information from the email.

Another Forest Service official responded a few minutes later to Holdsambeck’s warning stating that Provencio’s comments “tend to lead toward a place he should not go.”

Provencio sent a second Aug. 5 email to Dudley, providing more details on an assignment Marsh recommended to other hotshot crews that was turned down because it violated basic wildfire safety rules and was an example of “poor decision making.”

“I’m alive and my people are alive to tell you my story,” Provencio wrote. “I don’t agree that they are heroes ...”

The next day, Aug. 6, 2013, Dudley made it clear to two other Forest Service officials playing a key role in the Yarnell investigation that he was not going to contact Provencio for more information.

“I’ll let you decide if either of you want to talk to him,” Dudley wrote. “I’m not.”

No one from the Forest Service investigation team ever contacted Provencio. If they had, they would have heard an account that would have been very difficult to dismiss.

In an interview with *InvestigativeMEDIA*, Provencio provided details of a situation on the Horseshoe 2 Fire on the Coronado National Forest in southern Arizona in 2011. Marsh was a division supervisor there and made a recommendation for work that was rejected by four hotshot superintendents.

(Marsh was a division supervisor at the Yarnell Hill Fire where he oversaw Granite Mountain, which was under the command of his assistant, Jesse Steed.)

"Marsh's expectation was we can get this done in a short amount of time," Provencio said. But Provencio and the other hotshot superintendents thought otherwise.

"There was just too much against us. The steep slopes; the weather; there was no safety zone, no escape routes," Provencio said. "All the ducks were lining for a bad day, a bad week."

The superintendents, Provencio said, all agreed that Marsh's plan would likely end up with the hotshot crews being forced to "hurry" off the mountain. Being in a hurry, Provencio said, is something that hotshot crews never want to encounter.

"We said no, we don't want any part of this," Provencio said.

Marsh, Provencio said, was "pissed off" that his fire plan recommendation was turned down.

"He basically didn't talk to us after that," Provencio said.

Marsh, Provencio said, had quickly developed a reputation for pushing his crew to outperform other hotshot crews. By 2009, other hotshot crew superintendents began derisively referring to Marsh as "One Up" because of his attitude.

"His mentality was that when you came into a situation, a fire, an assignment ... we are going to 'one up' any other crew that was working alongside," Provencio said. "We are going to bust our asses, go down into the ugliest, most dangerous situation — we will show these guys we're not pussies."

"It was sad the way his mindset was," Provencio said. "That's the way he worked. I didn't like that."

Granite Mountain's reputation was well known and a lot of crews, including his own, didn't want to work with Marsh and his crew, Provencio said.

"I hoped I didn't end up on the same piece of line as them," he said.

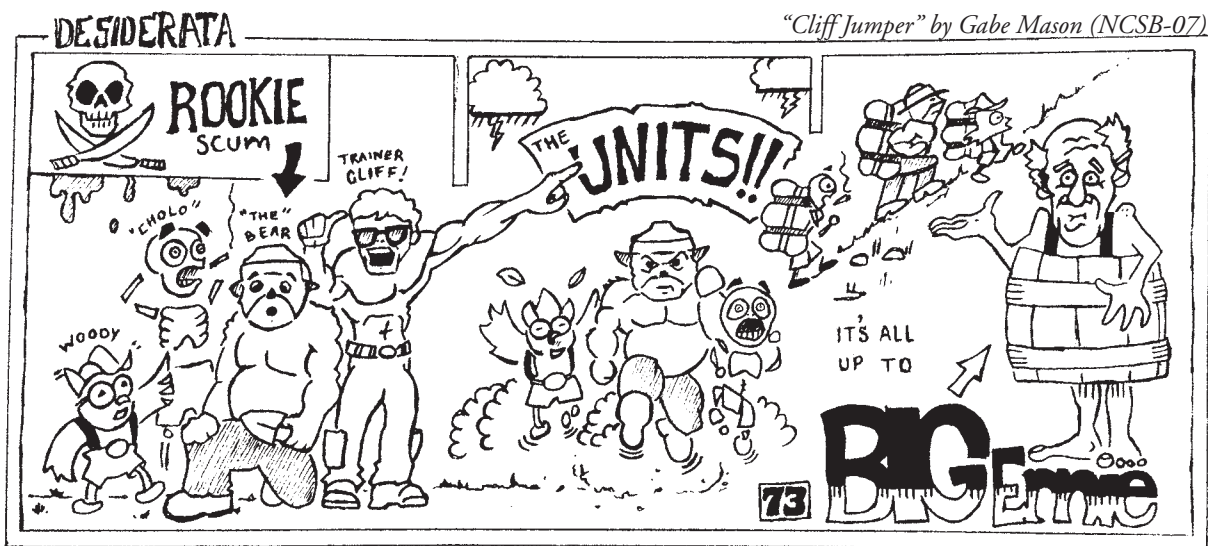
Provencio said he talked to Yarnell Hill Fire supervisors, including planning operations supervisor Paul Musser and Blue Ridge Hotshot Superintendent Brian Frisby, immediately after the Granite Mountain crew was burned over as recovery efforts were under way.

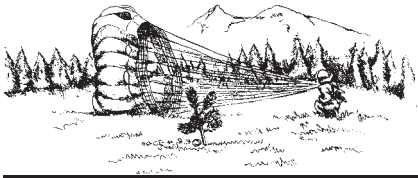
"They were in shock in what had transpired and why it came down that way," Provencio said.

In October 2013 a group of hotshot superintendents went to the Yarnell Hill Fire fatality site and went over the scenario they believe led to the tragedy, Provencio said.

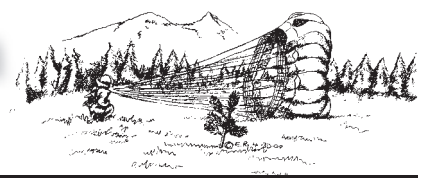
The hotshot superintendents concluded that the Yarnell Hill disaster was one that many of them saw coming for years. The crew, under Marsh's leadership, had been lucky until June 30 because it had survived a series of bad leadership decisions.

"This s— shouldn't have ever happened," one hotshot superintendent said, during the gathering of those who best know how a hotshot crew should safely operate. 🧠





Snapshots from the Past



by Jeff R. Davis
(Missoula '57)

The “Stomp” Fire

IF THERE'S ONE thing in which smokejumpers take pride, it's rapid initial attack and our ability “to keep small ones from becoming big ones.” The Stomp Fire stands as the best example of that in my experience as a jumper.

I'd been a jumper for seven years when the jumper request leading to the Stomp Fire sounded. Twenty-four of us from Missoula, Winthrop, McCall and Idaho City were enjoying the usual action on the Gila National Forest out of Silver City, N.M. It was July 20, 1963. I'd already made eight fire jumps on the Gila and I was ready for more.

We got the fire call at 3:45 that afternoon—a two-man-ner in the Wilderness District named the Canyon Fire. By 4 o'clock we were airborne and over the fire by 4:30. Our spotter was **Glenn Hale** (MYC-57) from McCall. My jump partner

was **Max Allen** (MSO-48), also from McCall.

The guys from McCall were always in stiff competition with each other over just about everything, and this was to lead to a questionable judgment call jumping the Canyon Fire.

Hale started making streamer passes over the fire, and I figured I was looking at a dry run. In those years we jumped from 1,000 feet above ground level. Hale had to release his streamers more than a half-mile upwind to get them into the spot.

“It's too windy,” Hale said. “I'm gettin' a good 800 yards o' drift.”

I sure agreed with that. I was preparing for a free ride back to Grant County Airport, courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service.

“You're just a candy a—, Hale,” said my jump partner, Max. “I'd jump that thing in a heartbeat!”

The two went back and forth for another pass over the fire. Then Hale yelled, “Okay, you dumb son of a b——. I'll put you out the door!”

My heart sank. If Max was going, and he'd made it clear that he was, I was next out the door with him on a two-man stick. We were jumping “7-5 Charlie,” the AT-11 Twin Beech owned and flown by Tuck Grimes in Silver City. Hale slapped Max out the door and I followed right on his tail.

I knew we were in trouble as soon as my parachute opened. That old 28-foot FS-2 parachute was whipping backward through the countryside at an alarming rate. The FS-2 had about a 4-mph forward speed, which was doing little to eat up the drift that was exceeding 30 knots.

It was an easy jump spot: an open mesa close by the fire. Hale had released us in good position to hit the spot, but I wondered just how hard I was going to thump when I landed. I got my answer as soon as I hit — damned hard!

I hit and rolled and bounced and finally came to a halt. I was all right but my concern was for Max. He'd outweighed me and I'd watched his landing before I had to cope with mine. I winced when I saw him hit. He smacked in flat on his back, rolled twice and came to rest lying flat on his belly and stayed that way, motionless.

I ran over to him as soon as I released from my still-blowing canopy. Max had struck a head-sized boulder when he hit with such force that it broke the plywood “trayboard” on the back of the FS-2 parachute. He was unable to get up, and I told him I was going to radio the aircraft for help. It was only a two-man request, but we had four jumpers aboard.

Max was not only stubborn; he was proud. “I ain't about

to let that son of a b——Hale know I'm hurt, Davis! I'll be fine in a minute or two when I can get the hell up! Lay out the signals and tell that sucker to go home!"

It was the first year we'd carried air-net radios on the Gila, but we still used the crêpe-paper streamers for ground-to-air signals. There was no arguing with Max. He had more time in the jumpers than I did, by far, and I begrudgingly laid out the "double-L" signals that we were both down and okay. I backed it up with a call to the aircraft and got Hale on the horn.

"You sure he's okay, Davis?" Hale asked. "I saw him take a hell of a thump when he hit, you know."

"Yeah, he's okay," I radioed back. "Order us in a chopper for 7 tonight. We'll have 'er out by then."

The fire was burning in a small cat-face 10 feet off the ground in a single snag. It hadn't spread to the ground yet – an easy fire to put out. Standard procedure for this one called for digging a line around the snag so when felled it would lie inside the line, then chopping the fire out of the snag and mixing it 50-50 with dirt until it was cold out.

However, that would take a lot of time, and we both wanted to be on that chopper at 7:30 because the jumpers were holding a termination party that night at Little Walnut Campground in Silver City. We wanted to be part of it.

I grabbed my quart canteen and hurried to the base of the

snag. Taking a mouthful of water, I clambered up the snag, until I could reach the cat-face and squirted my mouthful of water on the fire, much as a firefighter would use a trombone pump (we called 'em "piss pumps"). After four or five trips up the snag I could see no further signs of fire or smoke and I declared the fire out.

But this was not the record-breaking fire. That was yet to come.

It was nearly 7:30, we could hear the chopper in the distance, darkness was beginning to invade the mesa, and it was time to pack ol' Max to the helispot and head for the party.

The pilot was nervously waiting for me to get Max aboard and the tools and gear stowed aboard the skids on that old Bell G3-B helicopter. We were running out of time. We took off at 7:22.

The chopper had barely gained altitude before I spotted a second fire, only a hundred yards from the one we'd jumped. It was probably caused by the same storm passing through; we hadn't seen or smelled it in the haste of putting out the first one.

An immediate quandary: on a map, the two fires were so close together that if I didn't extinguish the second one, it would look like we had a re-burn of our first fire, and that could get our butts fired. I told the pilot to put 'er down as close to this new fire as he could get. He was pissed, but he set it down with the warning that he would "leave us both in the woods if you ain't on this chop-

per in 10 minutes!"

I ran over to the fire without bothering with tools or gloves or anything. It was small – a circle about two feet across – smoldering in the duff. The lightning strike in the pine above it had quickly gone out after a few sparks fell to the ground and ignited the pine needles and duff.

I mixed the fire with dirt, using my bare hands, extinguishing the fire and blistering my hands in the same process. I declared it out, ran for the chopper and we were gone.

My diary tells the story in cold numbers:

- **7:22** – Takeoff from the Canyon Fire – Chopper 2.
- **7:24** – Discovered Stomp Fire.
- **7:28** – First attack.
- **7:38** – Mopped up.
- **7:40** – Left fire; fire out.
- **7:45** – Takeoff, Chopper 2.
- **8:12** – Landed Silver.

Sixteen minutes from the time of discovery to fire declared out. I think that record might stand for some time. And why the name? The man who discovered the fire got to name it and I couldn't think of a better one than "Stomp."

And oh, yes, Max and I made it to the party. A blood clot loosened by his landing later migrated to his lungs and he damned near died of pneumonia, but for that night, the party was on. 🔦



Garry Peters (CJ-63)



Larry Welch (CJ-61) & Larry Peters (CJ-63)

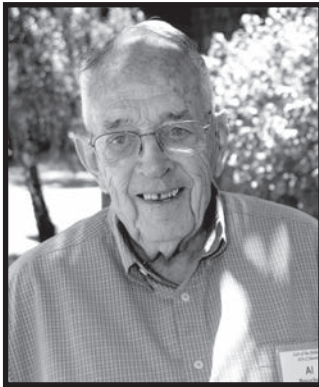


Cliff Hamilton (CJ-62), Butch Hill (CJ-63), J



Gobi Reun

Photos & Layout Design



Al Boucher (CJ-49)



Doug Beck (CJ-70)



Chuck Mansfield(CJ-59) & Troop Emonds (CJ-66)



*L-R: Jerry John (CJ-62), Jim Grubb,
Gil Boundy (CJ-62) & Jerry*



*Dave Laws (RAC-66), Harold Hartman (CJ-65) &
Gary Buck (CJ-66)*



Tommy Albert, (CJ-64)



Joe Niesen (CJ-66), & John Robison (CJ-66)



Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64) & Chuck Sheley (CJ-59)



Ray Osipovich (CJ-73) & Ted Clark (CJ-77)



Skip Bunn (CJ-67)

Reunion 2016

Host: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



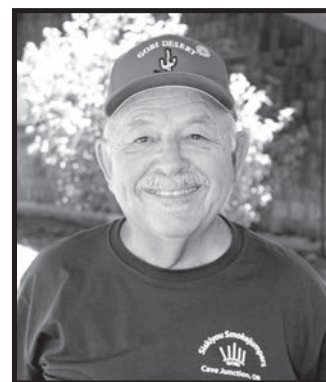
Bob Scofield (CJ-49)



...s (CJ-63), Jim Fritz (CJ-59)
...y Schmidt (CJ-62)



Dave Towers (CJ-60) & Ron Lufkin (CJ-60)



Bill Knight (CJ-60)



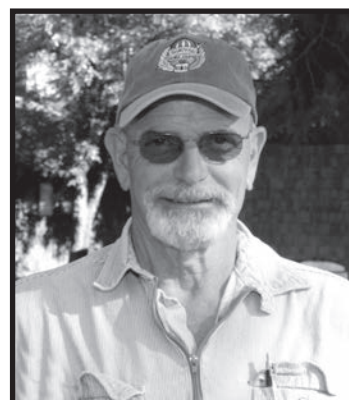
(65)



Steve Baumann (CJ-73)



Henry Florip(CJ-50), John Harns (CJ-50) &
Bud Proctor (CJ-50)



Gary Mills (CJ-66)

Lessons Unlearned—A Historical Prospective, Part IV

The Myth Makers

by Karl Brauneis (Missoula '77)

Historic Background

The Pop Culture loves a myth. Make-believe is easy and fun, and you can believe what you want regardless of the truth. If the latest “Spin” sounds good, feels good, and does not really affect me ... “Wow! That’s Cool Man.”

Politicians and lobbyists have the Pop Culture figured out. They own it - or rather, it owns them. I first became aware of “Media Lies” when I was in Forestry school at Colorado State. To watch a major news network report on the environment was painful at best. Unfortunately, I was dumbfounded at the number of fellow students who believed the reporting. Fortunately, in those days we had professors who knew the science of Forestry inside and out and taught accordingly. It is humorous to hear an environmentalist that finally figures out a specific of truth. I often respond, “Oh yea, Gifford Pinchot laid that out in his Primer of Forestry back in 1900. We all learned about it our freshman year in college.”

So, for fun, let’s weave our way through the Myths resulting in today’s Global Warming issue. I generalize with humility. For the purpose of this short piece, I do not want to get bogged down in fraction but rather use a “Forester’s Thumb” to arrive at general concepts.

40 Million Log Trucks

When Bill Clinton took office in 1993, the annual cut on National Forest System Lands was around 12 billion board feet of timber. Midway through his administration, the cut was dropped to between 1 and 2 billion board feet. To accomplish this, Clinton had to purge the professional leadership corps of the Forest Service. At the time we had a Washington Office Chief’s organiza-



Karl Brauneis (NSA file)

tion chart at the Wind River Ranger Station. We would X out the professional chiefs as they were replaced with political appointees. The Civil Service professional corps was replaced almost overnight to resemble the corrupt pre-Roosevelt-Pinchot General Land Office. You just knew this wasn’t going to end well.

Of course, the Republicans never changed a thing for fear of being called “Mean Spirited.” So ponder this over time. We dropped 11 billion board feet / year for about 20 years to the present day. To put that in perspective, lets do some simple math.

- 1) 1 billion board feet = 1,000,000,000 or 1,000,000 (1,000 board feet or mbf)
- 2) 1,000,000 mbf x 11 (billion board feet lost per year) = 11,000,000 mbf/year
- 3) 11,000,000 x 20 (years) = 220,000,000 mbf in two decades

4) A fully loaded log truck = 5.5 mbf (or 10 chords)

5) $220,000,000 \text{ mbf} / 5.5 \text{ mbf} = 40 \text{ million log trucks}$

Think about it. Forty million fully loaded log trucks. That is the true picture of lost revenue, lost American jobs, and most importantly to firefighters - increased fuel loading.

Gifford Pinchot in his book "Breaking New Ground" emphasized over and over again that Forestry must pay for itself. In that context, I submit that whatever we are practicing on the National Forests today ... Well, it certainly isn't Forestry.

Myth 1

Remember the Fire Environment? Fuel, weather and topography? Of those factors we as humans can control only fuel. So let's start our myth there. We can't harvest timber and burn activity fuels (slash) so let's create a one-size-fits-all model to keep the budget dollars flowing from Congress and control fuel loading. Let's use the southwest, Ponderosa Pine model because this system requires frequent, low intensity surface fire. We "Spin" to Congress that this is the model for the entire west to obtain annual dollars for burning (frequency means primarily budget allocations and secondly fire interval). The myth works for a while. But then reality hits. Cerro Grande - Los Alamos burns along with a multitude of "escaped fires" over the decade. Homes and property are lost. Lives are lost. The professional field corps balks at the myth of a one-size-fits-all monoculture and the inherent risk of implementing a Myth.

Ooops - They Found Us Out.

Myth 2

No problem, we will just spin another Myth. Blame is our "Go To" tool unless of course we are blamed. Then it's "Let's stop playing the blame game." But for now, we have time, so let's blame. How about ... Past Fire Suppression Policies got us into this mess? Yes, "Past Fire Suppression Policies." It was dumbfounding for me to hear young firefighters repeat this Myth that they were spoon fed by a politically corrupt leadership corps. Talk about the opportunity for a "Come to Jesus Moment" with young firefighters. I was working

overtime on this one. In short:

National Forest Land Base

1) 30% Commercial Forest Lands reacquiring timber harvest and slash burning.

2) 40% Rangeland requiring livestock grazing and prescribed fire.

3) 30% Wilderness and backcountry now under Fire Management plans.

We had it right for 70 % of the land base. The remaining 30% began to be addressed in depth in the 1970s under the Fire Reintroduction umbrella.

This myth worked until someone connected the dots: "If fire suppression got us into this mess, then why are you perpetuating the disaster with more fire suppression?"

Ooops - They Found Us Out.

Myth 3

No problem. Let's blame it on something we have no control over - how about Global Warming or Climate Change? It's already in the news. We can piggyback this one.

Global warming is a title the Myth Makers can hang all of their failed deceptions on. It is, however, irrelevant to us as firefighters. Plan for longer and more intense fire seasons? We always plan for the worse case scenario. No change there. But, we all know the dangerous reality. Fuel loading continues to increase annually and we are doing very little about it.

Conclusion

If you are a smokejumper and think your job is secure under this Myth ... Think again. Your purpose is to suppress fires in remote areas to save trees that will be harvested in the future. In short, if we run off the cowboy and the logger, there is no need for the smokejumper. The Hotshots are better equipped to simply drive up and defensibly protect homes and property. So, unless the political climate changes drastically to a more traditional conservation model, the smokejumpers will likely soon hang their spurs along with the old horse cavalry of days gone by. Kinda tough to say "Wow! Cool Man" to that.

Stay tuned for Part Five that will explore what prescribed burning is and what it isn't, and what we can realistically expect from using this tool. 🧑🏻🔥

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by Chris Sorensen
(Associate)

WHEN WE LAST visited I mentioned the forthcoming movie on the Yarnell Hill Fire. The film is now titled "Granite Mountain." Filming began in New Mexico in early June.

Among the stars are Jeff Bridges and former Missoula resident Andie Macdowell (Rose Qualley).

I debated with myself whether or not to ever mention this film in this column ever again. I ultimately decided that it's up to the members to draw their own conclusions, and I shouldn't withhold news based on my personal biases.

I fully admit I am pretty biased about how badly smokejumpers have been treated in film, including the 1996 made-for-TV movie "Smoke Jumpers," which is loosely based on **Don Mackey** (MSO-87) and the South Canyon Fire.

I have a particularly in-

tense hatred of this film, even though I only managed to sit through half of it before turning it off. The film portrayed Mackey and everyone else in Montana as a bunch of backward hicks.

Another horrid film was "Smoke Jumper" – later titled "Trial by Fire" for television. This gem was filmed in British Columbia using Canadian uniforms, Canadian fire apparatus, a fake mockup of a DC-3, jump gear out of the costume department, and stock footage of jumpers under canopy. There was no attempt whatsoever to make anything closely resembling a real film about smokejumpers.

Warner Brothers had an option years ago on *Young Men and Fire* and, as I recall, a screenwriter started work on a potential film. A woman smokejumper was added to the story as well as conflict that never occurred.

Laird Robinson (MSO-62) was consulted about the ideas they were working on and nixed them. In his words, "Norman Maclean would have gone ballistic."

A tip of the hard hat to the Great Basin Smokejumpers on their 28th anniversary which they celebrated in May. Another tip of the hard hat goes to that group for receiving an award in the excellence category from the National

Wildfire Coordination Group. The citation for the award is as follows:

"The Great Basin Smokejumpers are recognized for demonstrating their independent initiative in the areas of quality assurance and patient care. The smokejumpers have created a well-established and robust EMS program with standing medical protocols, extensive training and oversight provided by a medical director, enabling them to provide qualified EMS responders and equipment on every smokejumper mission.

"Their efforts have paid off in recent years. In 2015 they experienced two significant injuries, providing excellent medical response during the Watson Butte Fire, where a smokejumper sustained a back and neck injury while landing, and during a smokejumper parachute training mission in the Blacks Creek area, south of Boise, where a jumper experienced a hard landing and sustained a broken right humerus, dislocated right shoulder, and a fractured rib during landing."

Several jumpers have been injured in practice jumps this year and having read the after action reports, I can say that in every case the smokejumper response, packaging and transport were excellent. Every injured jumper was in the hos-

pital within the golden hour. A tip of the hard hat to everyone involved in those incidents.

Ralph Rau (NCSB-86) was recently promoted to Director of Fire and Aviation for Region 1. Ralph came from the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests where he was the deputy forest supervisor.

Shawna LaGarza is the new

director of fire and aviation for the Forest Service. She began her duties on July 24. She started her career with the BLM in 1989 and quickly moved to a Forest Service Hotshot crew in Nevada. She is the former superintendent of the San Juan Hotshots in Durango, Colo.

Her most recent position

was director of fire and aviation for Region 5. She is the author of the 2009 book *No Grass*. I am told Shawna holds an excellent reputation in the fire world.

Speed – range – payload.
Aggressive initial attack.

This column is dedicated to **Laird Robinson** (MSO-62) and **Joe Lord** (MSO-56). 🧠

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Emergency Squad Of Flying Lifesavers Projected Here

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

*From the Daily Missoulian
Wednesday, Oct. 23, 1940.*

If a project being formulated here by a group of aviation enthusiasts is fulfilled, Missoula may be the first city in the United States to become the seat of an emergency squad of flyers, woodsmen and parachuting medical men.

The idea was born last summer shortly after Robert Maricich, local aviator, was killed and a companion, Dellmont Clabaugh, was injured when their plane crashed as they were dropping supplies by parachute to a firefighting crew. It was necessary to pack Clabaugh many miles to an emergency landing field, where he was met by a doctor who had flown there from Missoula.

Under the proposed emergency squad plan, a doctor trained in parachute jumping, a woodsman who could make his way through the most primitive wilderness country, a first aid expert, and a plane pilot, would comprise the crew to be located



here, and with parachute equipment available, aid could be rushed within a few hours, or in some cases, a few minutes, in remote areas in the Northwest.

Victims of hunting accidents, injured mountain climbers, prospectors or homesteaders taken suddenly ill in regions almost inaccessible by ground, could be treated by a doctor with the least possible loss of time, the promptness in some cases being the difference between life and death, it was pointed out.

An air-minded doctor in Missoula has been trained as a parachute jumper by the instructors who trained the Forest Service "blitzkrieg" fire-fighters (smokejumpers) last summer, and two 'chute jumpers that have knowledge of the woodcraft are also here.

The men fostering the "emergency squad" project here say that it will be put into effect if they can find employment for one of the smokejumpers, a licensed parachute rigger who is a key man in the plan, to keep him in Missoula. Everything is all set, they say, and they are eager to put Missoula on the map as the first city to synchronize its life-saving and relief-of-suffering program with the rapid progress of aviation. 🧠

Tom Collier and the Stolen Truck

by Jeff Fereday (McCall '70)

In the summer of 1970, western Washington had more forest fires and bigger fires than it had ever experienced. I believe that summer still stands as a record fire year for Washington State. While most of the fires were in the North Cascades, areas burned that almost never burned, including forests on the west side that were part of, or adjacent to, Washington's temperate rain forest. Some National Forest Ranger Districts had smokejumper support for the first time ever. Fires were jumped even on the Olympic Peninsula. I recall hearing that at times, during the six-week fire bust, Washington had something like 300 project fires burning at once.

That summer was my rookie year as a McCall Smokejumper. My first fire jump was a two-manner with Squadleader Jerry Blattner

(MYC-63) in early June on the Umatilla Forest. We had boosted the LaGrande, Oregon, base and flew out of there in the Twin Beech.

Back in McCall, I jumped a couple more fires, another two-manner and a four-manner, in the Salmon River Mountains in Idaho. On both of these, I was with fellow rookie Tom Collier (MYC-70). Then, in the second week in July, we got a call to head for the North Cascades Smokejumper Base at Winthrop, Washington. There were at least two Doug loads of us from McCall. I believe we flew over in DC-3s 146Z and 148Z.

I remember arriving late at night at a jumper base that had been transformed with temporary shelters, cargo chute packing tables set up outside, a field kitchen, and general round-the-clock activity. It was unusual for Winthrop to need boosting from the Idaho or Montana bases, but there were jumpers from every base, even Anchorage. I remember hearing that, of the 400 or so smokejumpers, over 200 were at Winthrop during that historic fire bust.

The frenzied experience at Winthrop was in response to large and recurrent lightning storms that hammered the North Cascades throughout this period. At one point, thick smoke made flights into Winthrop impossible, and returning flights had to use the airstrip at Twisp, on the other side of the

ridge. It was an exciting time with activities going full bore on all fronts. The Winthrop guys had a bulletin board on which they tallied the number of jumps out of NCSB. They had already surpassed the all-time record by about 100 jumps and that gap grew much larger as the season progressed. I'm quite sure that record still stands.

In terms of level of activity, number and type of aircraft, stretched logistical and communication systems, and general chaos, the 1970 fire bust in Washington surpassed anything I ever saw in my six years of smokejumping—except perhaps some experiences as an Alaska Jumper.

Before daybreak, the morning after we arrived, something like four Doug loads and a couple of Otter loads were rolling. I was next to Tom near the bottom of the jump list. We both had more jumps than any other McCall jumper and had just come off an Idaho fire the day before. So after the jump ships had taken off from NCSB, we were among about a half-dozen jumpers still at the base. Within a half hour though, we were on an Otter and heading out. By then, we had heard that the first loads had jumped a couple of huge fires. Tom and I lucked out again and, over the next three days, were dropped on two four-manners in the North Cascade Wilderness. First was with Jerry Blattner and Gary Martin (MYC-70), then with Martin and Mike Hill (MYC-69).

Each time we returned from these fires, the base was nearly empty. By now we had begun to hear the tales filtering back from our companions in those first loads. Some of them were still on the same gobbler. Jerry Ogawa and Bill Newlun had their gear burned up in a fire that resisted two Doug loads and several ground crews and ran to 30,000 acres. Some had been de-mobbed only to be sent out on another 16-man load to another project fire. Everyone else seemed to be getting big, aggressive fires, and over a wide geographic area. Tom and I remarked on our luck to be out of phase with all that, having been dropped on two four-manners in about three days. Our little fires had been conventional.



Tom Collier (Courtesy T. Collier)

Tom and I got separated from our buddies after the second fire and ended up the last two jumpers at NCSB. Two McCall Neds were manning the NCSB Smokejumper Base and not a DC-3 or Otter in sight. What now? A fire call comes in. Tom and I suit up and waddle behind the spotter out to—what's this?—An Aero Commander. The huge engines that gave it such notorious speed hung from the overhead wing. That ship is not a favorite. Cramped, loud, and way too fast to allow reliably good exits. When you sat in the door ready to jump, the propeller was spookily close, like you could reach it with your right hand. Still, it was thrilling to be in an aircraft that was new to us and rarely jumped.

We were dropped on a fire near the Canadian Border that looked to be a cakewalk. Both of us had twists from being upended by the prop blast on exit. But this was not to be our fire. As we were gathering gear, a district crew helicoptered in and we were whisked to the little town of Tonasket, where we find out that we've made history. We were the first smokejumpers to man a fire on the Tonasket

District of the Okanogan National Forest. Oh, well, we were on the fire for at least five minutes.

The next morning finds us back at NCSB, which again was fully jumped out except for a lone individual, Redmond jumper Don Skei (RAC-69). By now we were accustomed to being regarded as a small but viable firefighting force, and we knew a viable aircraft was available. The Aero Commander sat menacingly on the tarmac.

Fire call. The three of us suited up and packed ourselves into the aircraft, which had been a tight fit even when it was only two of us.

We endured a bumpy dry run in the mid-day heat halfway across the state. The spotter shouted in our ears that there is another fire call and that we are the last hope for the state of Washington's forests. Back across the state on another dry run. By this time, Tom has been airsick and is down to the dry heaves, experiencing the nauseating feeling most jumpers get sometimes: "I don't care what else happens, and I have no idea where we are. I just want out of this airplane!"

We landed for fuel at a sagebrush strip somewhere in central Washington. A few minutes to stretch our legs and stop the ringing in our ears and we're in the air on yet another fire call. This turned out to be a live one, Devil's Canyon on the Snoqualmie. The Aero Commander took us west over the Cascades and into huge timber country. Our fire turned out to be only about 30 miles northwest of Tacoma.

The fire was burning in a snag and in the brush and deep forest duff at its base. On the east side this would have been fairly straightforward, but in these heavy, slightly damp fuels, it was clear we had some work ahead of us. That evening a Cessna flew by, low, evidently giving us a deliberate flyby. We figured maybe it had dropped something, a message perhaps, so we hunted around awhile. The timber was so thick we saw nothing come out of the ship, and we found nothing. Given the thick timber into which we jumped, perhaps they thought we might need climbing spurs, but somehow neither we nor the paracargo had treed up. Naturally, we had no radio as the fire bust had quickly scattered NCSB's radio supply. Tom and I had felt like the forgotten jumpers all week, and I think Don did as well, so this was nothing new. The Cessna flew off and we were on our own.

It took us the better part of three days to mop up, using a crosscut saw on the smoldering logs and to drop a burning snag. By then we were nearly out of food. Don had been studying the map he'd been handed before the jump. Then all three of us looked at it together. Tom finally said, "Well, it's pretty obvious we're not where they said we are." Don agreed, pointing to landmarks. "They've got us in the wrong drainage. We're right about here." "At least there are logging roads below us," I offered, pointing at a network of sketchy roads on the map. "That's where we'll have to pack out to. Maybe we can catch a ride. What is it, about 15 miles to the valley floor? Then probably twice that to this town, North Bend."

"Catch a ride. That would be good," said Don, "before we succumb to starvation."

We packed up our gear and started down in late afternoon. In a couple of hours we reached a logging road spur and marked our position on the map. There we left our big packs, shouldered our PG bags, and began walking down the narrow road. We passed a number of spur roads, most of which were not on the map, and kept to the option that offered

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.

the most likely downhill route. In about another hour we came around a bend and there, parked in a crude bulldozed pullout, was a Forest Service pickup all locked up. No one was around. We shouted to alert the driver, wherever he might be. Nothing. I looked at Tom and Don and said, "We're taking this pickup."

There's a thing about Tom Collier that the reader needs to know at this point. Tom is a fantastic guy, but at least in 1970 he also was a complete straight arrow, a person very concerned about following rules to the letter. Tom's type was not unknown among the jumpers, but it was rare. Most jumpers have an independent streak, a suspicion of authority. A "we'll get-this-done" attitude that sometimes can be difficult to distinguish from a wild side. Tom was on the other end of that spectrum.

"No way!" he said. "That's government property. We can't just steal it! And besides, what about the guy whose truck it is? He'll be stranded."

"Well, we're stranded," I replied. "And out of food. Nearly out of water. The base has us mislocated. Whatever that guy is doing up here, we'll just have to trust that he's prepared. He probably has a radio."

"Well, it's locked anyway," Tom stated conclusively. "And we don't have a key. So let's just keep walking." By now I was rummaging around in the pickup bed, and, as Tom picked up his PG bag, I came up with just the thing, a stiff piece of wire about three feet long. I made a hook in one end and worked it under the window gasket on the driver's side. Inside of a minute, I had lifted the lock button and opened the door. Tom stared at me like I was committing a felony, which I suppose I was.

"But Jeff, we still don't have a key. You can't get it started! This is crazy and illegal!"

By then I had grabbed the canister-style headlamp I found in the truck bed. Tom looked at me quizzically as I unwound the lamp cord connecting the battery canister to the lamp. "What the heck are you doing now?"

"Tom, we're gonna hotwire it." With that I pulled out my knife and cut a one-foot length out of the light's lamp cord. Tom's eyes got big. "And now we've got destruction of government property."

Don grinned. "I'm liking this."

I bared the ends of the lamp cord and made

a three-legged conductor. Then I unscrewed the bezel holding the ignition to the dashboard, letting the mechanism dangle below the dash. I put the rig in neutral, angled my head under the dash and worked the three legs against the contacts until I found the right combination. The truck turned over, then started. Don was on the throttle. We were in business. We honked the horn a couple of times. No response from the silent woods. Don put the rig in gear, Tom reluctantly climbed in beside me, and Don drove us back up the narrow road to retrieve our gear bags. Then we headed down the hill. As we passed the point where we assumed we were leaving some hapless Forest Service employee wandering in the woods, we honked again and paused for a minute. Nothing. Tom muttered something about how we're going to regret this.

At dusk we arrived at an actual numbered forest road on flatter terrain. A little further on we came upon a longhaired young man carrying a ragged backpack. When he heard us coming, he stopped walking and held out his thumb. Don pulled over.

Tom pointed out that it is “against Forest Service regulations” to pick up hitchhikers in government vehicles.

“But he’s just a little hippie boy, Tom!” I replied. “Let’s give him a lift.” Don was of the same mind, so we pulled over, put him in the back and drove on. We dropped the kid off on a state highway outside of the little town and went looking for any Forest Service building we might be able to find. We got directions at a gas station and finally pulled up to what appeared to be the living quarters next to a classic CCC-style District Ranger station. We got out of the truck. As Don went to the door, Tom said quietly, “We’ll just have to take what comes. I’m as guilty as you are.” Lights came on. The ranger stepped onto the porch. He was wearing his bathrobe.

“Are you the Smokejumpers?” he exclaimed excitedly. “Yes.”

“Great! So you found the key we left on the air cleaner. The pilot was a little worried you might not find the note.” 🗝



Bob Bartlett (Assoc.) and Pherron Doss (MSO-77) at a recent visit to the Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum in Cave Junction. (Courtesy B. Bartlett)

TRAVELING SMOKEJUMPER EXHIBIT

by **Chuck Sheley**

The Traveling Smokejumper Exhibit (changing from Museum to Exhibit) has been busy so far. We are currently on display at the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, where we are looking at a potential 150,000 visitors to see the exhibit. High Desert gave us an absolute prime location at the entrance of the museum. Everyone who enters will view the 18 wall panels and suited-up mannequin. Along with the display, a 25-minute loop film with excerpts from “Smokejumpers-Firefighters From The

Sky” is playing on a screen.

The second exhibit is at the World Forestry Center in Portland, Oregon, where we hope to have 50,000 visitors learn more about smokejumping.

I picked up the smokejumper mannequin and wall panels from the Mt. Shasta Museum the first week in July. The six-foot plus mannequin is now standing in one of our bedrooms looking out the window. I’ve put an NSA cap on his head in place of the helmet. The neighbors are impressed with the “man” continually looking out of our

front window. That 24-hour presence is probably better than any home alarm system.

Thanks to you NSA members, we have had museum inquiries from Washington State and Michigan to run a fall exhibit. I’m leaving the initial contact up to you as members. If a museum is interested, I can take it from there. We can send an electronic document to the museum with all the available panels. They can look at it, chose the ones they want, and we can go from there. **Stan Collins** (MYC-67) is handling



Traveling Smokejumper Exhibit Mt. Shasta Museum (Courtesy Jean Nels)



Smokejumper Exhibit at World Forestry Center Portland, Oregon. (Courtesy WFC)

the agreement between the NSA and the museums.

Now that I'm in the museum display business, I'm learning that exhibits are rented by museums all over the country. The normal rental time is eight-ten weeks. We would like to get the normal rental fee if possible. It took money and a lot of research and time to create the exhibit. We are very reasonable, however. The aim is to get the smokejumper message out to the general public in the U.S.

I am not amazed any more at the lack of knowledge of the general tax-paying public about smokejumping and the potential smokejumpers have to save the tax payers a tremendous amount of money. A common response is: "What are smokejumpers?" I expected this on the East Coast but not in the Western United States. Now I expect this. The people living within miles of smokejumper bases know little about the capabilities of jumpers and their potential to prevent large expensive wildfires.

The USFS has done very little, in my estimation, to educate the public about their wildland firefighting crews. This includes Hotshots, as well as smokejumpers. In years past the media had an easy access to the smokejumper bases. Now you have to get a pass to get a visitor's tour.

The USFS is missing a great opportunity to do a bit of "showing off" by allowing, even encouraging, media access to the smokejumper bases. The NSA website gets a number of requests from US and foreign media for opportunities to interview and shoot some film. I forward these requests to the appropriate base, where I hope they will get some positive response. Usually they are thwarted by the amount of red tape necessary to do a good filming or interview.

This week I was talking to a writer for National Geographic who is doing an article on smokejumping. He had just returned from spending time with the Alaska Smokejumpers and was very comple-

mentary about the amount of cooperation he received in Fairbanks. I supplied a lot of information about the history of smokejumping and hope to fill in some of the holes on the subject.

As I have said in the past, smokejumping has a long, varied and complicated history in the U.S. As evidenced by news releases by the Washington Office, you cannot count on getting an accurate account of smokejumping history from the USFS. Kudos to the BLM and the Alaska Smokejumpers for their cooperation with National Geographic. The Geographic article will benefit the Alaska Smokejumpers and the BLM immensely. If the USFS were proactive, they would go out and solicit media to show off their elite firefighters.

Certainly the NSA is doing one heck of a job waving the flag and educating the public about the value of smokejumpers. Does anyone care? Do the current jumpers care? Who knows, but there are a few of us still waving the flag. 🇺🇸



ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to

Mary LaMoy (Pilot) and **Jerry**

Timmons (FBX-62) who just became our latest Life Members.

Email to **Tom Kovalicky** (MSO-61) from visitor to his store:

"I wanted to follow up on our visit with you in your shop this week. It was quite a delight to share experiences and to hear that our paths almost crossed in our youth when we worked with the USFS. Our mutual fire fighting experience was a surprise bonus in our chance meeting in Stanley. I learned something that had haunted me for years of recalling walking through the area on what you told me was 'Higgins Ridge' and seeing all the burned-out equipment, including some boots, etc. We had heard that 'Most' made it out alive but have wondered about this for years. You shared that it was your crew that got caught in a wind shift and had to literally run for your lives dumping all equipment.

"Your sharing of your miracle rescue by the brave helicopter pilot, when the fickle winds opened up a hole in the smoke so he could see, and how he spotted you and saved all of you. This cleared up a mystery for me that I have thought about many times. To meet you and learn that you were one of the crew brings that chapter to a close - a positive close."

Bob Graham (MSO-52) "In 1953, I was in the Ford Trimotor crash in the Bob Marshall Wilderness and was taken to the Missoula hospital along with **Kenny Roth** (MYC-46), the pilot. One night I was visited by Bob Johnson, and I asked him if the plane was insured? Bob told me that it was not insured since he bought the Ford that spring for \$27,000 and insurance would have cost \$9,000 a year."

Mark Corbet (LGD-74): "The Smokejumper exhibit at the High Desert Museum looks very



good. Is reported to be very well received by the public. The wall panels make it look very professional as well as appropriate for the museum. The edited version of 'Firefighters From The Sky' really ties it all together and answers many questions people have."

Tony Sleznick (RDD-92): "It was a great go in Missoula for the last three years, but I have recently transferred back to Redmond as a Smokejumper Pilot. My wife is in med school at the University of Portland, which was the impetus for our move. However, with the retirement of Region-1's DC-3, it made the transfer easier for me. Life is good back in the High Desert, and I look forward to heading up to Alaska next week to finish up their fire season."

Ralph Rau (NCSB-86) has been named the Director of Fire and Aviation for the USFS's Northern Region. Rau came from the Nez-Perce-Clearwater National Forests, where he was Deputy Forest Supervisor. He jumped at North Cascades during the 1986-88 seasons.

Tommy Albert (CJ-64): "We had a couple who are in my Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) stop by. They had been to the High Desert Museum in Bend and said the Smokejumper Display was extremely interesting and informative. Great work and foresight on your part. They had no idea, nor had even heard of 'smokejumpers' prior to the visit."

A note of importance to all the Gobi Jumpers who are members: **Johnny Kirkley** (CJ-64), **Cliff Hamilton** (CJ-62) and **John Moseley** (Assoc.) stopped by and visited **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) and his wife, Emily, in Redmond on their way to the Cave Junction Reunion. They were in good spirits and send best wishes to all who attended the reunion. 🍷

Shep Johnson Remembered

By **Chuck Sheley** (Cave Junction '59)

Shep passed away April 20, 2016. The July issue of *Smokejumper* was already in layout at that time, so we're doing a bit of catch-up in this issue.

Starting in about 2001, I wanted to do articles on the Smokejumper/CIA connection. Besides being an interesting subject, I wanted to get some of these stories recorded before this aspect of our history was lost.

Jack Mathews (MSO-48) was a major player in Southeast Asia (SEA) and other parts of the world involving smokejumpers and the CIA. Jack and I had started to develop a good line of communication when he died in January 2001 and that source of information was lost.

I then came into contact with **Thomas C. "Shep" Johnson** (MYC-56) and realized that here was a story that covered years of operations from Tibet to Southeast Asia and beyond. A former Marine, Shep had already received a Purple Heart in Korea when his brother **Miles Johnson** (MYC-53) recruited him to the smokejumpers in 1956. Shep was working on an Idaho cattle ranch at the time. As it happened, it was off-season on the same ranch when he was recruited for the CIA.

James E. "Jim" Parker, author and paramilitary officer in Laos writes the following about Shep on his blog:

I've stared at the computer screen for some long time, remembering Shep stories, trying to write something appropriate. But I hurt inside. I am not smiling. I hurt

and feel my age.

What makes Shep stand out in my mind so much was that, like Hog (**Jerry Daniels** MSO-58), he was a cowboy, laconic and weathered features. Had no rough edges. Smiled a lop-sided smile. Beer drinker or whiskey out of the bottle. Worked hard from sunup to sundown. And he was CIA.

Unbelievably, this throwback to men, who broke trail for wagon trains to the west coast a couple of hundred years ago, worked for the CIA with its Harvard men and persuasive boardroom thinkers. Who, as long as I knew him, had callouses on his hands and could get drunk on a pair of beers at night.

I wrote something recently about the Battle for Skyline, that first ridgeline north of the Long Cheng valley, that was a line drawn in the mountains to hold off a North

Vietnamese invasion force of 27,000 main line soldiers. The job of this big NVA force was to kill the 4,000 ragtag CIA army, which was the only force standing between them and the Lao capital of Vientiane.

Three Americans stood out in my mind in the successful effort of the CIA army to hold the line at Skyline – Hog (Jerry Daniels), Hardnose and Moose.

I should also add Shep. His job was to get war supplies and food in at Long Cheng and then out to the CIA army in their dozens and dozens of locations on the battlefield. He had many Hmong helpers, but Shep, with his clipboard, took in all orders from the field, prioritized them, got them fitted for delivery, either by sling load or configured with parachutes for any of five or six different types of delivery aircraft and sent them on their way – one man – Shep Johnson – made it all possible. No one you know could have done it.

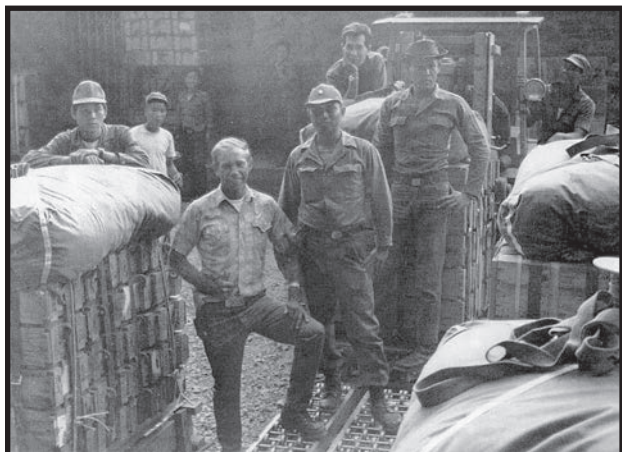
Only person I ever knew who could do this, day after day, with incoming rounds landing nearby, was Shep. Never complained. Broke down tons and tons of supplies and got them to where they needed to go out there on the battlefield. 🧑



In Memoriam Thomas (Shep) Johnson (MYC-56)



Photos Courtesy: Shep Johnson



Shep with Thai & Hmong Riggers Long Tieng, Laos



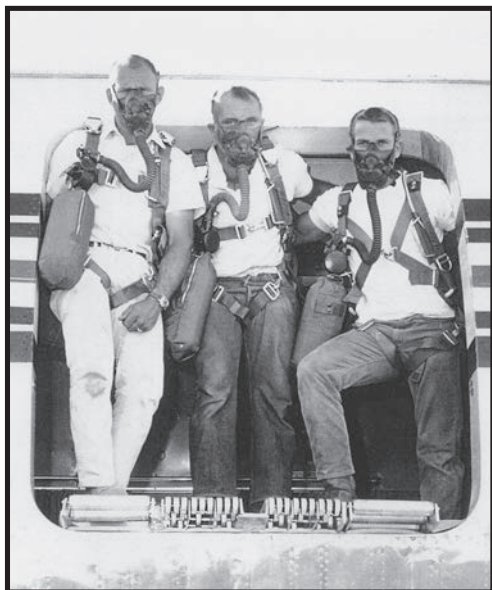
Miles Johnson (MYC-53), Shep Johnson (MYC-56) & Gar Thorsrud (MSO-46)



Royal Thai Army Jump Training
Shep, Al Adolph & Frank Odom (MYC-63)



Shep checking C-130 air drop



High Altitude Cargo Drop Marana, AZ
Shep, Gary Hannon (MSO-60) & Ken Hessel (MYC-58)



Shep with Ops Assistants

Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

A SNAPSHOT OF SHEP'S LIFE

by Ken Hessel (McCall '58)

Ken gave the following at Shep's memorial on June 28, 2016, in Weiser, Idaho.

LOOKING AROUND OUT there, I see a lot of familiar faces. I met Shep when I joined the McCall jumpers in 1958, and he and I have been kicking around together ever since. Some of you may wonder how Tom became known as Shep. He told me that some of his high school buddies got to calling him Shep because of his knack for handling livestock and the name just stuck.

My intent here today is to give you all a snapshot of Shep's life, as I knew it. He was born in New Meadows, Idaho, in 1931, but spent most of his childhood growing up here in Weiser.

When he was about 12 or 13, he went to live with his Uncle Tommy Carr in New Meadows. He claimed that Weiser was just too big a city for his liking. His Uncle Tommy ran sizeable cattle operations in both the New Meadows and Weiser areas and Shep was thus introduced to the cowboy's way of life – a trait he exhibited for the rest of his days.

He graduated from New Meadows High School where he played some 8-man football and claimed to be the second fastest man on the track team. Thinking about that for a minute, I asked him how many people were on the track team? He said there were two of us. He had a great sense of humor, a lot of which was directed at himself.

When he was 18, he joined the Marines where he served as the commander of a tank crew. He survived the Korean War where he was wounded and awarded a purple heart. After serving five years, he mustered out and went back to New Meadows to work on his uncle's ranch. In 1956 Shep was offered a job with the McCall Smoke-jumpers where his brother, Miles, was already working. For the next two years, he fought fire in the summers and fed cows during the winter.

Then one night in 1958 in the middle of the winter, Shep was at an isolated cow camp about an hour's ride from the end of a snowed-in road. He was peacefully sawing logs when he was awak-

en by another of Carr's ranch hands who told him he needed to get to a phone and call a number that the cowboy handed him. He took the horse and rode back to the truck, loaded the horse and headed for town, all the time thinking something bad had happened to his brother, Miles.

When he called the number given him, he found himself talking with a CIA recruiter in Washington, D.C. who was hiring Parachute Drop Officers, more commonly known as "Kickers." Shortly thereafter, Shep and other jumpers from McCall and Missoula were making resupply drops to General Vang Pao's Hmong Army in northern Laos.

Interspersed with the resupply missions in Laos, night missions were flown into Tibet to drop indigenous, paramilitary teams back into their home country to organize resistance and combat invading Chinese troops. Shep said the Tibetan missions stopped when Gary Power's U-2 plane was shot down over Russia in 1960. How that incident influenced the Tibetan missions, I don't know.

Next Shep and other jumpers from Southeast Asia (SEA) showed up in Guatemala to help with the training for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in April of 1961. That the invasion was a complete bust was certainly no fault of the Guatemala contingent.

Heading back to SEA to continue support of Vang Pao (VP), a tragedy happened on August 13, 1961. A C-46 crashed while dropping arms and ammunition to VP's troops. Two McCall jumpers, Darrel Eubanks and my future brother-in-law, John Lewis, were killed along with Missoula jumper Dave Bevens. The crash also killed two American pilots and a Thai radio operator. At that point the cat was out of the bag with regard to what some of the jumpers were doing during the off-season. The direct hire of Kickers by the CIA was stopped and was turned over to Air America, which is to say that the agency was still hiring Kickers, but indirectly by a cover organization.

In 1969 Shep was assigned to Long Tieng,

which was the mountain stronghold of Vang Pao and his Hmong army in northern Laos. Shep was put in charge of keeping VP's field troops resupplied, all of which was done with aircraft and most of it with parachute drops.

When Shep showed up, there was a mountain of supplies sitting on the ramp waiting to be rigged and dropped. There were three or four of VP's troops working there, but obviously fighting a losing battle. After busting his butt all day, Shep could see he needed a lot more help.

He found Jerry Daniels, who was VP's Ops Chief, and asked him to go to the general and ask for more help. Jerry had his hands full and told Shep he'd have to go see VP himself. So Shep walked down to VP's compound and requested a few minutes of the general's time. Shep made his pitch to the general and left, not feeling too encouraged about things. VP showed up on the ramp about two hours later, looked around and left. When Shep showed up for work the next morning at daylight, there were 30-40 workers standing around waiting for instructions.

Shep got everyone lined out and was hard at it when Daniels showed up about mid-morning to see how things were going. Shep asked what had happened to inspire such a turnout of workers. Jerry told him that when VP left the ramp the day before, he went looking for the man he had put in charge of the riggers. VP found the man in his hooch stoned on opium. VP handled the situation on the spot and the message was clear to everyone – show up for work or suffer the consequences. Shep got the help he needed and VP's field troops got the supplies they needed. The troops started regaining some lost ground and everybody's morale greatly improved. Shep had made a big difference in a very short time.

Shep was at Long Tieng until February 14, 1971, when he was wounded by shrapnel. During the night of the 13th some NVA sappers and troops raided Long Tieng. They blew up a couple aircraft and tried to breach VP's compound. Air strikes were called in by Daniels, and they were delivered until the next morning when the NVA withdrew. During the night firefight, Shep and the others took shelter in a bunker at the base of a cliff. Unfortunately the bunker didn't have a roof on it and when an enemy B-40 rocket hit the cliff

above them, some ricochet shrapnel hit Shep in the butt.

Well, no aircraft would land the next morning until they got the OK from Shep, so Jerry loaded Shep in a Jeep and drove him up and down the runway a couple times. Shep told them to fill some holes here and there and soon had aircraft coming and going. He left on the first plane out. Everyone called that night the St. Valentine's Massacre because there were multiple friendly casualties.

When he returned to Laos after a couple months recuperation in the states, he was assigned a top-secret mission which was to be conducted

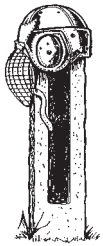
He was assigned a top-secret mission which was to be conducted from a jungle camp in the Laos panhandle.

from a jungle camp in the Laos panhandle. His assignment was to train a team of two Lao commandos to climb a telephone pole and install a wiretap on a main communication line that ran south from Hanoi in North Vietnam. After three attempts, which failed for one reason or another, the mission successfully was completed. We later learned that the info collected off that wiretap was used very successfully in the Paris ceasefire negotiations with the NVA. Again, Shep played a large part in influencing the immediate future of Laos and of South Vietnam.

The ceasefire went in effect in January of 1973. Shep and I left Laos for the last time in October of 1973. Shep left Agency employment in June of 1975 and went to work for the BLM, where he retired from in Alaska in 1990.

In retirement he raised horses on a couple different ranches in Oregon and finally on a third place in Payette, Idaho.

In closing, I think it's very fitting that we are having this service on Memorial Day weekend. Shep was a true patriot from head to toe and he was a warrior of the first order. He was a man who put his heart and soul into whatever task he was handed and always gave it his best effort. I knew him like a brother, as many of you did. He was a loyal friend and will be truly missed by many. 🙏



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
10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95926

Robert W. "RW" Berry (Missoula '48)

Bob, 87, died at his home in Indianapolis on May 12, 2106. He worked in forest management in Idaho before joining the Army where he was with the 82nd Airborne. After leaving the Army, Bob jumped out of Missoula for the 1948-49 seasons. After attending Purdue University extension, he started a successful construction business in Indianapolis building houses and apartments. Bob was married to his wife, Betty, for 57 years.

Thomas C. "Shep" Johnson (McCall '56)

Shep died April 20, 2016, in Boise, Idaho. He graduated from New Meadows High School and joined the Marines in 1951 during the Korean War, where he was wounded in action. Shep went back to Idaho and was working on a ranch when he joined the McCall Smokejumpers in 1956. He was recruited and joined the CIA and spent 15 years working for the Agency in Southeast Asia. This story has been printed in Smokejumper magazine and will be run again in this (Oct. 2016) issue.

When he returned to the states, Shep went to work for the BLM and retired in 1990 and moved to Vale, Oregon, where he raised horses and cattle.

Laird A. Robinson (Missoula '62)

Laird died May 22, 2016, after a nine-year battle with cancer. He graduated from the University of Montana in 1966 with majors in Biology and History. Laird jumped at Missoula 1962-65 and entered the US Air Force, earning the rank of Captain. He returned to smokejumping from 1972-75 and continued with the USFS until retirement with almost 40 years of service.

Laird worked with author Norman Maclean as a research partner on Maclean's "Young Men and Fire." He was a Past President of the National

Smokejumper Association.

Charles W. "Chuck" Dickie (North Cascades '51)

Chuck died June 15, 2016. He served in the US Navy before earning his bachelor's and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Colorado State University in 1957.

Upon graduation in 1957, he was employed by the State Department of Agriculture of California in the laboratory system. After seven years of employment in California, he was appointed director of the branch laboratory in Rocky Ford for Colorado State University-Fort Collins. He served in that capacity for more than 38 years and retired in 2002. Chuck jumped at NCSB during the 1951-52 seasons.

Tony Percival (North Cascades '54)

Tony, 82, died on June 14, 2016, at his home in Tucson, Arizona. He graduated from Wenatchee High School in 1952 and worked two summers on the Lake Wenatchee District while attending college. His smokejumping career with the USFS started in 1954. Tony worked on the early Silver City crew in '55 and eventually left Winthrop and moved to Redmond when it was established.

Tony jumped at NCSB 1954-56, 61-63 and Redmond 1966-71. He was in the Army 1957-58 in Germany. After Redmond, he was the Bly FMO on the Fremont National Forest, then on to Marana, Arizona, at the R-3 West Zone Dispatch Center, completing his career at NARTC. He retired in Tucson with his wife, Lorraine, of 49 years.

William "Bill" L. Kickbusch (Missoula '49)

Bill, 86, died June 25, 2016, in Missouri. He graduated from Michigan State University with

a degree in Forestry. While in college he jumped the 1949 and 1951 seasons at Missoula. He served in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Bill worked for the USFS for 35 years and spent the last 18 years on the Mark Twain National Forest.

After his retirement he remained active in the Rolla (MO) community. He enjoyed volunteering for the Phelps County Elections committee and the Korean War Veterans. He was proud to be selected to participate in the Franklin County Honor Flight to Washington DC in 2014.

Homer A. Rice (Missoula '45)

Homer died June 26, 2016, in Salem, Oregon. He was a member of the CPS-103 smokejumper unit during WWII and worked as a professional house painter after moving to Oregon in 1947. Homer was a member of the Zion Mennonite Church and was married to his wife, Josie, for 68 years. He jumped at Missoula during the 1945 season.

Joseph M. Lord (Missoula '56)

Joe died June 26, 2016, in Buffalo Creek, Colorado. Joe graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in civil engineering before entering the US Army. After two of his college summers as a ground pounder, Joe jumped at Missoula for the 1956-58 seasons.

Joe began his professional career with Boeing before going to work as an agricultural engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation and the Agency for International Development in Thailand. He returned to the states in 1971 and settled in Fresno, California.

Joe was a pioneer in irrigation management in California's Central Valley establishing weather stations to determine crop water requirements before the State thought of the idea. Eventually the State established the California Irrigation Management Info. System, which is in operation today.

Joe was active in the NSA Trails Program and was on a project only ten days before his death.

Les McDevitt (North Cascades '48)

Les, 87, died May 27, 2016, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. He graduated from St. John's Mili-

tary School in Delafield, Wisconsin, and attended the University of Cincinnati. Les enlisted in the US Navy and served five years as a carrier fighter pilot on the USS Midway.

After active duty he flew for Pan Am and continued flying in the Reserves, retiring as a Commander. Les commanded 747's for a number of years with Pan Am. He jumped at NCSB 1948-50 and was a Life Member of the NSA.

Robert D. "Bob" Heeren (Missoula '52)

Bob, 87, died July 13, 2016. He graduated with a degree in Forestry from Rutgers University and went on to get a master's degree from Duke University. Bob was the Hardwood Management Coordinator for Union Camp Corporation and retired in 1996.

Bob was a Captain in the US Army 1948-50 and was in the Army Reserves and National Guard from 1950-89. He was active in the Boy Scouts of America and served as a Scout Master District Commander. Bob jumped at Missoula during the 1952 season.

James R. "Jim" Phillips (Missoula '67)

Jim died July 17, 2016, at his home in Helena of Pancreatic Cancer. He enlisted in the US Navy in 1961 as a Hospital Corpsman assigned to the 4th Marines at Kenohe Bay, Hawaii, in the Fleet Marine Force. After his discharge he enrolled at the University of Montana and jumped four seasons while getting his degree.

Jim's professional career included 25 years as a school counselor, ten years as a civil rights contract compliance officer for the Montana Dept. of Transportation and five year in private sector management. He was very active in the NSA Trails Program and acted as the lead liaison between the USFS and the NSA in the facilitation of a completed Mann Gulch Preservation Plan and trail system.

Jim jumped at Missoula 1967 and '71, and at Grangeville during the 1968-69 seasons and was Life Member of the National Smokejumper Association. He headed up the 2015 National Reunion in Missoula celebrating 75 years of smokejumping. 🕯

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

Donor

In Memory Of/Honor of

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Contributions since the previous publication of donors July 2016

Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004 - \$77,540

Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:

Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926

Good Samaritan Fund Helps Boise Family

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

Thanks to your generosity as NSA Members, we were able to come to the aid of the **Quincy Chung** (NIFC-03) family. Quincy and his wife, Michelle, took their son, Tanner, age eight, to Boston for further treatment for medical problems. We are pleased that we (NSA) were able to help with expenses.

I asked Quincy to let us know how the trip went. From his email:

"We flew to Boston on June 12th, 2016. The kids were excited and Tanner was most excited to see doctors, who he hoped would help him. On June 13th, we met with Pediatric Orthopedics and Pediatric GI Dr. Matheney and took 12 X-rays of his joints and bones. When Tanner was five years old, we discovered he had bilateral necrosis of the femoral heads in his hips. Through the 12 X-rays taken in Boston, they discovered 'necrosis'-like markings on his elbows and knees as well as what was present in his hips. With that said, they are not sure if it's necrosis or Multiple Epiphyseal Dysplasia (MED), which is a very rare genetic disease of the bones. With those findings, we are waiting to discuss further testing with Boston after we get back some other test results from tests in Boise.

"Later that day, we saw Dr. Nurko in Pediatric GI. He told us he thinks Tanner has Functional GI Diseases. He said it's very painful and it's forever. Once he discovered Tanner was bleeding from his colon, he demanded a full colonoscopy and endoscopy. We had the procedures done when we returned back to Boise and results were recently sent to Boston for review. We are currently waiting for a consult with Boston.

"During the colonoscopy and endoscopy, they found many reactive lymphocytes within his colon and have concerns with the lymphoid tissue of the colon. His colon was covered with black spots, and they are not certain what they are until the biopsies come back and are reviewed.

"On June 14th, we returned to the hospital where Tanner had a nuclear GI dump test. It took four hours, and he had to have X-rays of his stomach every hour on the hour. That came back normal. We also met with Pediatric Immunology where they drew 18 vials of blood. They discovered he had Hypogammaglobulinemia, which is where his antibodies are too low to fight off bacterial and viral infections. Intravenous infusions are being discussed as a possible treatment to help him raise his immune system.

"On June 15th we met with the Pediatric Pain clinic. That consisted of five hours and three doctors. We saw the Pain Doctor, Psychiatrist, and Pediatric Physical Therapist. They discovered that



Tanner Chung (Courtesy Q. Chung)



The Chung Family (Courtesy Q. Chung)

“Nobody has been able to help us until now. We feel very blessed to have had your assistance. I don’t think we could have done it without the help of the National Smokejumper Association.”

Tanner is much weaker on his right side due to the necrosis in his hip and said he needed physical therapy. Due to the amount of pain he has been in for so long, it has damaged his central nervous system. Therefore they want him in cognitive behavioral therapy as well. He needs help coping with the pain and tools on how to get through it. It was a very long four days, but four of the best days we have had with his medical journey.

“Tanner has traveled to and been seen by doctors in Utah, Seattle, Stanford, Portland and now, Boston. Nobody has been able to help us until now. We feel very blessed to have had your assistance. I don’t think we could have done it

without the help of the National Smokejumper Association. We will be going back to Boston for check-ups and, pending biopsy results, we may be going back for treatment. It’s been a very long eight years, but they say it’s better to go through the journey than to skip to the end. We have been on this journey for some time and we feel we are finally hitting the end with results, a plan, and hopefully moving forward to help Tanner live a long and healthy life!

“We did manage to attend a Red Sox game, and that was the highlight of Tanner’s Trip. Again, thank you so much for the support and help you provided our family.”

I always like to get back to you members with a report on the use of your Good Samaritan Fund dollars. The last three donations were used to help the families of jumpers with medical treatments for their children. We all know that these children are the most valuable thing we have as a family. Thanks to you, the NSA family, for your continuing support of the Good Samaritan Fund. Giving to those in need is a tremendous reward to us as individuals. 🙏

Malvin Brown Memorial – August 6, 2015

Life Member Denis Symes (McCall '63) represented the NSA at a dedication ceremony honoring Triple Nickle Malvin Brown (PNOR-45). The ceremony, sponsored by the USFS, was held at Mt. Calvary Cemetery in Baltimore, MD. It was attended by family members, USFS personnel and about seven NSA members. The following is Denis' presentation:

Two military organizations pioneered the way to integration of the military in the 1940s – the Tuskegee Airmen and the Triple Nickles. Both groups overcame rampant racism and showed the mettle and patriotism of African Americans. This was 20 years before Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement.

These two groups demonstrated their loyalty and bravery to a nation that did not appreciate them. They endured hurtful discrimination and insults, but persevered and proved their mettle.

Just as the Tuskegee Airmen broke military color barriers, the Triple Nickles broke through the same barriers to proudly serve as Airborne Infantry soldiers; they were proud to wear the Airborne Infantry badge.

Malvin Brown (PNOR-45) was one of these men, and his death was a real tragedy. While the Triple Nickles' assignment was not the European combat service for which they had trained, it was combat just the same – fighting fires in the Pacific Northwest, a dangerous endeavor.

While they trained as paratroopers, they were given scant training in jumping into mountains and timber. They used standard U.S. Army airborne equipment and techniques, which were poorly suited for this assignment.

For example:

- They used standard Army Air Corps sheepskin-lined flightsuits as protective clothing, not the Forest Service canvas jumpsuit.
- They used standard military parachutes, not the steerable Derry chutes – thus they were unable to steer themselves into small landing spots.
- They jumped in a long stick, not the individual or two-man sticks used by the Forest

Service, thus spreading them out over a long path and making assembly difficult.

- They did not use drift chutes to judge the wind, but instead just jumped and drifted, landing where the wind took them.
- The jumpmaster pushed cargo out of the plane before the troopers, making it difficult to find, and thus delaying assembly and attacking the fire.
- The planes were not co-located with the paratroopers, delaying the response for hours or even the next day, thus letting the fires grow to unmanageable proportions.
- They used 50-foot ropes for letdowns from trees and not the 150-foot ropes used by Forest Service jumpers. Their flight suits also lacked the D-rings which allowed for a controlled letdown. These conditions most likely resulted in Mr. Brown's fall from a tree and tragic death.

To our knowledge, the only Forest Service equipment adopted by the Triple Nickles was the football helmet with wire face mask, adopted by the Forest Service in 1940.

In spite of the lack of appropriate training and equipment, these men did jump into tall timber in rugged terrain and they suffered a number of serious injuries and Mr. Brown's death. Some have speculated that if the Forest Service experienced a similar injury rate, the Forest Service jumper program would have been canceled. Yet, in spite of these injuries, the Triple Nickles did jump and fight fires. It is unlikely that many Forest Service jumpers would have jumped under similar circumstances, but the Triple Nickles did.

Many people do not realize it, but the U.S. Forest Service led to the creation of the U.S. Army Airborne. In 1940, three officers – led by Maj. William Cary Lee, later major general and 101st Airborne commander – and three sergeants visited the smokejumper base in Missoula, Mont., and observed smokejumper training and operations. They returned to Ft. Benning and developed airborne tactics and training, based on their observations.

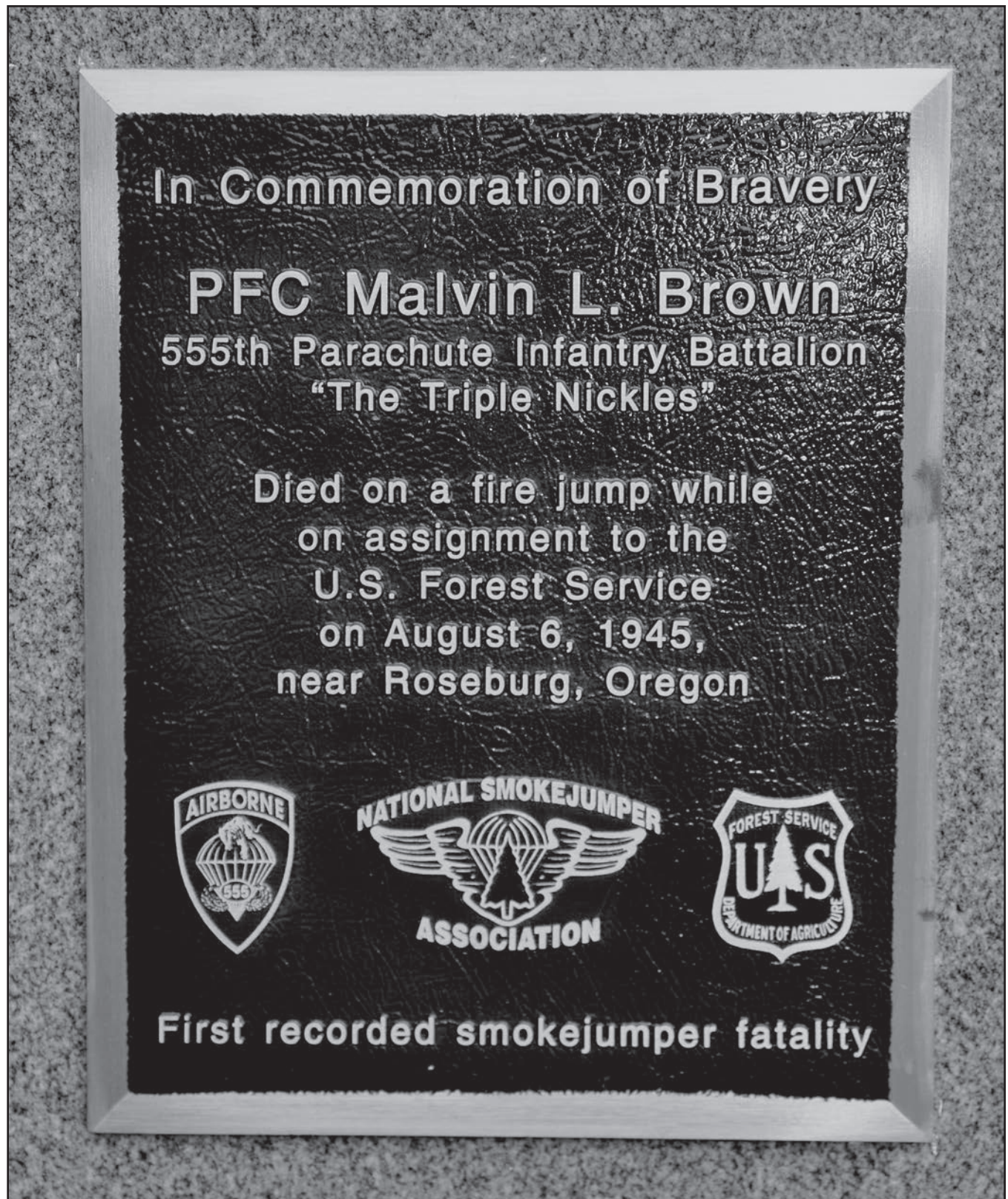
Another interesting observation is that the

Army Airborne-prized “Corcoran” boots were adapted from those boots worn by the Forest Service jumpers to give better ankle support than the standard Army footwear.

We all owe the greatest respect and admira-

tion to the Triple Nickles, exemplified by Malvin Brown, in confronting enemies, both social and physical, and their willingness to overcome all adversity and build a better nation.

Malvin Brown – rest in peace, trooper. 🪦



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