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National Smokeyjumper Association

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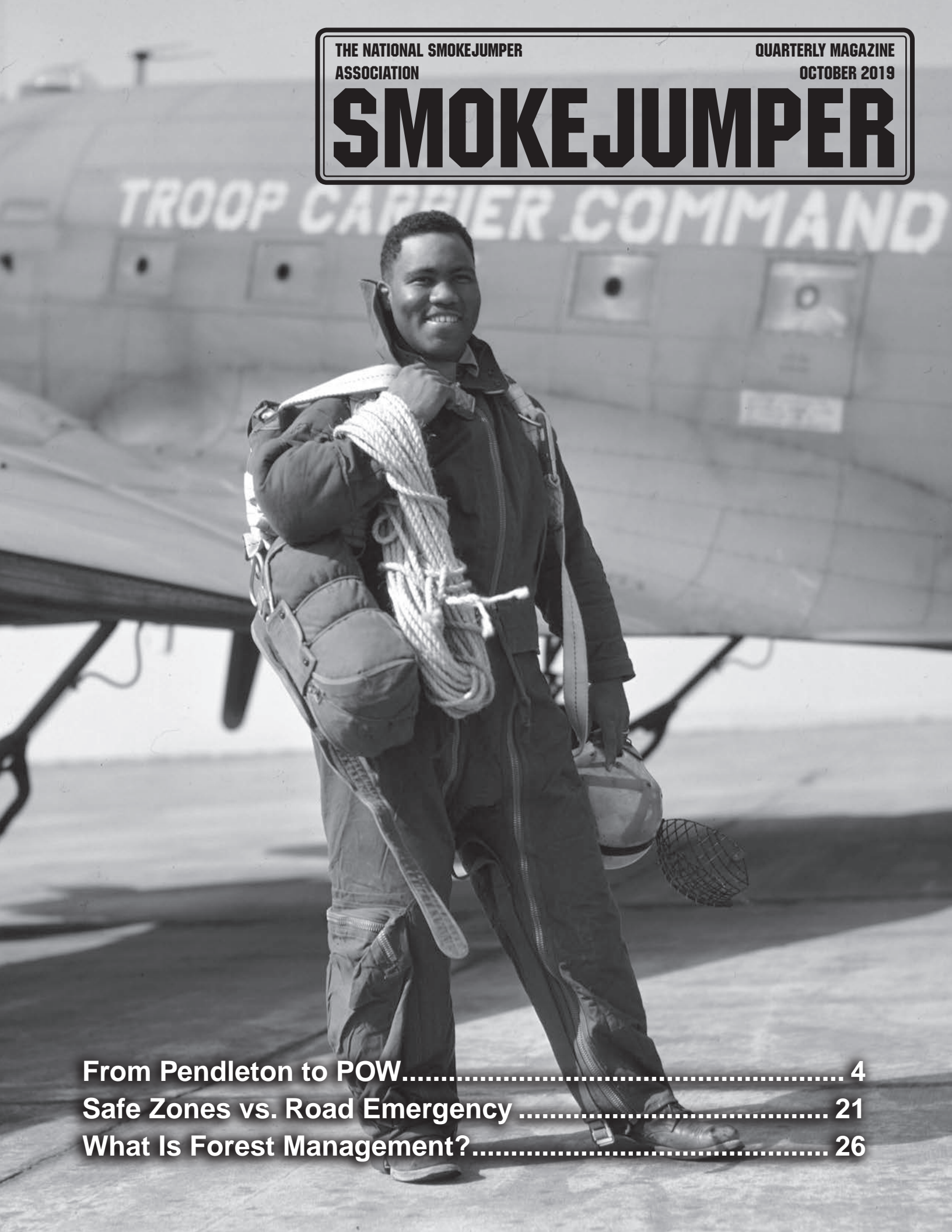
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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2019

SMOKEJUMPER



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Message from the President



by **Bob McKean**
(Missoula '67)
President

"I NEVER SAW anything blow up so fast! Worst fire I've ever been on! Trees were exploding! It was a ...tornado (of smoke and fire) right above us!" **Dale Graff** (MSO-60)

"Smoke was so thick, it was like being in a PingPong ball! Didn't think we were going to make it! Sounded like a freight train. Someone said the Lord's Prayer!" **Wade Erwin** (MSO-59), retired fire management officer.

"Someone said, 'God help us!'" **Don Gordon** (MSO-59)

"I told them, '...build yourself a hole in the rocks!' ...my canteen cover burned and my canteen fell out! We had many holes burned in our clothes!" **Ross Parry** (MSO-58), Squadleader

"One guy tried to run," **Fritz Wolfrum** (MSO-53), Foreman, said. "Grab him!" Fritz said to the ranger. "The hell with you, we're staying right here (in the black)!" **Tom**

Kovalicky (MSO-61)

"I thought I was going to die!" **Neil Walstad** (MSO-61), retired Grangeville Base Manager

In reference to helicopter rescue by **Rod Snider** (NCSB-51): "Don't know how he did it; don't know if I would have tried (even in a Huey)." **James Van Vlec** (MSO-61), retired career US Army helicopter pilot and trainer

"I'm not a hero. Proud I did it," said **Rod Snider** (NCSB-51), helicopter pilot. Rod was awarded the North American Forest Fire Medal, which is reserved for heroism of the highest order.

These are the words of smokejumpers and the helicopter pilot who rescued them (20 smokejumpers in all) from the Higgins Ridge Fire where they were overrun on July 4, 1961. Someone at a higher level had even written a draft press release about their demise prior to their rescue. And, the helicopter pilot, Rod Snider, having been told to head home, decided instead to look for the crew. Then, when he found them, he made multiple trips through the smoke and flames to rescue them by overloading his helicopter designed to carry two passengers—think "MASH"—with four passengers.

This past June 10 smokejumpers provided their individual accounts of the

Higgins Ridge Fire as part of the Higgins Ridge Oral History Project. The event was sponsored by the National Museum of Forest Service History (NMFHS). Following two days of video taping individual accounts, a panel discussion was held where these individuals had the opportunity to sit together and, for the first time, share as a group perspectives about what happened. It provided the audience—which included many family members—a glimpse of what these men did and endured to survive.

I was honored to represent NSA as the moderator of the panel discussion. In preparation for the task, I was privileged to sit through individual oral history accounts as they were recorded at the University of Montana Mansfield Library.

Here are a few of my takeaways from this event:

- Leadership and courage by those on the

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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

ground were as important to survival as was the heroism demonstrated by the helicopter pilot.

- Lessons from the Mann Gulch Fire were in the minds of many and most especially, the leaders, Wolfrum and Parry.
- Smokejumper training was excellent and key in how these individuals responded.
- Those who are not smokejumpers—interviewers, videographers, reporters, and even family members—have difficulty comprehending the culture that engenders smokejumper thinking and behavior.
- For most of these individuals, smokejumping was a life-shaping experience with lessons and loyalties that prevail nearly 60 years later.
- Smokejumpers are smokejumpers no matter the era that they jumped.

A video of this project is currently being developed and should be available in the not too distant future. Two articles about the Higgins Ridge Fire have appeared in previous issues of *Smokejumper*: Wolfrum-April 1994 and Kovalicky-October 2012.

Finally, the National Museum of Forest Service History and, especially, its Executive Director Lisa Tate deserve credit for putting this project together!

Other Stuff:

Alaska

As I write this in the middle of July, Alaska is burning, 1.6 million acres to date according to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). This is understandable since Alaska has been having record high temperatures. Accordingly, well more than half of all active smokejumpers have been detailed to Alaska (Smokejumper Status Report, July 16, 2019). The following NBC News video speaks to the changing weather patterns and the warming climate conditions affecting those patterns. It is worth careful consideration. <https://tinyurl.com/yy9e43ce>

Miss Montana

After 20 years of dormancy, the Mann Gulch DC-3 (Miss Montana) was restored at the Museum of Mountain Flying (MMF) in Missoula. Many organizations (including the NSA) and individuals contributed to the effort. In June, Miss

Montana was flown to England and France where it participated with other C-47s in the 75th anniversary tribute to the Normandy D-Day Invasion. At this writing, Miss Montana is scheduled to fly over Mann Gulch to commemorate the 70th year since that tragedy. In future, Miss Montana will be on display at the MMF when not flying.

NSA Scholarships

The NSA has an active scholarship program. Scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis to smokejumpers or members of their families. Recent scholarships have been awarded to the following individuals: Angela Barbetta, Michelle Chung, Amy Duning, Brooke Hornberger, Jon Joiner, Hanna Kaiser, Linnea Leist, Kerissa Sheley, and Mike Stackley. More about these individuals will be shared in the next issue of *Smokejumper*. Please consider making a contribution to this valuable program.

Articles for *Smokejumper RE*: “Campfire—Future of America’s Wildfire?”

In the last issue of *Smokejumper*, I requested that those of you with expertise about issues associated with today’s fires consider writing an article in response to one or more of the questions posed (See July 2019 issue of *Smokejumper*). It is one thing for those of us with little or no expertise to “Monday Morning Quarterback” against the backdrop of these fires, as to how they are managed, how climate change affects them, how forests might be better managed to address changing climate, responsibilities of businesses and home owners to engage in self protection, et al. It is another thing to hear the thoughts of individuals who have real expertise and who might genuinely enlighten our readership by contributing an article. So please, if you have the expertise or know someone who does, contact Chuck Sheley or me. 📧

From Pendleton To POW: The Clifford Allen Story

by Robert L. “Bob” Bartlett (Associate)

His proud look drew me into a dangerous life once lived. This lone jumper, carrying a letdown rope, a caged helmet, and standing next to an olive drab C-47 dated the image, but who was he? What was his story?

The picture is one of a number in an assortment of Triple Nickles (555th Parachute Infantry Battalion) photos taken by World War II Army Air Corps photographer Edgar H. Weinberger while on assignment at Pendleton Field during “Operation Firefly” in 1945.

This particular photo joined my collection some time ago. But, who was this Triple Nickles jumper, frozen in time by Weinberger’s camera, and what stories lie behind the image?

Unlike the photo that appeared in this magazine some time ago of the first black Civilian Public Service (CPS) smokejumper **Wardell “Knuckles” Davis** (MSO-45) standing next to a Ford Trimotor, this lone, black jumper is Army

and the plane in the background is Army. His circumstances drew me in.

This confident-looking jumper is 25-year-old **Clifford Allen** (PNOR-45), born in Widener, Ark., in 1920. His family relocated to Chicago when he was young. Allen attended public schools and later graduated from Northwestern University before being drafted into the Army as a private in 1942. Officer Candidate School (OCS) should have been an automatic military consideration, but not in his case.

While at basic training at Camp Wolters, Texas, Allen saw an opportunity for OCS. During an interview many years later, he mentions being “discouraged” by other troops from pursuing OCS. He persisted and, after passing all the entry requirements, was sent to Ft. Benning, Ga., a place he referred to as “the Benning School for Boys.”

The military, which Allen and others entered



Bob Bartlett (Courtesy B. Bartlett)

in the early 1940s, was as harshly segregated as the civilian lives they left. OCS training at Benning was separate from the Parachute School, as was the all-black service company attached to it.

Allen was eventually commissioned a second lieutenant there at Benning. At the time he could not imagine someday returning to Benning and making history there. His first assignment was to an Air Base Security Battalion at Camp Butler, N.C. Allen joined a growing list of both black enlisted men and officers longing to be assigned to combat units and frontline duty overseas, but routinely denied.

President Franklin Roosevelt, in November 1943 – after much public pressure – called for black paratroopers. Roosevelt had previously responded to similar pressure from black leadership to support the “Tuskegee Experiment.” Black Tuskegee-trained pilots were already flying bomber-escort missions over North Africa.

Following the Tuskegee Experiment, 1st Sgt. **Walter Morris** (PNOR-45) and 16 other enlisted men made military history at Benning as the first to earn Airborne wings. Their success drew the attention of Allen and a handful of other recently commissioned black officers.

By the second week in January 1944, 2nd

Lt. Allen made the bold decision to join 2nd Lt. **Bradley Biggs** (PNOR-45), 1st Lt. **James Porter** (PNOR-45), and three other black officers for the second phase of the Benning experiment. They would attempt to be the first cadre of black officers to earn their jump wings.

Biggs recalls of this handpicked group of officers: “By the time of the first jump, we were so full of airborne propaganda that we would have jumped without a chute ... Each of us felt a sense of moral responsibility. We felt that the pride of Negro America rested on our success. We were, in effect, on trial every day ... Always on our minds was the thought that, if we failed, the arrogant aristocrats at the Army’s helm would have the excuse to say, ‘See? We gave them a chance and they couldn’t handle it.’”

Their struggle was represented by the Double V campaign, initiated in 1942, which was a national campaign to recruit black troops willingly to fight for victory overseas and victory at home!

Allen and the other officers earned their wings in March 1944 and, along with the 16 enlisted men, were given the task of hand-picking more black volunteers for Benning. Now paratroopers, Allen and the rest thought they would surely see combat overseas and have a chance to prove the doubters and haters wrong.

Allen and some 300 men, now designated as the *555th Parachute Infantry Battalion (PBI)*, boarded a troop train May 6, 1945 – destination Pendleton, Ore.; mission unknown. Some among them thought that Pendleton was only a temporary stop along the way to join the war in Japan. However, Pendleton Field proved to be the permanent change-of-duty station for approximately 200 of the original 300. After initial training, 100 would transfer to Chico, Calif.

Pendleton Field was at that time skeletonized and on “caretaker” status. The men of the 555th found a white full-colonel as base commander, a staffed control tower, and a small engineer maintenance contingent. The base commander quickly assigned them to separate quarters, and they were told what areas of the base were off-limits.

They also learned that much of Pendleton was also off-limits.

Trained for combat, Allen and the rest were issued shovels, pickaxes, letdown ropes, caged

helmets, and other firefighting gear and oriented in their new assignment: “the destruction and demolition of Japanese Balloon Bombs and the suppression of wildland forest fires.”

Allen and the rest would serve under the 9th Service Command and their new mission, “Operation Firefly.” Without access to Allen’s military records or After-Action Reports (AARs) kept by the Army, we do not know the details of his experiences or of other Triple Nickles’ experiences who fought fires out of Pendleton, nor do we know much of what their lives were like in and around Pendleton.

What we have are mostly black-and-white photos of the men, their planes, and of smoke off the wing tips of their C-47s. Also, in the collection is a single reel of training film likely recorded in and around Pendleton. We are left only to imagine what Allen’s life was like.

Much of what we know about fires responded to by the 555th comes from two main sources, the 1945 Silver Lake Dispatch Log – recorded by the Army – and a Smokejumper Base Fire and Jump Log for Region 1. Allen and his men could have been on the Meadow Creek Fire July 20, the first fire jump for the Pendleton Group. Entries in the Region 1 log prove interesting.

The log reports that 32 CPS jumpers and 52 Triple Nickles jumped the Meadow Creek Fire. It is noted that a Triple Nickles medic took an injured soldier off the fire, then jumped again from a Forest Service Travelair plane. Most interestingly it also notes, but hard to imagine, that German POWs and Mexicans were used as reinforcements.

Imagine, Allen and others who have been denied a much-anticipated overseas assignment, wielding pickaxes and shovels, shoulder-to-shoulder with conscientious objectors, German POWs and Mexicans, all battling the same raging fire in Idaho! What thoughts went through their minds on that fire are all but lost to history, and there were many others.

Allen could have been with medic **Malvin Brown** (PNOR-45) on Brown’s Aug. 6, 1945, fatal jump on Oregon’s Lemon Butte. He could have been one of the 72 Triple Nickles who joined 10 CPS jumpers Aug. 17-18 on the Long Tom Fire along the Salmon River, Idaho, or one of

100 from Pendleton who jumped a fire on the Wenatchee National Forest July 13.

There was the Chilliwack Meadows Fire, near Winthrop, Aug. 22, when jumpers were reported injured and taken off the fire. The injured were packed out and picked up by PBY plane and flown to a Tacoma, Wash., hospital.

In the end, the Pendleton group fought fires in USFS Regions 1, 4, 5 and 6. The Pendleton group responded to 19 fires. The sources merely report some limited facts – the *when*, *where*, and sometimes the *who*. The stories are left to us to find or imagine.

By mid-October 1945, Allen and the 555th found themselves at Fort Bragg, N.C., under the command of Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin, who proved to be a godsend. Gavin treated the men of the 555th with unprecedented respect, likely because of their service in the Pacific Northwest and their status as fellow paratroopers. However, postwar units were demobilizing and the 555th’s numbers dropped dramatically.

Allen and those remaining were left to once again recruit volunteers from other black units to fill their ranks. By June 1946, their numbers were back up to 36 officers and more than 1,000 men. Gavin allowed them to grow and he provided many opportunities to showcase the unit.

Gavin is seen in one of Weinberger’s photos, geared up with a load of smiling Triple Nickles ready to jump, likely at Ft. Bragg.

By December 1947, the 555th would no longer be. Gavin’s plan was to integrate the 82nd. Soon Triple Nickles like Allen would be scattered to different units and assignments, some overseas. For the first time in their military careers, those who stayed would serve under all-white battalion commanders and Allen would enter the war in Korea.

Without access to his military records, there is no way of knowing for sure the details of with whom he served or what happened to him and his unit in Korea. We do know that he was captured in 1950 and was a POW until the end of the war in 1953.

During an interview years later, when asked about his wartime experience in Korea, Allen answered proudly, “I continued to serve my country as a prisoner of war.” Col. Allen’s military decora-

tions include the Army Commendation Medal, awarded for consistent acts of heroism or meritorious service.

Long after Korea, the original members of the 555th met for a reunion at Fort Bragg. It was decided then that they should form a reunion steering committee and Allen was designated its first chairman. That was the origin of what is now the 555th Parachute Infantry Association.

In retirement Allen moved to the Washington, D.C., area where he began his civilian career. He joined what was then the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Much of his work in the 1970s involved increasing educational opportuni-

ties for minority students in the health field.

Allen retired again in 1986. The initial curiosity that drew me to stare at his image, although far from complete, is now somewhat satisfied.

On Sept. 1, 1993, Col. Allen made his last jump, a proud member of the first all-black cadre of officers to lead the first all-black Army Parachute Infantry Battalion, known as the Triple Nickles, and as a veteran of two wars. As we record his story here, we again remember, *Good men must die, but death cannot kill their names.*

We now have a name and know a little of the story of a dangerous life once lived: Lt. Col. Clifford Allen, (Ret.), 1920-1993. 🕊

George Gowen: A “Bro” For Sure

by Ian Dooley (Fairbanks '08)

I met George Gowen (MSO-54) at Three Guys, a Greek diner on Madison Avenue in Manhattan. George was wearing a light gray suit and a red patterned tie, and I was wearing one of the cheap suits I had bought when I moved to New York for law school.

I did not know then that George would end up being one of my closest friends in New York, and that he and his wife, Marcia, would be two of the hardest people to say “so long” to when I left.

When George and I first met for breakfast at Three Guys in 2013, we began a tradition that would endure for the next six years. I had been awarded the National Smokejumper Association Art Jukkala/Jon McBride Scholarship for education, and the folks at the NSA asked George to present the award letter to me.

George made time to meet with me on his way to the law firm that he worked at since 1957. I had just finished my first year at Brooklyn Law School and my first summer internship teaching inner city youth in Newark, N.J. After one year in New York City, I was starving for a good conversation with someone who appreciated hard work in the woods. It was a breath of fresh air to meet a fellow smokejumper.

George rookied in Missoula in 1954, and dur-

ing his one season at MSO George bagged seven practice jumps and two fire jumps, and jumped from just about every type of jump ship available. George jumped out of the DC-2, DC-3, Ford Tri-Motor, Twin Beech, and the Travelair! George's first fire jump was Aug. 14, 1954, on a fire called Crooked River #4.

The Crooked River # 4 was a two-manner, single-tree fire that George and his jump partner extinguished in one night and then demobed via pickup truck the next day.

George's second fire jump was Sept. 2, 1954. The Buck Creek Fire was an eight- or 12-manner burning on the Payette National Forest.

In his memoir, *Talk of Many Things*, George recalls it was his parachute catching on a snag that saved him from blowing clear over the Buck Creek jump spot, and that kept him from sailing into the deep leeside canyon. He and the other jumpers spent a couple of nights on the fire before weather came in and knocked the fire out.

George told me how the jumpers demobed via helicopter from the Buck Creek Fire, and how he regretted that he never experienced a painstaking packout. I always laughed when we talked about this, and had to admit that as an Alaska Smokejumper, my packouts were limited to the times

I jumped out of the Great Basin or Redmond jump bases. (There is nowhere to pack out to in Alaska!)

Like so many challenges as a firefighter, I think packouts are things I endured in the moment and looked back on fondly, so I understand why George would long for that experience.

I learned over time that the experiences George and I had as jumpers, law students, and lawyers had many parallels. George and I both got our start working for the U.S. Forest Service in Oregon, and we both had our first fire experiences when we were called away from our regular duties to assist in fire operations.

George was acting as a lookout on the Wallowa National Forest in 1953 when he was dispatched to his first fire in Hells Canyon. On the Hells Canyon Fire, George saw jumpers for the first time as they deployed to assist in the suppression effort.

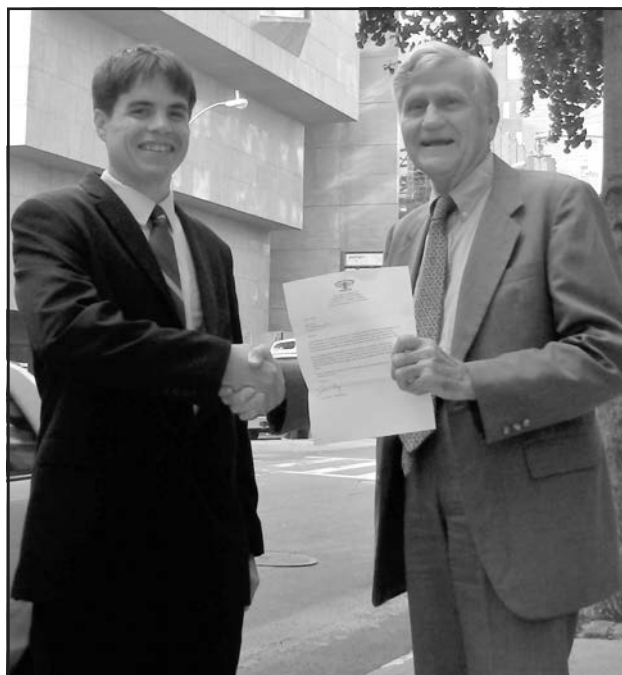
George would apply for and earn a position with MSO's class of 1954. The next year he would go to University of Virginia Law School, and then take a job at a firm in New York City, where he is a partner, and where he has worked for more than 60 years.

My first assignment for the Forest Service was toting around a chainsaw to clear trails on the Mount Hood National Forest. I was dispatched in 2000 as part of a 20-person crew to the Hash Rock Fire burning on the Ochoco National Forest, which was where I saw Hotshots working for the first time. I became a Rogue River Hotshot in the spring of 2003 and an Alaska Smokejumper in 2008.

I left Alaska in 2012, moved to New York City, graduated from Brooklyn Law School in 2015, and took my first legal job working in the Bronx as a public defender.

George and I also remember our first practice jumps well. George jokes in his book how he did not need to be pushed out of the door of the plane during that first jump. Neither did I.

George's parachute opened up in western Montana, surrounded by the Northern Rockies. My parachute opened up in the hills outside of Fairbanks, with the Alaska Range looming distantly to the south. Like George, one thing I remember from my first practice jump was the "total silence"



George Gowan (MSO-54) congratulates NSA Scholarship winner Ian Dooley (FBX-08) in 2013. (Courtesy George Gowan)

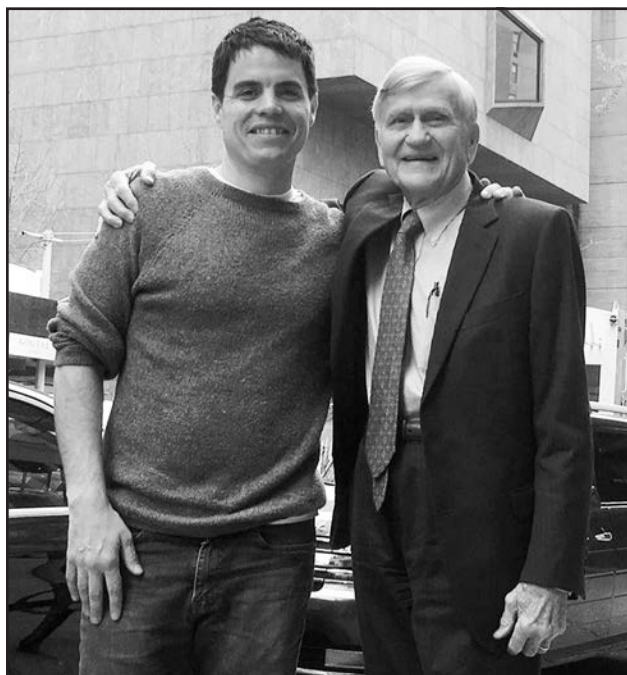
that surrounded me after my chute opened.

During my almost seven years in New York City, George and I had countless breakfasts at Three Guys, dinners at some of the finest restaurants in the city, and dinners at his Upper East Side apartment with his wife, Marcia, and my girlfriend Ellie.

When we went out to eat, George never let me pay. In fact, the only time I got to pay for a meal was when I sneaked my credit card to the waiter, and surreptitiously paid for our Italian dinner.

George and Marcia also had me and my former girlfriend out to their place in the East Hamptons, which was a whole other type of world. I remember how George told me that blue and white were the only colors allowed to be worn at the local country club, and how the turf on the tennis courts was real grass. I remember how Marcia drove us around and pointed out where Steven Spielberg's massive property was and mentioned how so many wealthy people had taken over the area since her father bought their beautiful home way back when.

I learned how George and Marcia traveled the world far and wide. They have hilarious stories about their hike into Kennecott Mine in Alaska, their whirlwind romance that began on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic, and their European



Ian Dooley and George Gowen in 2019 (Courtesy I. Dooley)

and Asian adventures. George even rode aboard the *Itasca* as it motored past the Arctic Circle and through the Northwest Passage.

I appreciated George telling me how we shared a wanderlust and compulsion to seek out adventure and challenge.

At our many meetings, I often brought George a book like *The Perfect Storm* or Robert Dallek's biography on John F. Kennedy. George, in turn, would sometimes bring me a book, but more often he brought me one or two of the latest editions of the NSA's Smokejumper magazine. As a longstanding member of the National Smokejumper Association, George volunteers his legal expertise to make sure the magazine and its managing partners are following the rules of the charter.

George also served on the board of NSA, and if you search for George's name and the word "Missoula" on Google, you will see how often he is mentioned in the magazine as a contributor, friend, and steward of smokejumper history and ethos.

George has been to countless smokejumper reunions, and will never forget the brains and eggs at the Oxford Café.

George always asks about my plans and where I want to go. I think he viewed my work as a public

defender as a kind of involuntary placement, even though this was a job I fought hard to get and believed in very much. George never hesitates to reach out to his friends in Alaska, or Maine, or wherever, when he thinks I might have a new friendship to gain, or a possible job opportunity.

I regretted not reaching out to his friend in Anchorage when I was there last year – fly fishing with **Doug Carroll** (FBX-94) kept me too busy on the river!

For me, George has been the finest of a bro that a bro can be. For the older jumpers and jumper spouses reading this, you may be rolling your eyes at my use of the word "bro." And before I became an Alaska Smokejumper, I would have rolled my eyes, too.

But I have learned that a bro is someone who can be trusted, who is reliable and predictable, and who will give his left shoe so that the two of you can walk down the road together, each barefooted on one foot. George Gowen, who jumped one season 65 years ago, is a bro for sure. His dedication to smokejumping and to smokejumpers is unimpeachable.

George was one of my first friends in New York City, and is among my longest standing friends from that crazy metropolis. When I got off the plane back in 2012, I had come almost directly from Fairbanks with my guitar, a box, and my packout bag filled to the brim. I did not really know anyone in New York, until I met George. From that point on, I knew I had a bro who had my back.

On April 22, 2019, some six years after we first met, George and I stood outside of Three Guys to have our photo taken for a second time, and to take stock of how things had changed or remained the same.

The manager who took our photo back in 2013 graciously agreed to take our photo again. He still called George "Mr. George," and he still asked me about smokejumping, and told me about his deer hunting exploits in upstate New York. The picture was taken in almost the exact same place as six years earlier, with New York taxis zooming by behind us on Madison Avenue, and the old Whitney Museum building leering in the background.

George Gowen – a bro for sure. 🐼

Celebrating Sixty Years of Alaska Smokejumping

by Murry A. Taylor (Redding '65)

Tuesday, June 11—Sitting at Seattle Tacoma International waiting for my flight to Fairbanks and watching people obsessing over their cell phones, I was trying to remain calm, trying not to be grumpy, trying to resist thoughts about how these phones are destroying brain cells and turning modern people into mindless dolts. Suddenly, I looked up and saw a smokejumper—no phone in sight. “I know that guy,” I mumbled to myself. He then turned and began walking away. I jumped up, “Hey, Brollier?” I called out, causing people to briefly gaze up from their phones, snake-eyed.

“Hey, Murry.” It was Jake Brollier (RDD-95), brother to Justin Brollier (NIFC-01). I jumped with both these fine lads back in the day and roomed with their Dad, Phil Brollier (BOI-71) in Fairbanks during the mid-70s. Suddenly, the world was a better place.

Hey, Murry, indeed. Jake was on his way to Alaska with nine other boosters from the Great Basin crew at NIFC. We talked and laughed—a fine moment. I remember him when he was a newborn, baldheaded, and barely bigger than a football. Soon the other nine showed up, all looking fit and handsome like only jumpers can. On the plane, I sat next to Joshua Domingues (NIFC-17). He’d read *Jumping Fire*, was sharp as a tack, and knew a lot about the history of his crew: the Arroyo Grande Hotshots, and that of the Los Prietos Hotshots, the Mark Linane, Stan Stewart, and Chris “Woody” Woods legacies, as well.

Waiting at baggage claim in Fairbanks was none other than Bob Quillin (FBX-71). Dapper and fit as ever, Bob had come to take me to his palatial estate on Chena Ridge—my home for the next six days. Wednesday, Bob and I went out to the base at Fort Wainwright. It’s hard to describe the feelings that brought on. I jumped in Alaska for 20 years and had left part of my heart there when I left in 2000. Seeing the jumpers again

(some of whom I knew when they were mere pups) working there, jumping fires, moving cargo, (showing off photos of their kids), and still having a fine time was special beyond words.

Let me make an apology here: I can’t imagine doing this piece without including a bunch of names. Some of these people some of you will know; others not so much. To those whose names do not appear here, I apologize; there were just so many. Also, unless I know these folks current positions, I’m going to leave them out.

Right off in the Ready Room, the fun began with handshakes and big smiles: Rob Yeager (RDD-92—Crew Sup.), Tom Kubichek (FBX-90—Operations), Al “Togie” Wiehl (FBX-91—Loft Foreman), Ty Humphrey (FBX-98), Gabe Lydic (FBX-99), Jeff “Itchy” McPhetridge (MYC-93), plus some others. After about an hour of that (renewed male bonding frenzy), we went over to the Fire Service Specialists office and had a long talk with John Lyons (FBX-90—Manager of FSS). John’s office walls are filled with crew photos going clear back to the days of the original AFS fire crews, first run by Quillin and Jay Peterson (ANC-71).

It became clear during our talk how much pride had been maintained and held dear in the organization over the years regarding both the Chena and the Midnight Sun Hotshots. What a legacy, and what a bunch of top people keeping that going.

At lunch in the chow hall, Quillin and I ate with Rod Dow (MYC-68), Evan Simmons (IDC-68), Tom Boatner (FBX-80), and a few others. What a blast, sitting there in that same room as I had done hundreds of times, eating and watching the young jumpers looking so strong, and the other crews excited by their lives fighting fire. It’s damned good to know that some of what we helped build back in the day is still alive and well in the spirits of these young firefighters.

That afternoon a few of us gathered on the deck at Pike's Landing for "just a couple of beers." Bob Quillin and I, plus Lee Gossett (RDD-57) and John Manley (CJ-62), enjoyed the afternoon shooting the bull about the old days when we were young and handsome and looked good with our shirts off. Really fun!

Thursday morning Bob and I went out to the Ken Kunkle Community Center on Goldstream Road to help Dow and Company put up some parachutes and get the place ready for Friday night. A huge thanks to Rod, Evan Simmons, and the Fairbanks locals who did so much to pull this whole thing off. Another epic run of old Bros were in attendance, bantering, laughing, and generally renewing our skills at picking on each other . . . and (brace yourself), "just a couple of beers." People there: Dow and Simmons, Chris Silks (FBX-91), Mike McMillan (FBX-96), Ken Coe (FBX-80), Lance Clouser (FBX-85), Murray Lawson (NCSB-73), Willy Lowden (NCSB-72), Ron Lund (FBX-64), Bob Mauck (FBX-79), and more.

That afternoon at Pike's was the first big coming together. It was one of those perfect Fairbanks summer afternoons with a big dome of blue sky, scattered clouds, and sun sparkling on the Chena River. Right off, there they were: our Band of Brothers laughing and carrying on in the way we always had—And yeah, you guessed it; "just a couple of beers." People there: All the ones at the Kunkel Center that morning plus George Steele (NCSB-72), Davis Perkins (NCSB-72), Frank Domingues (RDD-89), Mark Motes (RDD-86), Bert Mitman (RAC-70), Gary "Pop" Johnson (FBX-74), Dave Stephens (FBX-76), Paul Banister (FBX-91), Chris "Woody" Woods, George Battaglia (RAC-78), Jim "Andy" Anderson (MYC-74), Steve "Bubba" Baker (NCSB-88), Lynn "T-Hangar Lynn" Coe, Chris "Tuffy" Farinetti (FBX-79), John McColgan (FBX-89), Dave Witmer (FBX-92), Steve Nimore (RAC-69), and others.

What an extraordinary evening there, together, once more remembering and recalling all we enjoyed in the great State of Alaska: the C-rats, the lost fires, the bears, bleeping rats, the old T-Hangar, the Snoose Locker, the McGrath Vortex, the I-hear-you-walkin'-chair, the Golavin Bay Massacre, the all night beat at Unalakleet,

Big Mac's weigh-in, Don Bell and the Rollagons, "Chickenhawk," rookie initiations, Al Dutton and the Volpars, midnight sunsets, and mystical flights through clouds only known to the Gods—and us.

The next morning (Friday), we met at the base for the first official gathering. As Quillin parked his pickup in the parking lot, I noticed one thing that had changed for sure. These modern jumpers had really nice cars (mostly pickups), fancy ones, no dents, no taped tail lights. Back in my time, we had cars with famous names: The Trout, The Duck, White Trash, The Armadillo, and The Stallion.

Anyway, walking over onto the lawn, I began to see the Bros. The yard at the Shack had grown up nicely in the ten years since I was last up there at the 50-Year Celebration. Dow and Simmons and Company had hung up some chutes, which radiated bright orange and white in the morning sun. On the lawn someone had attempted to build a parachute hootch, one with which Quillin took immediate umbrage. "Acckk, that's the worst looking hootch I've ever . . . out on the Seward in '77. . . not a tree in a hundred . . ." I assured Bob that it was just for show, but that "disgraceful attempt at a jumper hootch" put him a cloudy mood almost until lunch. There were at least 70 people present. I'll not name those already mentioned, though most were there. Here are the ones (I think) I remember: Shawn McKenna (FBX-79), Gary Mclean (FBX-79), Richard Fort (FBX-80), Scott Lusk (FBX-81), Cindy Lusk (RAC-87), Bruce Nelson (FBX-81), Oded Shalom (FBX-95), Mike Silva (RDD-72), Bill Meadows (ANC-66), Bill Robertson (MSO-57), Chuck Kase (LGD-74), Charlie Brown (FBX-88), Chip Houde (FBX-88), Gene Bartell (MSO-67), Lynn Palatino (RDD-69), Dick Hughes (MSO-64), Bob Maloney (MYC-64), Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64), John Leclair (MYC-77), Jay Wattenbarger (FBX-92), and—like I've said before—a whole bunch more. To add to the excitement, the base was jumped-out, more boosters were on order, and it was "hot and dry out west."

From the base we hopped in rigs and headed east out around the golf course and across the Chena River to watch a practice jump. I rode in Mike Silva's pickup with Bob Mauck, and "Tuffy" Farinetti. Mike drove. They jumped two

eight-man loads. That was really good since, busy as they were, the base didn't have all that many parachutes in reserve. But that's another thing I've always loved about Alaska and the BLM. When we have reunions, they jump. No hemming and hawing. No bureaucratic handwringing, just have a couple practice jumps.

That afternoon was the first of the two big evenings at the Ken Kunkle Center. Again we had a perfect Fairbanks summer afternoon, golden light, scattered clouds, a few thunderheads and crepuscular rays in the west. Some people (not yet mentioned) that were there: Woody Salmon (FBX-73), Gary Baumgartner (FBX-88), Mike Bradley (FBX-95), Robert Walker (ANC-71), Victor Nicholas (FBX-69), John Culbertson (FBX-69), Mark Stevens (FBX-92), Ben Dobrovoly (FBX-04), Joe Don Morton (RDD-95), and Steve Theisen (FBX-86). Again it was "a couple of beers," some jump stories, really great food from the local Bros – caribou, moose, sheep, the usual faire up north.

Epic tales of the Grumman Goose, the Turkey Dougs, the All Night Pound on Norton Sound, Fire B-043, the Old Wainwright Fire Hall Standby Shack, midnight meals at the Air Force cafeteria in Galena, Old Leathersack, Troy Hodges' business card with all the Bros in front of the New Standby Shack, shooting moons of various shades of pale-ass white. The season of '77, '88, '91, '94, and 2000 were told to uproarious laughter and "This is no shit" levels of credibility. "Pops" Johnson and Steve Nemore, plus a few others, had some great slides to share; they brought on a whole lot of laughing and yelling mixed with scenes of great country and absolute wonder.

The next day (Saturday), people visited the base as they had Friday. Personally, I spent it at Quillin's trying to get well after staying up around the campfire at the community center with Johnny Culbertson and a bunch of late-niters—some just in off fires—until three that morning. By this time there was a lot more going on than "just a couple of beers."

That afternoon it was the Kunkle Center again with a lot of the same people. Some new ones were Tony Pastro (FBX-77), Rick Thompson (FBX-89), Doug Carroll (FBX-94), Matt Allen (FBX-95), Kip Shields (FBX-04), Randy Foland

(FBX-01), C.R. Holder (MSO-70), Tony Marchini (FBX-01), John Dibert (FBX-96), Billy Cramer (NIFC-90 – Base Manager), Brian Fitzsimmons (MSO-70). Mike "MacDaddy" McMillan took a great group photo and more slides were shown. Along about 11:00, a Big Flip was organized. By then I was too tired to join in, so ducked out the back with John Culbertson and headed home.

Two days later, I flew home. Waiting at the Fairbanks gate, I was joined by Willy Lowden and George Battaglia. Flying up through the clouds, I looked down at the green greatness of the state that had been such a rich and wonderful part of my working/jumping life. As you might imagine, this reunion was a time of times. So much good cheer and joy. We have much for which to be thankful. Most of what we've been able to accomplish as individuals was possible due to the community we built together: a community of trust, loyalty, a whole lot of adventure, and (perhaps most of all) a hell of a lot of fun. As I said at the beginning of this article, a part of my heart will always be in Alaska. Up there with the ones of the old days, those there now, and even the ones yet to come.

In that regard, I wrote this sometime in the mid-'90s:

Out There

Out there ... sailing below the peaks, above the
rivers and lakes ...

my spirit lives and belongs to the wind

Out there ... beyond the sunset, in spruce thickets
with newborn caribou and suckling wolf pups

... my spirit lives and belongs to the earth 🌲

National Smokejumper Reunion

**June 26–28, 2020
in Boise, Idaho**

Prepare to Prepare!



ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to **Dave Lancaster** (GAC-63), **Kris Kristofors** (RDD-64) and **Doug Beck** (CJ-70) who just became our latest Life Members.

KYW News Laruen Lipton (4/21/19):

Philadelphia celebrating a famous Philly tree ahead of Arbor Day—Right here in Philadelphia we have a very important tree growing with quite a history behind it.

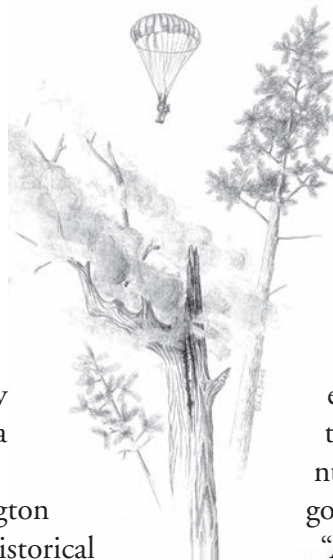
“The ‘Moon Tree’ is in Washington Square Park,” said Susan Edens, a historical landscape architect. It got there because of **Stuart Roosa** (CJ-53), who was an astronaut and before that was a smokejumper for the Forest Service. In 1971, Roosa was part of a mission to land on the moon and the Forest Service asked him to be part of an experiment to bring tree seeds into space to see if they would germinate once back on Earth.”

Edens says Roosa agreed to the Forest Service’s request and put 500 different kinds of seeds in his own kit while orbiting the moon.

“On his return, the seeds were successfully germinated, and the first of the bicentennial ‘Moon Trees’ was planted in Washington Square Park,” Edens explained. “The tree that is now in Washington Square is not the original tree. We have had several of them, as they don’t seem to thrive here. So what we’ve done is make a clone from that original tree.”

Del Hessel (MYC-59): “I have been coaching (Track & Field) several high school kids at various schools. After 11 years of refereeing major college conference meets, I retired last year.”

Associate member **Len Kosup**, who lives in Franklin, WV, sent along a newspaper article about a C-47 that has been restored and will fly in the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. You will be reading this long after the event. There will be a contingent of more than 30 C-47s that flew to



England to participate in this event. **Dave Wood** (RAC-66) after receiving the latest issue of *Smokeyjumper*: “Today was not a good day to get my online issue of the *Smokeyjumper* magazine for two reasons. First, the introductory article raising questions about fire management/suppression. Secondly, I decided to take a Sisters, Oregon, trailer trip. My intention was to drive to the top of McKenzie Pass, as I have done numerous times, and enjoy being among the gorgeous mountains and forests.

“Alarming, I found myself among miles of burned forests soon after starting up the Pass as well as a blocked road stopping my journey. I sat at the blocked road for a long time and questioned why.

“I remember when I was a 12-year smokejumper and spotter out of Redmond. I would take a DC-3 full of jumpers right behind a thunderstorm. At the first sign of a smoke, two jumpers were out and on it.

“I do understand the accumulation of fuels over the years, as well as other factors, but are the jumpers being allowed to be aggressive on fires or are they being cut back to save government?

“Some people have to do some serious thinking, and I too believe it is our right to question... as being a smokejumper was a passion.... and, it never leaves.”

Ernie Hartley (MSO-62): “Well, your latest article (July, 2019) on the 2017 Lolo Peak Fire made me mad. Mad, once again, at the incompetent management practices/mismanagement of USFS, apparently based on a lack of knowledge of both traditional fire suppression practices and of traditional Smokejumper capability.

“You point out that Smokejumpers have successfully jumped on other fires in the past into that same area and controlled fires while still small. You ask, does it sound like a “well-oiled machine” when a two to four-man fire is allowed

to burn to more than 53,000 acres at a cost of almost \$50,000,000. **AND, has management forgotten what the Smokejumpers are trained for?**

"Thanks for your article. I read it to my wife last night, and she asked, 'Does the *Smokejumper* magazine get mailed to USFS Administrative offices throughout the country?'"

"I don't know the NSA policy on distribution of the mag, but I do think staff and administrative personnel could learn a thing or two from those of us who have **put out** the nation's forest fires. Every issue of *Smokejumper* documents our members' personal experiences and how difficulties are confronted and brought under control. Keep up the good work!"

Sunil Ramalingam (NIFC-93) was just selected (July 2019) from a large field of applicants for the Nez Perce County Magistrate Judge position. He was an Assistant Clinical Professor at the Univ. of Idaho College of Law prior to his selection.

Sunil used his firefighting jobs to put himself through the University of California at Davis before going to law school. From the Davis Fire Crew, he went on to jump four seasons at NIFC. Good luck in your new job, Sunil!

John Hawkins (Assoc) retired from Cal Fire last December (2018) after 55 seasons on the job. I've never heard of anyone in wildfire being on the job as long as John. On behalf of the NSA membership, I want to congratulate John on his retirement and thank him for his many years of valuable service to the public and wildfire community.

In the 80s when I was heading up the Type II Crew Program for the Mendocino N.F., I had the opportunity to work closely with Cal Fire at times. I remember an Engine Capt. at a station here in Chico who was about as hardnosed as they come. My young firefighters were afraid to deal with him at times.

One morning I stopped by the station and Hector's demeanor was completely changed. He was actually social and semi-humble as he moved around his engine at lightning speed. I asked him what was going on today. A very nervous Hector replied, "John Hawkins is coming for an inspection today."

Parts of an email from John: "I retired from CAL FIRE on December 26, 2018, after working 55 fire seasons and 52 or so retirement years.

My last assignment was as the CAL FIRE Riverside Unit/Riverside County Fire Chief at Perris, CA. Was great job. Loved it. I miss the people and the emergencies but don't miss the drama and stress.

"Thank you very much for all you do and for the magazine. I just received the July 2019 edition and have briefly read a few of the articles. **Michael T. Rains** (Assoc) was my classmate and roommate at Humboldt State University during the mid to late 60s.

"Please keep charging. I love what you are doing and writing. Best wishes and, as always, please take care, be safe, have fun and live the FF dream."

Howard Chadwick (MYC-52): "Thanks for printing my story *Cuisine of an Idaho Fire Lookout*. A great article by you on the Lolo Peak Fire. The centerfold on Mann Gulch—**Bob Sallee** (MCO-49) was a classmate of mine at the Univ. of Idaho. He was the one who got me interested in smokejumping."

Cole Macpherson (MSO-55) made a significant donation to the Good Sam Fund in honor of a number of our members. I would like to list those people in this column and print Cole's letter: "This tribute is on behalf of some super people that it was my good fortune to know, like, respect and be thankful for their friendships. These guys gave more than they expected to receive. God bless their character—Jim Manion, Hans Trankle, Steve Clairmont, Chuck Sheley (his strength and devotion), Ed Henry, Jim Spence and John Mackinnon."

From **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63) (King 5 News-Sebastian Robertson, Laura Fattaruso): "Saturday marks 50 years since the historic Apollo 11 mission. But the missions that came before and after helped set foundation for the understanding of our universe.

"At the corner of Capitol Way and 14th Avenue in Olympia, just feet from the State house, you'll see a tree that looks just like any another. The Douglas fir tree was grown from a seed that visited the moon in the pocket of Apollo 14 astronaut Major **Stuart Roosa** (CJ-53) in 1971.

"The Apollo 14 mission was the third to successfully put men on the moon. Roosa, the pilot, was a former Forest Service smokejumper. This tree is just one of 100 believed to be alive around the country today." 🌲

Leadership Part I: Western Hardscrabble

by J. Jay Jones (Associate)

The Early Days

A good friend of mine, who had just received his squeaky-clean master's degree in Public Administration, was offered an appointment on the Siuslaw National Forest's Waldport District as an administrative officer. In what may have been a rescue attempt, to extract me from my family's influence and the curse of being a fourth-generation railroader, he facilitated my being hired as a firefighter way back in 1974.

Waldport was on the coast of Oregon and, although I had never actually met one, the Bull-of-the-Woods was a legend in the Pacific Northwest. Stories about them permeated the woods and surrounding settlements. Those unfamiliar with the term will do well to regard this illustrious officeholder as the lead negotiator in managing all the contracts pertaining to work in the woods.

This arbitrator was selected out of all the woods workers in the region by the liberal employment of fists, muscles, and other readily available means of hardscrabble persuasion. At the time of my hire, there was a natural animosity between government workers and private contractors; it raged in constant low-grade conflicts.

Shortly after arriving in Waldport, I witnessed a logger leave a bar briefly, come back in with his chainsaw, and start it up with every intention of giving a U.S. Forest Service employee a haircut.

The Waldport District fire management officer kept us busy with prescribed burning; we worked 12 or more hours every day of the week. We put in extensive hose lays in the predawn hours before burning and then pulled those same hose lays out after the sun went down.

Everyone was expected to use a chainsaw. We didn't get classroom training; we usually got a tailgate briefing with a few chilling remarks about being careless, and then were turned loose on the forest.

Felling trees at night was no big deal; it just took longer. When we had to build trail in dif-

ficult terrain, we'd tie a rope to a tree trunk, head down a 70-degree slope holding onto the rope with one hand, and build trail one-handed with a Pulaski in the other. Today, many people shake their heads at this kind of "do-whatever-it-takes" attitude, but that's just the way it was.

During my first year working forestry, I had no particular motivation at becoming a leader, but as fate would have it, one person after another failed in his assigned leadership role and I eventually ended up with the radio.

I acquired this leadership role by default and I knew it. I retained this status by having two rather minor virtues. I didn't initiate radio communications and I also wouldn't let anyone else use it. This qualified me as a de facto squad leader since I controlled the radio.

I may not have actively sought this role, but I learned some important lessons about leadership from using the radio, that technological totem of command. Firstly, leadership is a responsibility to others, not a right to lordship. If you go around throwing your authority in a subordinate's face willy-nilly, you'll undermine your own authority. Either the subordinate rebels or your supervisor seeks someone with more finesse.

I also discovered how important it is to learn how to say "no," mean it, and stick by your decision. If you keep changing your mind about the decisions you've laid down, your indecisiveness will open the door to gratuitous challenges from subordinates who have watched you buckle under duress. No one will take you seriously at that point. And that's just one of the many ways you can undermine your own authority.

Probably the most common motivation to seek leadership springs from having been under bad leadership. Even if you don't want to be a leader, you may decide that it's better to accept the role of leadership than to have some incompetent – who can't do the job effectively – bossing you around.

I'd had several years of firefighting experience in Oregon by the time I'd joined **Chuck Sheley's**

(CJ-59) Mendocino National Forest Type II firefighter Program in Chico, Calif. While local participation varied, Chico, Davis, Quincy, Oroville, Red Bluff, and Redding managed to field crews with varying degrees of success, sometimes with entire crews returning year after year.

Chico managed to field as many as a dozen crews some years. **Gordon Brazzi** (RDD-66), who supervised a Type 1A 20-person hand crew with the Mendocino National Forest for several years, drew heavily from a large pool of the firefighters who stayed with the program year after year.

During this time, Chuck supplemented our basic Guard School/Rookie School training with a squadleader training course given through a local junior college. This was valuable training for the Type II pickup crews, a big improvement over the previous hardscrabble school of training. For one thing, it gave a sense of legitimacy to privately, contracted firefighters by documenting firefighting experience, increasing our competency and professionalism, and it upped our self-confidence and morale.

Following that experience, I re-entered government service as a regular employee, alternating between the USFS and the Bureau of Land Management for many years. As always, training opened up opportunities for advancement. I can't emphasize that enough – no training, no advancement.

During one fire season, I was sent to Alaska for my first time, something I'd always wanted to do. I ended up on a Twin Otter, with a full load of other single resources, headed for a landing strip that seemed right out of the movie *Air America* with Mel Gibson.

We dropped onto a landing strip that ran uphill, crested the top of the knoll, went slightly airborne again, then dropped into a saddle, and finally rolled out atop a second knoll with a wide turnout.

As soon as I departed the Twin Otter, I was assigned to the helicopter deck. I spent several hours compiling passenger manifests, briefing hand crews, building cargo nets, and, in general, helping to organize an airlift for all the arriving resources on their way out to various wildfires that had broken out following a lightning bust of from

9,000 to 10,000 strikes.

At some point, they needed a helispot manager to go out with several crews and decided I should go with them. I ended up on an island in the middle of a swamp with nine native hand crews and a command team. smokejumper **Jack Firestone** (MYC-75) was in charge of the command team.

Jack immediately struck me as the kind of man who didn't have to be taught anything about command presence. He had me organize the crews into a work party to construct a helipad. Using 30-foot logs, we built a walkway from the island into the swamp and raised a crosshatched pad for medium-sized helicopters to set down on. Then the crews departed to the fire.

Meanwhile, I tied a rock to some parachute cord and threw it over the top of a tree. Then I hauled a Dahl antenna into its heights, hooked it up to my radio, and tied the radio to the end of the parachute cord so it would swing in the breeze. I started ordering up supplies from the base camp that was a bit more than 20 miles away. My routine two-hour requests for supply updates were routinely ignored.

When Jack got back to camp, I updated him on the situation. Jack was a bigger man than I was. As his eyes grew wide and his lips grew narrow, I thought about that Bull-of-the-Woods I had never met – until now, maybe – and I got nervous as I saw his temper rising.

Jack spotted my radio hanging in the breeze and his eyes flashed as he grabbed it. He called the supply base. His repertoire of cuss words ran the gambit as he cursed and cajoled the base camp. He demanded whoever was in charge and then he launched into a lengthy accusation that was followed by demands for immediate action.

When he was done, he threw the radio at the swamp. Arrested in flight by the parachute cord, the radio came swinging back and forth in the wind; it bestowed a Doppler effect upon the voice of the camp supply officer issuing from it.

"Jack! Now, Jack! Will you just calm down for one minute? I'm sure we can sort this out. Jack? You hear me, Jack? You still there, Jack? Jack? Did you hear me, Jack? Jack? Jack? You listening, Jack?"

Well, Jack had walked away and he wasn't listening. The supplies, however, started arriving

20 or 30 minutes later. Jack came down to the helipad and watched the supplies rolling in. There was a bit of a smug look of satisfaction on his face. That look convinced me that Jack hadn't actually been all that angry. His anger had just been a tool he had used to get the ball rolling, to accomplish his objectives, and it had worked. He glanced at me, and I nodded my own satisfaction with his

results with a grin.

Jack's method in leadership convinced me that there were times that it was better to do your duty than to play it safe with your career. As you might imagine, you don't hear people talking on the radio like that anymore. Consequently, the use of command presence, I am certain, has been greatly diminished – except perhaps by the untrained. 🔦

Leadership Part II

The Eastern School of Law

In Part I, I mentioned smokejumper **Jack Firestone** (MYC-75) as an exemplar of early hardscrabble leadership. Jack was actually a good-natured guy, once you got to know him, but he wasn't afraid to speak his mind. The Western hardscrabble style of leadership has clearly passed. Naturally, you'd want to know how these changes came about.

Spotlight on the Alaska Mafia

If you think this subsection title is from out of left field, then you're obviously paying attention. Try to bear with me. It might have some relevance.

You see, at one time I'd heard stories about that notorious organization called the Alaska Mafia. I can't say for sure, but I met several people who probably qualified for this dubious honor. One Alaskan – I believe his name was Jellavich – showed me his fire card, and it seemed to explain a lot. This gentleman had more qualifications on his fire card than anyone I had ever met.

He was a firefighter, a crew leader, a division supervisor, a helitack crewmember, a helitack supervisor, a helicopter manager, a helitorch manager, a helispot manager, a helibase Manager, a helicopter coordinator, a fixed-wing base manager, an air tanker base manager ... well, I hope you get the idea.

There was more. The fire card folded down

with an extended page with fine print on both sides. That's what made him Alaskan Mafia. He was someone who could take over anywhere he had to. I was at a helibase during the Yellowstone fires when I met him, and he wasn't in charge; that was someone else from Alaska.

Innumerable people from the lower 48 resented this cadre of super-qualified personnel. You might wonder how this state of affairs came about.

As I was informed, Alaska, at that time, had about 75 native crews for fire response in four designated fire zones. They designated 24 people to supervise these four zones; that's six people for each zone the size of Washington state. They were trained to assume command wherever they went and do whatever was required of them.

Well, this made sense in Alaska and was cost-efficient as well. It did, however, cause enormous friction whenever they came south. There was enough friction for resentment to fuel a political realignment in training and certification so they couldn't keep jumping out of their zone and poaching on the lower 48's fires.

Modern leadership responds to crisis

At this late date, I couldn't tell you who specifically engineered the change, but it spelled a change in the way every firefighter's credentials are established and certified. This was before task

books were established, but the policies that were developed about this time began the process of restricting the number of qualifications deemed allowable. Clearly, the idea of just generating a counterweight of equally super-qualified personnel didn't appeal to them.

Consequences followed. One of them is a high potential for denying advancement to merited personnel. Political interference by supervisors, or others further up the chain of command, can sometimes be specious, sufficient to drive experienced firefighters out of the industry – something I don't think we can afford.

There are innumerable opportunities, and various methods, to prevent advancement to people who have expressed – or want to express – valid criticisms of processes that occur in fieldwork. One result is that field personnel aren't as forthcoming in their after-action reviews if they anticipate retribution upon their careers.

The denial of training, and preventing or delaying advancement, is an obvious tactic in keeping thorny criticisms to a minimum. This adds a significant political element to careers in firefighting. As I said earlier: no training, no advancement.

Another consequence of the training and certification process is the embedding of liability into every document relating to fire suppression. A particular concern is the pressure on firefighters to retain professional liability insurance.

It should be obvious what a negative effect this has on morale. It doesn't just attack the chain of command's authority by pitting leadership against itself. Because once legal advocates become involved in investigations, the use of individual, self-serving justifications can work at cross-purposes to other members of the same Type I or Type II team. This is a political complication that makes the interpretation of unfolding events in an emergency situation far more complex.

The increasing demand for real-time documentation is concurrent with the retention of liability insurance; it intrudes upon a command team's fire suppression efforts. This goes beyond the scope of most tactical considerations, doesn't it?

How many incident commanders believe the increased demand for real-time documentation of their field operations provides them with tangible benefits? The incident commander is being micro-

managed from the office. This is an unnecessary distraction from the actual suppression of fire, but too few want to acknowledge this is a strategic misuse of tactical assets. All it does is insure that plenty of scapegoats will be available since those involved have been distracted by the need to drop their shovels and pick up their pens.

It's certainly not good to force incident commanders to choose between suppressing their fires and protecting themselves from potential litigation. This is, perhaps, a subtle indication that leadership has shifted its commitment away from current field operations to the future battles in the courtroom.

Combined with the previous unintended consequences, it creates a perception that leadership is not only divesting itself of responsibility for the actions of subordinates, but abandoning its government mandate to safeguard its *raison d'être*. If the government abandons its support of the people it has hired to do a job, it has surrendered its own mandate. If it abandons its mandate, only the private sector can take up the slack.

If you review the history of firefighting companies in early New York City, you'll come across stories of competing fire companies arguing in the street about whose responsibility a fire was – while the building burned down. Firefighting is inherently a government mandate – and government must support its agencies and, in particular, its personnel.

Clearly, if leadership abandons the support of department and bureau personnel, it will have a deleterious effect on unit morale. The resulting increase of anxiety could lead to an exodus of experienced professionals from the industry.

Leadership on this critical point begins at the very top. Fire officials, from the lowest levels to the very top, should recognize that part of maintaining our government mandate is the need for us to assume liability for our own personnel. To do otherwise is to surrender ourselves to defeat in detail as investigators attempt to divide leadership from itself through the threat of litigation. I think it is obvious that to abandon our support of agency personnel is a form of self-destruction.

I have too often seen budgets whittled from fire-suppression agencies because elected officials opted to short land-management agencies so as to

curry the support of some constituent.

Witness the 2003 Healthy Forest Initiative and the budgetary shortfalls. Elected representatives come and go. They seek temporary advantage to their own political existence and willingly sacrifice the nation's resources in furtherance of their own shortsighted agendas. It remains for fire industry officials to use the inertia of government to protect our priceless resources from the vagaries of pork-barrel politics and government buck-passers.

Some of these elected officials would do well to remember a plaque that used to hang in the Oval Office.

"THE BUCK STOPS HERE."

— *Harry S Truman*

Troubling as these matters are, something worse is that acquiring professional skills then becomes a secondary concern. This is certainly a sad state of affairs when limiting public-relations damage becomes more important than preventing that damage in the first place.

Training is a feedback loop; training efficiency improves only when people respond with honest criticism in after-action reviews. And that depends on the moral support of field personnel by those above them in the chain-of-command.

Something related to field operation efficiency concerns the centralization of functional tasks. This has increased – which means many people in support functions are disconnected from personal interaction with firefighting personnel. Support functions have often retreated to an only distant contact with field personnel. There is a sense that employees who are at risk in dangerous environments can't expect support personnel to share their urgency.

Bureaucratic inertia has made an expanding role for litigators and accountants, but this comes at the expense of tactical assets. Judging from a field personnel's perspective, it would seem that the drive to increase documentation and tracking it may be costing more than it is generating in benefits. This affects overall efficiency.

While the use of the task book is intended to standardize training, there can really be no guarantee of excellence, nor even competence. And intentions aren't what you have to live with.

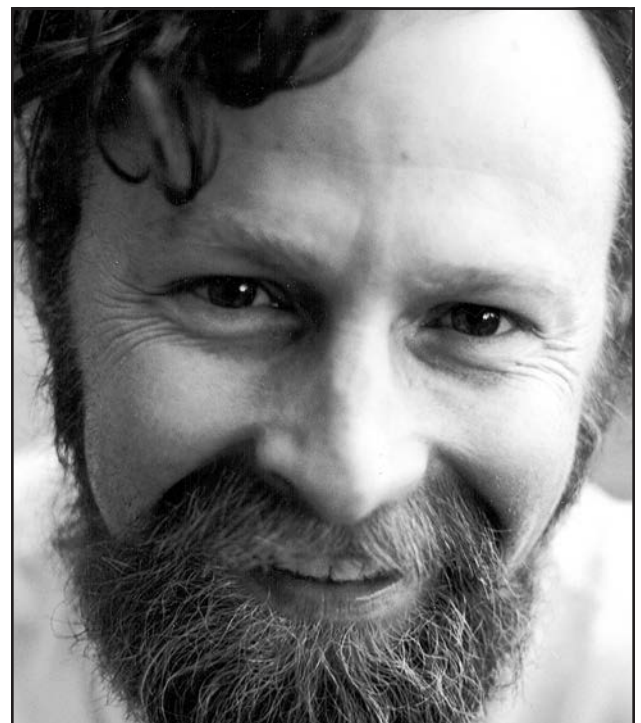
"THINGS THAT WILL DESTROY AMERICA ARE PROSPERITY AT ANY PRICE, PEACE AT ANY PRICE, SAFETY FIRST INSTEAD OF DUTY FIRST, AND LOVE OF SOFT LIVING AND THE GET-RICH QUICK THEORY OF LIFE."

— *Theodore Roosevelt*

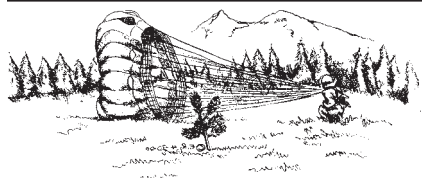
This is my way of saying that we could use a little resurgence in the Western Hardscrabble style of leadership with a commitment to duty first rather than relying on the Eastern School of Law mode of leadership that plays it safe. It is both its mode of thinking and its perception that I find disconcerting.

I'm certainly not advocating we abandon safety, but I believe that the firefighting mission must take precedence over the army of micromanaging lawyers and accountants who live in the office. We must somehow verify, simplify, and de-politicize the protocols and procedures of training and certification without relinquishing our tactical assets into the hands of a cadre of lawyers and adjudicators.

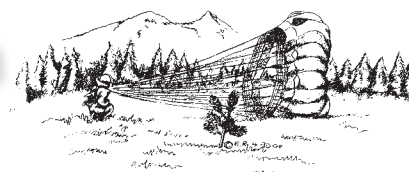
Hopefully, this would renew our commitment to our field personnel and give them cause to celebrate. And as most wildland firefighters can attest, this is not a profession committed to soft living or getting-rich-quick schemes. 🧑‍🔥



J. Jay Jones (Courtesy J. Jones)



Snapshots from the Past



by Jeff R. Davis
(Missoula '57)

How Bad Do Ya Wanna Jump?

I HAD MOODS when it came to jumping fires. Sometimes I'd just as soon fly back to Missoula and forget it; other times I wanted that jump so bad I could taste it.

I was in a want-it-so-bad-I-could-taste-it mood one time on the way to a fire in the Salmon River country. It was the summer of 1963. No jumper in his right mind wanted a fire in the Salmon River – I'd had a bellyfull of those gobblers – but this time was different.

It was nearly dark when our DC-3 arrived over the fire and the spotters finished making the streamer passes over the steep terrain, a thousand feet below, that passed for a jump spot. That alone would usually quash any desire to jump I had left.

Jumps into that kind of terrain with marginal light was asking for it. We were minutes away from our spotters cancel-

ling the drop because of darkness.

But I was one of several eager jumpers tearing into our fire packs to retrieve the flashlights we'd need to find our way to the fire. The first two jumpers stood hooked up in the door. I was number three, waiting my turn for the second two-man stick.

The aircraft flew over the let-out point, the spotter slapped the first jumper on the leg, and the two jumpers quickly disappeared out the door.

The static line anchor cable fixed inside the plane went right out the door with them.

We hooked to the small diagonal cable aft of the door. If it hadn't been for the stop-blocks fastened to each end of the cable, the jumpers' parachutes would not have opened. But the blocks functioned as they were supposed to, both chutes deployed, and the cable remained streaming out the door, attached only by the connection on the deck. It had broken loose from the upper connect-point on the overhead cable.

I thought that was the end of *this* jump. But before we'd gone clear around the pattern, the spotter had yanked the cable back inside, wrapped it back up through the attach-point on the overhead cable, cleared the slack, braced both feet, and stood holding the loose end of the cable in his bare hands.

"This thing's perfectly safe",

he announced. "I'll give you guys a choice. Anybody who wants to go home – I won't hold it against you. Who's first? How bad do ya wanna jump?"

I was first up to go anyway, so I shuffled up to the door, hooked up and stood ready. As I went out the door, I didn't give the unusual hookup a second thought. I had enough on my mind trying to see the jump spot in the growing twilight below me.

I trusted this spotter completely. If he said the cable was OK, that was good enough for me. I had better things to think about.

The jump went as advertised. My descent was as normal as any of them: a tumbling, twisting, half-inverted drop, rudely arrested by the thumping jerk of my canopy-first-deployed chute that made me see red and forced a grunt clear through the mesh mask of my helmet, then a crashing tumultuous landing on that 28-foot FS-2 canopy into the slammin' Salmon countryside. Business as usual.

I found out later that half of our 16-man load had opted to jump the fire. Eight jumpers flew back home and eight of us fought the fire alone.

I don't remember a thing about that fire. Only that I wanted it badly enough to be the first to respond to the cry, "How bad do ya wanna jump?"

Safe Zones vs Evacuation By Roads— There Is A Better Way

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

The Camp Fire that destroyed the town of Paradise, CA, on Nov. 8, 2018, illustrated the need to revamp the thinking regarding the evacuation of communities threatened by wildfire. People trying to leave in advance of the rapidly moving wildfire quickly overwhelmed the road system. Hundreds of vehicles were abandoned in the traffic jams. These vehicles further exasperated the situation by making the road system almost impossible to navigate.

In 2008 \$20 million in federal funding was allocated to improve the road out the upper end of Paradise. Regardless of the improvements, moving 20,000 on a road system is not the answer to protect people in the face of advancing wildfire.

Putting thousands of panicked people on the road systems is, in my opinion, a poor judgment call. The less road traffic—the better. Roads need to be kept open for first responders including fire, medical and law enforcement. In many communities, there are hospitals and assisted living facilities that will need these roads for evacuation.

As of this time there are 85 known fatalities as a result of the Camp Fire. Two of these fatalities still remain unidentified.

Early on **Dave Nelson** (MSO-57) brought up the idea of “safe zones” and “sheltering in place.” His thoughts are spot-on and should be at the top of the list for future evacuation planning by our wildfire agencies.

From Dave’s email: “A sad fact, regarding the number of fatalities, is that many probably could have been avoided by ‘sheltering in place.’ Many situations, scary to terrifying, are survivable, not necessarily in your house.

“I saw a number of areas where you could have probably weathered the flames especially if wet down or had a wet blanket – or better yet, in their vehicle. For instance, the high school survived and there was mention of the Paradise football team being in the playoffs, so they more than likely

have a football field.

“Like all problems, evacuation and safety zones present problems. It seems to me that safety zones were/are especially ignored. I know that I am only about 300 yards from the high school athletic fields and parking areas that could shelter a lot of people. Like Paradise, we are vulnerable and have as many egress problems as anyone – along with most, if not all, of the west side of the Sierra Front. To my knowledge the Nevada City-Grass Valley community does not have any safety zones identified.”

As Dave said, safe zones also present problems. Let’s explore ways to work out these problems and see if we can’t come up with a better way to save lives in the hundreds of communities that are in danger of wildfire.

First in the planning should be the establishment of a community grid system that takes into consideration population density, current road system capacity, and identifies areas that are already safe zones. The more dense the population, the more safe zones that are needed. Parking lots and athletic fields are already in existence in most communities.

After identifying existing safe zones in relation to the population, there will probably be a need to build more of these zones. However, they can be built at a fraction of the expense of improving a road system to meet the evacuation needs of a community. A safe zone does not have to be paved to work.

The biggest problem will be educating the people who live in the communities. The people in Paradise knew they lived in an area where wildfire appears on a regular basis. People are still telling the local newspapers, and about anyone who will listen, that they didn’t have the proper warning.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said evacuation orders were issued through 5,227 emails,

25,643 phone calls and 5,445 texts, in addition to social media and the use of loudspeakers. As cell-phone service went down, authorities went into neighborhoods with bullhorns to tell people to leave, and that saved some lives. There is a limit as to what can be done. This fire advanced 6.7 miles in the first hour.

On the other hand, I've heard from residents about many cases where the people heard, but ignored the warnings. There is a limit as to what the authorities can do. Somewhere along the line people have to step up and assume responsibility for their actions and how well they are prepared, or not prepared, for a wildfire.

If the safe zone concept is going to work, every individual in the community should have their safe zone identified ahead of time. Like the map you get in your hotel room that shows you your location and the evacuation route in the event of

fire, every resident should have that information on their refrigerator door.

The smart people will drive that route several times a year and know the time necessary make the trip. Just like we do in the school system—practice fire drills ahead of time and have designated assembly areas. If we can do it with the kids, responsible adults should be able to duplicate their efforts.

Safe zones will need management to make sure the parking is done in an efficient and organized manner. We do that at athletic and community events—it can be duplicated here. Go back to the WWII bomb shelters in London—volunteers handled the shelters and the block evacuations. The key is advanced planning and practice.

Communities need to add the safe zone concept to their wildfire evacuation plans. The next Camp Fire is coming soon. 🔥

Good Intentions And The Road To Hell

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

After reading the Alaska smokejumper piece in *National Geographic*, May 2019, I put up a post on Facebook. Chuck saw it and asked if I might expand it for the magazine. So, here goes.

It was great to see a few of the jumpers I knew back when they were just pups and I was the old dog growling at them. Hard to believe it's been 20 years. Also, great photos, especially from Mike McMillan (FBX-96) of the jumper on final into a spot with the pyrocumulus towering in the background.

Overall, I thought the piece was fine, but what hung me up and kept me (and several others who had read the article) awake nights was the story of Fire 320.

It was jumped, picked up by typical hard-hitting action, only to be demobed early (for reasons not clarified), then lost due to the replacement crew's fire tools not arriving in time. Then came the huge amount of money, effort, and exposure to risk that followed.

I haven't jumped in Alaska since 2000 and being pulled off fires too soon was a problem, even back then. In my novel *More or Less Crazy*, I have showcased the Minchumina Fire as an example of how jumpers commit to an all-night effort, use a clever containment strategy, work their butts off and, in what borders on a miracle, contain it by dawn. Later that morning, they are told they're being pulled off.

The Minchumina Fire is dramatized to enhance the book's main storyline and, in the end, the jumpers' effort is redeemed by one of the main characters in a gutsy decision to defy management. In real life this, is not the usual outcome.

I did some checking on Fire 320, and the difficulties with this fire, in fact, were not so much management screw-ups as they were a series of logistical glitches. It appears that a good faith effort was made to execute a swift and clean transition from jumpers to replacement crews.

However, as we have all seen, one small snag in

a complicated plan can have a domino effect causing unexpected delays.

Fire Operations Chief and ex-Alaska jumper **Dave Whitmer** (FBX-92) felt every bit as terrible about what went wrong and the ultimate fiasco as did the jumpers themselves.

This is from **Jeff “Itchy” McPhetridge** (MYC-93), Incident Commander on the fire:

“We jumped it and worked it hard with piss-pumps and a hose lay, and caught it at 33 acres around 3 a.m. We went down for some rest and were back on the line by 7 a.m. But there was a big need for jumpers back in town, so we were told that we were being replaced by a Type IV I.C. from Alaska Fire Service and a crew from Allakaket.

“We packed up and were taken by helicopter to Bettles. We got our gear ready thinking that we might make a load on the plane that was coming for us, but it ran into weather problems, didn’t show, so we spent the night there.

“The next day we were waiting for our ride when the Type IV I.C. guy showed up and wanted to see our fire. So the helicopter flew him back out there. When they returned, I asked the helicopter manager how the fire looked, and she showed me some photos. The fire had blown out on a section of line.

“That’s when we called Fairbanks and asked to helicopter back out there, and they said, ‘Go ahead.’ We tied into the slop over and had our hands full. That’s when I ordered another load of jumpers.

“We were doing pretty well, all in all, but then a wind shift hit us and we were getting flanked. We went back to protect our gear and regroup. Later on we found out that there was some delay in getting the fire gear – shirts and pants and stuff – from Fairbanks to Bettles, the kind of thing that can happen from time to time. Bottom line, I wish we’d never left the fire. I know the zone people feel the same.”

This was sent to me by former Galena Fire Management Officer **Ken Coe** (FBX-80):

“I honestly don’t remember the specifics, but I do remember feeling satisfied that the manager in charge had done his due diligence. This fire, roughly 250 air miles from the nearest base of operations, during a period of high activity, was both

at the extreme stretch of the logistical support system, and a low priority in the grand political scheme.

“Again, I can’t remember the details, but it was something like a chip light that grounded a helicopter, followed by unexpected bad weather that precluded flights – that kind of stuff.

“The specifics don’t really matter as there are a multitude of things that can, and do, go wrong in the Alaska fire environment that we all know, love, and to which we owe a great part of our best life experiences.”

Thanks to Jeff and Ken for that. Certainly when an organization commits to fighting thousands of wildfires in an area as logistically challenging as Alaska, things eventually go wrong. That’s a given.

All in all, though, what still bothers me is a memory from the old T-Hangar on Fort Wainwright, back in the mid-1970s. Someone tacked up a cartoon they had drawn of a Jumpship flying along, dropping jumpers, and a helicopter following with a giant butterfly net catching them before they hit the ground. Forty-four years later, the jumpers in the article refer to this practice as “Catch and Release.” Just sayin’.

One more thing in the article troubled me. The claim that “90 percent of all wildfires happen within a half-mile of a road” is seriously misleading. That may be true of ALL wildfires in the U.S. but it’s certainly not the case with the fires smokejumpers jump in the remote parts of Alaska, Canada, the Great Basin, and the wildernesses of the West.

Thus, in that context, the mention that some people say smokejumpers are no longer needed becomes absurd. A more vigorous use of jumpers could easily save hundreds of millions of dollars every year – money that could be used for much-needed prescribed fire programs.

All things considered, I’m glad *National Geographic* did the piece. It is high time jumpers were better seen and their value understood. Bottom line to this cautionary tale: Unless there’s a desperate need for jumpers on other fires, they (and other resources as well) should NEVER be pulled off a fire until the replacement crews are in place, tooled up, and fully briefed on their fire. 🙏



Alaska Smokejumpers

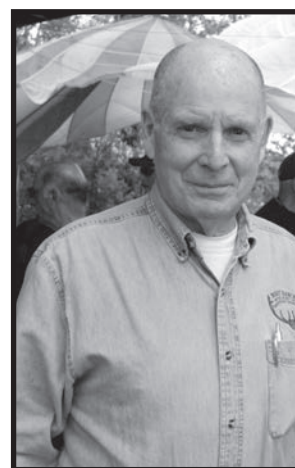
Photos Courtesy Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)



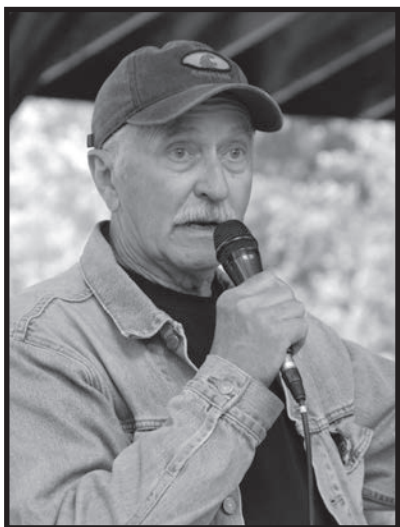
Bill Meadows (ANC-66)



Bob Moloney (MYC-64), & Tom Moe (MSO-63)



Lee Gossett (RDD-5)



Rod Dow (MYC-68)



Dick Hughes (MSO-64)



*Back: John Dibert (FBK-96), Chris Silk (FBK-88), Steve Baker (FBK-88)
Front: Evan Adsit (NIFC-09), Oded Shafer (NIFC-09)*



Jerry John (CJ-62), John Manley (CJ-62) & Joetta John (CJ-62)



Victor Nicholas (FBK-69)



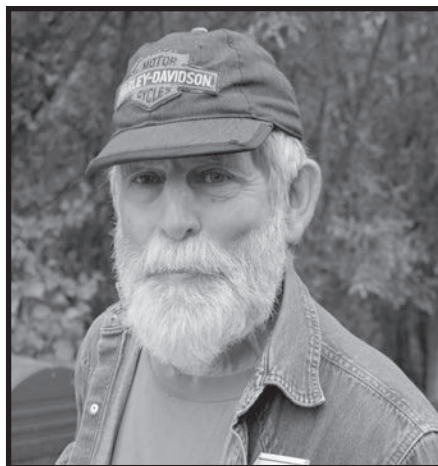
Layout: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

60th Anniversary 2019

J-64) & Mike McMillan (FBK-96)



57) & Tom Boatner (FBK-80)



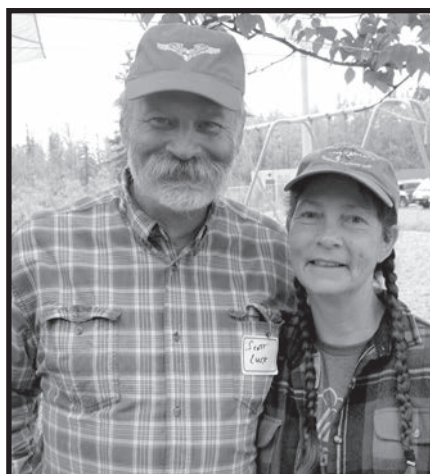
Willie Lowden (NCSB-72)



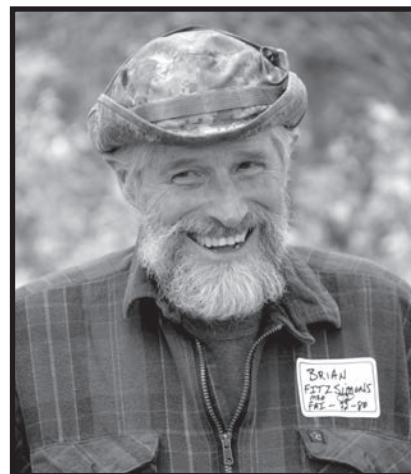
Kristen Fremont (FBK-08)



*s (FBK-91), Gary Baumgartner (FBK-88),
r (NCSB-88), Mike McMillan (FBK-66),
lom (FBK-95), & Eero Okkonen (NIFC-10)*



*Scott Lusk (FBK-81) &
Cynthia Lusk (RAC-87)*



Brian Fitzsimons (MS0-70)



Saturday Night Bar B Que



*Murray Taylor (RDD-65), Evan Simmons (IDC-68) &
Robert Walker (ANC-71)*

Forest Management: A Call to Action or Just a Catchphrase?

by Michael Rains (Associate)

Just because you may be one of the most powerful individuals in the free world, you still have to back your words with actions. Otherwise, those words become a catchphrase and most will see you as insincere and manipulative. On January 9, 2019, a colleague sent me a copy of a “tweet” from President Trump. It said: “...Billions of dollars are sent to the State of California for Forest fires that, with proper Forest Management, would never happen. Unless they get their act together, which is unlikely, I have ordered FEMA to send no more money. It is a disgraceful situation in lives & money!”

I felt compelled to write the President a letter the next day to express my thoughts. I began with two relevant points. That is, “forests” include more than just trees [for example, the chaparral *forests* of Southern California] and forest management takes time. I recall when a former Chief of the Forest Service said, “...Remember, we are in this for the long haul. Our work of caring for the land and serving people takes time.” Indeed, good forest management takes time and years of sustained actions before tangible rewards are seen on the landscape. Regarding the subject of the President’s “tweet,” these rewards equate to wildfires that are smaller, less intense and less destructive. Yes, it takes time, even when “...we have our act together.”

I concluded my letter by noting that I had worked alongside the women and men of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and assured the President they are first rate and certainly up to the task, despite his criticism. Given time *and* resources, America’s forests, including the forests of California, can become more resilient to disturbances so the linkage between environmental health and community stability can be more fully realized.

In his January 9th “tweet,” the President used the phrase “forest management.” This was the

second time I heard him use these words, or something similar. The first time was during a Cabinet Meeting [August 16, 2018], when the President spoke about the need to improve the *maintenance* of the forests.

The [former] Department of Interior Secretary, Ryan Zinke, stated that the current situation of uncontrollable wildfires is due to “gross mismanagement [of the forests] for decades.” Actually, what former Secretary Zinke said is not true. It is not *mismanagement*. It is little or no management.

In my correspondence to the President, I tried to explain that in California, and all the other states for that matter, there are mixed land ownerships – federal and non-federal. Part of “...getting our act together” is making sure everyone holds up their end of the bargain. For example, California has about 33 million acres of forestland – 57 percent of this is in federal ownership. Clearly, part of the wildfire problem in California is the lack of management of the federal forests. If we have any hope of effectively protecting people’s lives and their property, the forests on federal lands – the National Forests for example – must also be better managed. Again, it is not “mismanagement” of the forests, it is the “lack of management” that is the issue at hand. And, a dominating reason for this is a lack of funding over an extended period of time.

Moving ahead almost a year, President Trump on July 8, 2019, gave a 56-minute speech on “America’s Environmental Leadership.” About 2 minutes of the speech was devoted to “forest management and fires.” The following is the text that highlights these 2 minutes:

- In December, I signed a historic executive



Michael Rains

order promoting much more active forest management to prevent catastrophic wildfires like those that recently devastated California and Oregon. (Applause.)

- I went to the fires in California, and I said, “It’s also management.” It’s a lot of things happening, but it’s management. You can’t have dirty floors. You can’t have 20 years of leaves and fallen trees. After the first 17 months, they say the tree is like a piece of tinder. You have to be very careful. So, you can’t have that. That’s why you have so many fires.
- And I will say this: Spoke with the Governor of California, spoke with many people, and the process of cleaning is now really taking precedent. It—a lot of people are looking at forest management. It’s a word that people didn’t understand last year. Now they’re getting it. And you don’t have to have any forest fires. It’s interesting.
- I spoke to certain countries, and they said, “Sir, we’re a forest nation.” I never thought of a country—well-known countries: “We’re a forest nation.” I never heard of the term “forest nation.” They live in forests and they don’t have problems.
- One was telling me that his trees are much more susceptible to fire than what they have in California, but they don’t have fires because they manage, they clean, they do what you have to do. There’s not so much to burn. And we’re going to start doing that. And it’s called, remember, “management.” It’s called “forest management.” So, it’s a very important term.

Yes, forest management *is* indeed very important, both as a “term” *and* a set of actions. Over the past three decades on public lands, especially—due in part to a shifting of resources from management work to fire suppression—there has been a significant lack of forest management resulting in fires that are now larger and more intense than ever before. While the phrase “forest management” has surfaced again in President Trump’s vernacular, it seems to be just a catchphrase. So, what does “forest management” really mean?

I decided to go to the current website of the United States Forest Service. They should know, right? After all, with a direct and indirect role in the stewardship of about 80 percent of America’s 885 million acres of forestlands, the Forest Service is the “big dog” when it comes to forest management in our country.

Their definition says, “...forest management focuses on managing vegetation, restoring ecosystems, reducing hazards and maintaining forest health.” The website concludes that vegetation management activities, including timber harvesting, thinning, pruning and prescribed fire, are fundamental to the management of trees, forests and forest ecosystems.

The President states that good forest management helps maintain the forests and keeps the “forest floor cleared of leaves and fallen trees.” I want to give the President some credit for at least saying that forest management is important, especially if we want to keep wildfires from being so destructive. But to simply *say*, is not to be. So, I keep asking this *Driving Question*: What is really behind the President’s new vernacular, “you do not have to have any forest fires” [if the forests are managed or maintained]? So far, unfortunately, it seems not much; nice prose, little action.

For example, in 2018, under the leadership of Bruce Courtright, the National Wildfire Institute [NWI] drafted an Executive Order [EO]. It was hoped this draft EO would be used as a guide for the Administration. In part, this draft EO called for convening a “Commission on the Stewardship of America’s Forests.” The Commission would help tell a cohesive story, gather facts, and find common ground to address the catastrophic wildfire situation facing America, including the lack of forest management and the negative forces of a changing climate on people’s lives, their property and their communities.

Unfortunately, what resulted instead was an EO signed on December 21, 2018, by President Trump entitled “Promoting Active Management of America’s Forests, Rangelands, and other Federal Lands to Improve Conditions and Reduce Wildfire Risk.” As you may have noted in his 56-minute speech on the environment, the President termed his EO, “historic.” With all the respect I can muster, this EO was and remains a

joke. It includes no real actions and no funding; nothing except rhetoric and the notion, I guess, that an EO was signed so therefore forest management to address the risk of wildfires must be a priority. What a profound opportunity lost.

Recently, I was reviewing the Forest Service budget. I listed the primary accounts that I think best contribute to "...aggressive forest management to ensure effective fire management." In 2019, \$2.1 billion is available; about the same amount as 2018. The 2020 proposed budget for the same forest management accounts is about \$2 billion or a proposed reduction of about \$100 million [the actual reduction with the accounts I used is -\$90,582,000]. For fire, the 2019 budget is about \$3 billion. The 2020 proposal is \$4.6 billion [including the full "fire fix" that is supposed to begin in 2020]. That equates to a possible increase for fire of about \$1.6 billion [again, assuming the full "fire fix" funding is used].

So, the priorities for the 2020 President's Proposed Budget say, "...reduce forest management and increase fire suppression." THIS IS EXACTLY OPPOSITE OF WHAT IS NEEDED. The message that "aggressive forest management will ensure effective fire management" is clearly not getting through.

Again, notice the magnitude of the possible increase for fire – up to \$1.6 billion. Imagine the tremendous positive results on the land if there could be the following priority: maintain fire at the 2019 level and increase forest management by +\$1.6 billion. I am sticking with my earlier funding level of +\$2.2 billion for at least 5-7 years [published in the January 2019 issue of "Smoke-jumper"], but a +\$1.6 billion increase for forest management actions for the Forest Service would be a tremendous beginning. At least this would stay within what Congress has already committed to in terms of their bottom-line Appropriations level.

It has become apparent to me that the management of America's forests is not a real priority for this Administration [despite what the President says] or the current Congress—which suggests it is not a priority to us, the American people. And, that's a shame.

Part of the reason is there is not a cohesive story that people can gravitate to and understand.

Forest industry says one thing and scientists say another. Citizenry [people like you and me] say something else, and government agencies are content to conclude another direction. If I say, for example, we need +\$2.2 billion per year for the Forest Service for the next 5-7 years, the USDA will say the Forest Service already has too much money.

What's missing are leaders within the Administration and Congress that should have the ability and willingness to state, "...the lack of forest management in America is *the* natural resource conservation issue of our time. People's lives, their property, and their communities are being wiped away by catastrophic wildfires. It does not have to be this way. We must do something about this now."

That's the first step. Conclude that the lack of forest management is a significant problem. Get the facts lined up, shape a vision, then advance the vision. Pretty basic stuff. But when things are not a priority, they get shoved aside. Words become catchphrases. That is what's happening now with forest management in America. The 2019 fire season will probably be worse than 2018, which was worse than 2017...and so it goes. Nothing changes.

So, what to do? Becoming angry by careless remarks from the current President about raking leaves from the forest floor to eliminate fires gets us nowhere. His words about the need for forest management are empty. The facts support this conclusion. However, somehow we need a *Call to Action* to change America's forests with the primary goal to reduce the size and intensity of wildfires.

- A Commission to lead the way and convey a cohesive story that finds common ground.
- Additional funding—+\$2.2 billion annually for the Forest Service alone—until gains in forest resiliency can be achieved, fire suppression costs decline, and savings are shifted back into forest management actions.

We are long past the time for insincere, manipulative catchphrases. It is time for sustained commitment and actions on the land if we really do care about people's lives, their homes, and their communities. Now is the time. 🙏



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

I'M GETTING SOME great feedback from the July issue article, "The 2017 Lolo Peak Fire—Didn't Have To Happen." Even though the article was written two years after the event, it took me that much time to put it together. The biggest reason was that getting accurate information from the USFS is impossible. Do not look for any bit of truth in their press releases.

Reading the USFS Learning Review and Narrative, we were told: "Due to the remote location of the fire—steep, rugged terrain, the decision to go indirect was made. Higher priority fires required all available air resources leaving the Lolo Peak Fire unstaffed for the first two days."

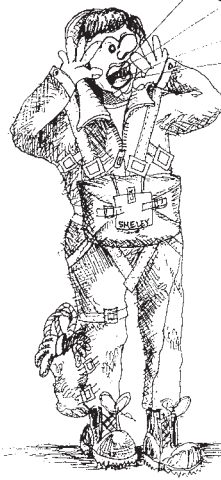
Now we know that there were jumpers available from Missoula—more jumpers from other bases. Does the Forest

Service know the capabilities of the current smoke-jumper aircraft? Absolutely not! Within a few hours, jumpers from other states can man fires miles from their home bases.

Now, this brings up another question. Is the USFS priming smokejumpers for another mission? We used to do initial attack, and our goal was to get to the fire within the shortest amount of time. With the new attitude, it seems like jumpers are being used selectively on fires. Is this arrow in the firefighting quiver being dulled?

All of this really brings us to the bottom line—do the Forest Service and other organizations really want to put out fires? Look at the amount of money that is spent on wildfire each year—close to four BILLION dollars. Wildfire is a big industry. There are the contractors for meals, showers, portable restrooms, laundries, garbage, air tankers, rehab, and things we do not know about.

My wife and I drove I-5 north several times in the past few weeks. The Carr Fire destroyed 230,000 acres in the Redding area in 2018. As we



drove along I-5, we could see work projects going on almost a year later. Trees are being cut, drainages were being built to prevent erosion. There are major work crews along the highway each day. Who pays for this? The erosion control drainages were beautifully landscaped. The rocks were all bright and shiny and the same size. It looked like a Japanese rock garden.

What the heck happened to water bars? Can't we just use dirty rocks dug out of the ground? We are all paying for this scam. The cost for the fire is probably a fraction of what it is hitting you in the pocket-book.

The Carr Fire cost \$158,000,000 in suppression costs. What you, as a taxpayer, do not know is the amount of money spent *after* the fire. It has to be astronomical. Will someone reveal the cost to the taxpayers of the work done after the fires? Not a chance—too much money involved.

The Camp Fire wiped the town of Paradise off the map. There was nothing that Cal Fire or any other organization could have done to stop that monster. It was the perfect storm.

By the time you read this, it will almost be a year from the start of the Camp Fire. The effect on our community

in Chico has been enormous. Add 20 percent in numbers to your community. That amount of people presents problems that require a lot of time to solve.

Back to the post-fire expenses—after the fire, the lot on which your home in Paradise was located is required to have all “hazardous waste” removed. If I read the rules correctly, that means the remains, *plus* a foot of soil, have to be removed. Here we go.

Yesterday, my wife and I drove a 30-mile section of highway south of the Camp Fire. During that 30-mile drive, we passed 114 monster trucks going the opposite way with Paradise “waste.” Since this is an ongoing process, there has to be about the same number going back to Paradise for their second load of the day.

Going north last week, we passed 97 of these trucks coming back from their first run of the day. Let’s stop and think about this. There are probably 400 of these 10-12-wheeler monster trucks making at least two runs a day from Paradise going north and south. These guys are making big money. Before long, the ex-community of Paradise at 2,000 feet should be below sea level. The money spent fighting wildfire is just a fraction of the amount spent down the line. You are paying for all this!

Wouldn’t it be better to do quick initial attack as in the “old days” and keep fires in the \$20,000 range? Why are

jumpers not being used?

I was just talking to **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65). He is in contact with the Oregon Fire Council. They actually want to stop the wildfires burning in our National Forests. What is the major block? Answer—the USFS.

Since the closing of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base in 1981, there has been almost a BILLION dollars spent on wildfire in the areas covered

the USFS? Answer—there is none!

Are we going to make a change? Our voice is small as the general public takes as gospel the word of the Forest Service. No resources available, too rough and steep for personnel, situation involved risk.

We need new leadership in the Forest Service. Risk is part of any job. If we want to become “risk adverse,” we

Wildfire is a big industry. There are the contractors for meals, showers, portable restrooms, laundries, garbage, air tankers, rehab, and things we do not know about.

by the Cave Junction Smokejumpers. Wildfire is an emergency to the public and money spent is something that the tax payers seem to be OK with.

Is there anyone in the Forest Service that is concerned with the amount of money spent annually on wildfire? I can’t find that voice. You are getting billed annually for the lack of Initial Attack on wildfires. I know we are in a different climate situation, but that situation demands a quicker and larger response than we had years ago. Situation changes—change the response. It is time that you as taxpayers demand more accountability.

The Lolo Peak Fire could have been manned by smokejumpers. After all the BS that was given to the public, we know it could have been jumped in its early stages. Where is the accountability of

need to stop training military, police, fire and other services. Teachers in public schools are at risk. Thank God for the teacher who rushed the school shooter and did not hide, as he became at risk in charging the shooter.

Risk adverse is an excuse for not doing the job. I trained over 3,000 rookie firefighters. I always told them that fighting wildland fire is a dangerous job. You could get hurt—killed. If that bothered you, put in your application at McDonald’s.

I really don’t see a lot of the public standing up and demanding that these fires be attacked aggressively, kept small, smoke layer reduced, money saved, watershed saved, businesses affected by three months of smoke saved, and more and more. Raise your voice! 🗣️



RECORDING SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY



*The following are excerpts from newspaper and magazine articles from **Dave Burt's** (MSO-47) scrapbook saved and forwarded to me by **Karl Brauneis** (MSO-77). Not all sources were listed and will have to remain unknown. (Ed.)*

Art Cochran (MSO-42), former dust-bowl farmer and smokejumper squadleader speaks for them: "Any man who jumps from the training tower will jump from a plane."

Cochran jumped on the High Lake Fire in 1942, which still stands as an example of smoke-jumping at its toughest. "The fire broke out on the roughest part of the Bitterroot range. Three sides of sheer rock walls dropped off to a deep mountain lake. The six of us who jumped had to land on a small bluff as yet not burning. A super job of spotting by **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40) put us all down where we wanted to be. After the fire was out, we had to build a raft and float our equipment down the lake to a spot where a pack train could pick it up. Even with each man packing a load on his back, the packer lost four horses getting out of there. Lewis and Clark never had it any tougher."

Colliers December 1944

Earl Cooley (MSO-40) keeps the trainees bug-eyed with tales of his experiences. "There is one jump I'll never forget. I came in over some tall timber when I hit the top of a tree smack across my chest. The chute collapsed right then and I started rolling down through the branches. The chute opened for a moment and caught on a branch. Only the branch broke and the chute collapsed a second time.

By this time I'd run out of branches and was falling free when the last limb snagged the chute and I pulled up with my feet just off the ground."

"How high up were you when you started Earl?" asked one of the boys.

"About a hundred and fifteen feet."

"Well, what happens when you run out of

branches?"

"That's when you want to be sure to put your hand in your pocket," Earl said solemnly. "Why?"

"Because that's when you'll want to reach in for that card Mother said to send her if anything happened."

Colliers December 1944

The comparative speed of a ground crew and a parachuting squad in reaching a fire was shown during a recent blaze in Yellowstone N.P. An alarm went simultaneously to the fireguard crew stationed in the park and the smokejumpers about 220 miles away.

Thirty minutes later, a Trimotor with six jumpers took off. **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) dropped the men on an 8,000-foot plateau into heavy timber with no open spots. The smokejumpers had the blaze under control when the ground crew arrived.

Colliers December 1944

Kalispell's two young men who lost their lives near Helena were both natives of this city—**Bill Hellman** (MSO-46) 24, a former student of Montana State University, Missoula, and **Henry J. Thol Jr.** (MSO-49), 19, who intended to enter the University this fall.

Bill Hellman volunteered in the Navy at the age of 17 when he was a student at Flathead High School. After two years in the Navy he transferred to the Marines, serving in the Pacific.

Two weeks ago he took part in a parachute jump near the White House in Washington.

Henry Thol observed his 19th birthday April 17. He graduated from Flathead High School in 1948. He was on his third year of summer service and in June took smokejumper training at the Nine Mile station near Missoula.

Newspaper article August 1949—paper not identified

At Meriwether Landing, deep in the Missouri River canyon, I heard:

"Did they find those guys?"

"Are they all dead?"

"How many got out?"

Up Meriwether canyon more than 120 men were strung out along a winding trail that takes the wind out of an experienced hiker.

"This is the damndest fire I ever saw," one man said. "You just can't fight it. It's too hard to get at."

Two worn out smokejumpers escaped the wind-whipped flames on Mann Gulch where 10 of their buddies perished. One was **Walt Rumsey** (MSO-49). It was Rumsey who told me how 15 men parachuted into the almost inaccessible gulch.

Rumsey said: "We all landed OK, but were downwind—the fire was coming at us.

"We started our plan of attack. We were going up the other side of the gulch and get on top of it, but it was too hazardous.

"Then we went back on the north side of the gulch and the wind blew the fire across and fouled up the detail.

"Man, it was hot. We tried to keep together as we went up a slope. But the men began to string out, dropping tools and equipment.

"There was fire all around. (Bob) **Salée** (MSO-49) and I stayed in a pile of rocks and the fire burned all around us but we weren't burned.

"When the smoke died down, we started looking for the other fellows. We found one burned bad. He was **Bill Hellman** (MSO-46).

"Then we saw our foreman, Wag Dodge (MSO-41), who saved himself by building a fire in the grass in front of himself and the little fire kept the big one from getting him.

"He built the fire so the rest of us could get in there. But the others just didn't understand, I guess. If they had gotten in there, they would be alright now."

*Newspaper article by Ed Johnson August 1949—
paper not identified*

Dodge Describes Tragedy of Fire Fighters

R. Wagner Dodge (MSO-41), foreman of the ill-fated smokejumper crew which lost 12 of its 15 members on the 5,000-acre Gates of the Mountains Fire, told his story Saturday.

The veteran of 16 years of fire fighting and seven years of jumping described the tragic mis-

sion which began at 3:30 p.m. a week ago Friday. That was the hour the 15 men jumped onto the primitive mountain area northeast of Helena. Dodge said the crew had set up a temporary camp near the blaze by 4:55. He went on:

"I heard someone hollering at the fire at 5:00 p.m. I started to the fire and told the squadleader to pick up food and water and follow me with the crew. At 5:15 I contacted **Jim Harrison** (MSO-47) (fire prevention guard) and told him I believed the fire was not safe to attack at that point. We returned and met the crew about one-fourth mile down from the fire.

"I told them to cross back to the north side of Mann Gulch and go around the side of the mountain on the level toward the mouth of the gulch on the river to observe the fire from that side.

"Harrison and I returned to the camp area to get supplies and caught up with the crew about 5:40. After traveling about five minutes toward the river, we discovered the fire had jumped across Mann Gulch below and we couldn't continue in that direction. The fire at that time (5:45) had spread and cut off our escape route to the river.

"We turned around and I had them go back to a safer area with less timber and inflammable material. After traveling about 1,000 feet, I had the men drop all their heavy equipment. After traveling another 1,000 feet, I saw our chance of getting to the top of the ridge was poor. Fire was behind us and in front of us and on the other side of the ridge.

"After entering an area where the ground cover was comparatively light, I told the crew we would burn off an area and get inside the burned space in order to survive. Using one match, I set fire to a clump of grass and within seconds an area about 100 feet square had burned.

"At that time all the men were out of the scattered timber. After two or three minutes I told the men to run through the light fire on the edges of the burned area and get into the burned area. At that time eight men were beside me and the rest were within 100 feet. I am quite sure they heard me.

"I heard some of them say they thought they could reach the top of the ridge and they all started up the side of the mountain. They started off walking and did not seem frantic. The nearest

point of the fire at this time was about 10 yards below and behind us.

"After the men left me, I walked into the burned-off area and continued calling at the top of my voice for the men to come back and join me there. This was about 5:55.

"When the main fire reached my area, I lay down on the ground on my side and poured water from my canteen on my handkerchief. I put the wet handkerchief over my mouth and nose and held my face as close to the ground as I could while the flames flashed over me. There were three extreme gusts of hot air that almost lifted me off the ground as the fire passed over. It seemed like a vacuum. It was running in the grass and also flashing through the tree tops.

"By 6:10 the fire has passed by and I stood up. My clothing had not been scorched and I had no burns.

"I heard someone holler east of me and I found **Joe Sylvia** (MSO-48) about 100 feet below and 150 east of me. He had survived the fire but was severely injured. After making him as comfortable as possible in the shelter of a large rock to protect him from burning snags and rolling rocks, I started looking for the rest of the crew who had tried to make it to the ridge.

"After reaching the top of the ridge and calling out I got no answer. On the other side of the ridge I met Bob Sallee, and he said he had **Bill Hellman** (MSO-46) down below on a rock. He said Hellman was badly injured. He said **Walt Rumsey** (MSO-49) was OK and was staying with Bill.

"We looked around for other survivors but got no answer to our calls.

Dodge's story came at the end of a week-long investigation of the tragedy by national and regional officials. The officials have sent an 82-page report to Forest Service headquarters in Washington D.C.

Regional Forester P.D. Hanson said, "The jumping operation was of a routine nature and was successfully executed. The men landed about a half mile from the fire in an area selected by experienced men as being safe. The jumpers then proceeded according to plan for about two hours before critical conditions prevailed.

"The foreman used excellent judgment in seeking refuge on the grass-covered hillside which

offered the quickest chance for safety from the on-rushing fire that came upon them unexpectedly."

Hanson expressed only the highest of praise for the heroic men. "There was no indication of carelessness or panic on the part of anyone," he said. "There occur times when men's lives are at stake. They alone must make the decision as to the course of action they select."

Newspaper article from Dave Burt's (MSO-47) scrapbook—no identification of the newspaper.

Memorandum For Smokejumpers— Group of 1949

P.D. Hanson, Regional Forester By C.S. Cracken (Acting)

An insufficient number of copies of the Board of Review were received from our Washington office to enable us to furnish each smokejumper with a copy.

No doubt you have been and will continue to be asked numerous questions about the Mann Gulch disaster. I believe that most of you were briefed regarding this tragedy before leaving this fall. However, to fill in any gaps in your information, the attached digest of the Report of the Board of Review is to be sent to you. (12/5/49)

Resume Of Report By Board Of Review— Mann Gulch Fire

"Intensified research in fire behavior, to furnish more dependable bases for anticipating fire 'blow-ups,' and intensified training of men to meet such emergencies are recommended in the report of a special board that investigated the disastrous Mann Gulch fire last August north of Helena," announced P.D. Hanson, region No. 1 forester, October 31, 1949.

"The Mann Gulch blaze, one of the worst forest fire tragedies in recent years, cost the lives of 13 fire fighters," said Mr. Hanson. It burned over approximately 5,000 acres of timber and watershed land before it was brought under control.

The board of review found no evidence that those responsible for the action of the fire fighting crew disregarded elements of risk which they are expected to consider.

Although recognizing that training of smoke jumpers and other regular Forest Service fire suppression personnel has included instructions on how to recognize dangerous fire fighting condi-

tions and the importance of following leaders in emergencies, the board recommended that even greater training be given in fire fighter training to both these factors.

The board found that the character of the country and the location and behavior of the Mann Gulch Fire at the time the smoke jumpers landed presented no indications of hazards beyond those often encountered by fire suppression forces. The sudden explosive runs of the fire across the lower end of Mann Gulch could not reasonably have been expected.

The board of review met in Missoula under the chairmanship of C.M. Granger, assistant chief, Forest Service. Other members were H.D. Cochran, chief of Forest Service personnel management; Jay H. Price, regional forester; Lawrence K. Mays, assistant regional forester, and J. Malcolm Loring, supervisor, Chelan N.F. Technical advisers were C.A. Gustafson, chief, division of fire control and Francis Lufkin smoke jumper foreman, Chelan N.F.

The board made a study of the fire area from the air and on the ground, following which hearings were conducted in Missoula for several days. Eighteen witnesses were heard, including all of those who had responsible parts in the fire control and rescue operations at the Mann Gulch Fire. Relatives of the deceased fire fighters living nearby were invited to appear before the board if they wished to do so. Henry Thol, father of Henry J. Thol Jr., who died in the fire, appeared before the board.

According to the board's findings, the fire was discovered shortly after noon on August 5, 1949, in Mann gulch, about 20 miles north of Helena in one of the roughest areas east of the continental divide. Because of the rough topography and inaccessibility, Supervisor Arthur D. Moir and Ranger J. Robert Jansson requested a crew of smoke jumpers to be delivered to the fire by air. A ground crew of 20 local fire fighters also was dispatched to the fire on foot.

The smokejumper plane reached the fire area around 3:10 p.m. Fifteen men were safely landed by parachute on the slope on the opposite side of Mann Gulch about half a mile from the fire. All cargo dropping of food, tools, and other equipment was completed by 4:08 p.m. Cargo was col-

lected by about 5:00 p.m., at which time Foreman R. Wagner Dodge heard a shout from someone near the fire. He instructed his crew to follow him to the fire and proceeded ahead to determine who it was that was calling. The foreman met Ground Patrolman James O. Harrison near the fire a few minutes later.

Mr. Dodge concluded that the fire was too warm for attack at this point, and with Harrison, rejoined his crew a few minutes later. He instructed the crew to cross to the opposite side of Mann Gulch from the fire and proceeded toward the Missouri River grading out of the bottom of the draw as they went, in order to be in a position to watch the north flank of the fire. It was his plan to the river from whence he would be able to attack the fire from the rear, thus assuring safety for his men while working on the fire.

About 5:45 p.m. the foreman noted that a fire was established across Mann Gulch on the opposite side of the draw from the main fire and about 750 feet in front of the crew. Seeing that they were cut off from the river, he instructed his crew to reverse directions and proceed towards the top of Mann Gulch ridge.

After proceeding about 2,000 feet, the fire had advanced to only a few hundred feet behind the crew. At this point the crew had broken out of scattered pine timber and were in an open grass area. Realizing that there would not be sufficient time to reach the ridge, where safety was a real possibility, the foreman explained to those nearest him that he would set a fire in the grass cover and, after letting it burn a brief period, they would seek safety inside the burned area.

The escape fire was immediately started by dropping a match in the grass but the crew, apparently believing they could make the ridge, continued in that general direction, despite repeated shouts by the foremen to the men as they passed, for them to come inside the burned-over area of the escape fire. Two men made it safely over the ridge. The foreman found safety in the area he had set on fire and also survived.

Shortly thereafter or about 6:00 p.m., 13 of the remaining crew members were caught in the onrush of flames from the main fire. Eleven died immediately and two others died later in the hospital at Helena. Twelve of the men were smoke

jumpers and one was the fire patrolman who had joined the crew on foot.

Spread of the fire was stopped on August 7 and complete control was established on August 10. A total of 450 men worked the fire.

The survivors and one of the men, who later died in the hospital, said they believed all of the men would have been saved if they had followed the foreman's lead in getting into the area burned by the escape fire. The board of review recommended that fire fighter training include training in the use of escape-fire methods, even though occasions for the use of this method are relatively rare.

Memo from Dave Burt's (MSO-47) scrapbook.

Brave Men

The Daily Missoulian August 9, 1949

Only a brave man steps from a flying plane, with only a packet of silk as protection against the deadly pull of gravity. Only a man of unflinching courage does this when below are the threatening tops of trees or the rough rocks of a mountainside. As a matter of less spectacular fact, only a brave man fights fires of the more dangerous sorts in our forests, no matter what his means of arriving at the scene.

So we may properly hail as heroes the men who down into the woods in parachutes, as well as those who march into the danger zones. And we must mourn as heroes those who lost their lives in the blazing hell that was the river canyon near Helena the other day.

And of this we are sure: There will be other brave men to take their places.

Class of 1947 Graduates with Parachutes

Commencement exercises for 33 graduates of the first 1947 Forest Service class of smokejumpers consisted of being dumped out of an airplane, smashing down through a grove of pine trees, and walking home with heavy equipment.

While the next class was getting ready for training at the Nine Mile Parachute school, those who completed the course were moved to jobs in the woods where they will await calls to fires, Victor Carter, parachute project officer reported.

The next class will open June 16 when 110 men report. Among them will be a few with army paratroop experience and 75 University students.

Carter said this year, for the first time, other regions are conducting smoke jumper schools of their own. Previously, all smoke jumpers trained at the Nine Mile station.

The Daily Missoulian June 7, 1947

William H. Brandt (MSO-47) was back in Missoula after a narrow escape on the fire (Bear Creek—Idaho). Brandt had landed and a pair of 20-pound spurs for climbing trees were dropped to him. The spurs struck his leg in falling from the plane and injured his ankle.

Information on his injury was radioed to Missoula and a plane was dispatched to Shearer Landing Field while he was riding 18 miles on horseback to meet it. He arrived in the city and was treated at a hospital and discharged with only a stiff ankle.

Newspaper article 1947

74 Jumpers Sent to One Blaze

The largest contingent of smokejumpers ever used at one time was called into action Tuesday morning when 74 men descended to battle a fire on the Flathead River. Three trips of a C-47 were needed to transport the men to the fire.

Newspaper article August 1947

Jumpers Will Break Camp Friday

Forest Service smokejumpers notified the board of county commissioners that they will bring their activities to an official close Friday.

Mr. Cooley said that of the 150 men employed as jumpers this year, 80 had worked previously. A total of 33 men were asked not to reapply for various reasons. About 85 of the lads are ex-service men and all but about four or five are enrolled in universities under the GI bill.

Newspaper article September 1947

Students Double In Silk

Nine university students, smokejumpers during the summer months, were called out of class Oct. 1 to rescue an elk hunter who was injured in the wilderness of the Bitterroot forest.

The men who went to the rescue are Leonard Krout, Marvin Amundsen, William Hellman, Bob Stermitz, Charles Parker, Bob Manchester, Vern Sylvester, Robert Dusenbury and Bob Morgan.

The rescue unit is set up on a voluntary basis under the supervision of the Forest Service. One major obstacle lies in the path of continuance of the service Brauer (Fred) said—the lack of funds. Even if a man is able to pay for a rescue, the money is not returned to the Forest Service.

Newspaper article October 1947

Air Rescue Unit Training in Missoula

Eight representatives of the air rescue service of the army air transport command are in Mis-

soula this week receiving special training in Forest Service parachute jumping techniques.

Forest Service training of air rescue jumpers started during the war. In 1943 and again in 1945 units of the army air forces and the coast guard were sent to Missoula for specialized training. Major Frank Wiley and the late Lt. Col. Earl Vance, both former Missoula pilots, were instrumental in first interesting the U.S. air forces in studying forest service techniques.

Newspaper article October 24, 1947 📖

My Years As A Smokejumper – 1948-51

by **Les Kile** (North Cascades '48)

I reported to the North Cascades Smokejumper Base in Winthrop, Wash., in May 1951, for another year of smokejumping. I did not know it at the time, but it was to be my last season at this profession, which started in 1948.

Lorraine, my wife of one year, remained in Wenatchee for the summer to work at her job.

It was in July of that year that my friend **Jim Campbell** (NCSB-48), who was also a member of the 1948 class, decided he needed an airplane.

Jim had been taking flying lessons and saving his money for a few years, waiting for this event. He made a trip to Yakima one weekend and returned to the base with an older Piper Cub, which he parked on a spot alongside the runway in a position where he could see and admire his new possession.

He let it be known the next weekend that he was going to

fly down to Wenatchee after work.

I had some message for my wife and persuaded Jim to give her a call from the airport and pass it on.

About the time it was beginning to get dark, Jim had not returned. I was becoming a bit concerned about his being able to see to land, since the airport had no landing lights.

Soon, I did hear a plane circling the airport.

It being a Friday night, I was there by myself, as the rest of the crew hit the bright lights of Winthrop and Twisp as soon as they had cleaned up after work.

I sensed what Jim's problem was and ran to the parking lot, looking for vehicles with keys still in their ignitions. I found about three, which I parked at the end and sides of the airport runway, leaving the lights on.

Seeing the lights, Jim got lined up and did not hesitate to "bring in the mail."

I was standing alongside the runway when Jim taxied up. Imagine my surprise when the door opened and my wife hopped out and grabbed me by the neck. She had talked him into a ride back up to the base. My wife was always very persuasive, and few people, especially men, could resist anything she asked.

Jim later informed me he "sweat blood" for about a half-hour circling over Lake Chelan, trying to gain enough altitude to scrape over the mountains and reach the base. Fortunately he knew enough not to trap himself in some mountain canyon.

Jim and Hal Warner decided the next weekend to take a short flight up the Methow Valley. Unfortunately, the carburetor iced up somehow and the engine died. Jim, however, did a great job of gliding down to a landing. Hal later wrote about coming down in a mountain meadow, but it looked to me like a potato

field. Fortunately, neither one was hurt.

As soon as we received word about the crash, a bunch of us loaded into a couple of vehicles and headed for Mazama, which was the scene of the forced landing. When we arrived, Jim and Hal were standing next to the plane. We examined them for injuries, and all we found was a small cut on Jim's arm.

Some "joker" saw a bead of blood and exclaimed: "Jesus, Jim – you're bleeding like a stuck hog!" Jim immediately nose-dived toward the ground, but someone caught him before he hit the ground.

I landed the job of aerial observer for the Wenatchee National Forest in 1952 and 1953, and spent two seasons patrolling the forest with pilot Ken Patton of Cashmere,

Wash., spotting fires after lightning storms.

The end of the 1953 fire season concluded my employment with the U.S. Forest Service.

I am now 91 years of age and still own and operate some cattle ranches in Chelan County, Wash. I would love to hear from any of my old friends – most of whom are now gone. 🙏

SMOKEJUMPER ARCHIVES ESTABLISHED

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER Association has partnered with Eastern Washington University (EWU) in Cheney to establish an archive of Smokejumper history. The collaboration has been both a pleasure and productive. This Smokejumper archive as it grows will be broadly accessible online. Accessibility will allow individuals with general interests and researchers with specific interests to access Smokejumper history from their own unique location; no need to travel to a distant location to unpack documents, facts, or recordings. In this digital age, Smokejumper history will be centralized and mere clicks away.

If Smokejumper history is "mere clicks away,"

then what is available so far? Start with the EWU Digital Commons landing page: <https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumpers/>

Digital Commons is a platform used by EWU and over 500 academic institutions, public libraries, and research centers to preserve and showcase scholarly output and special collections.

Going to the "landing page" cited above, here is what has been placed online so far:

NSA Minutes

A record of the NSA's Board of Directors meetings from 1995- present:

https://dc.ewu.edu/nsa_minutes

Smokejumper and Static Line Magazines

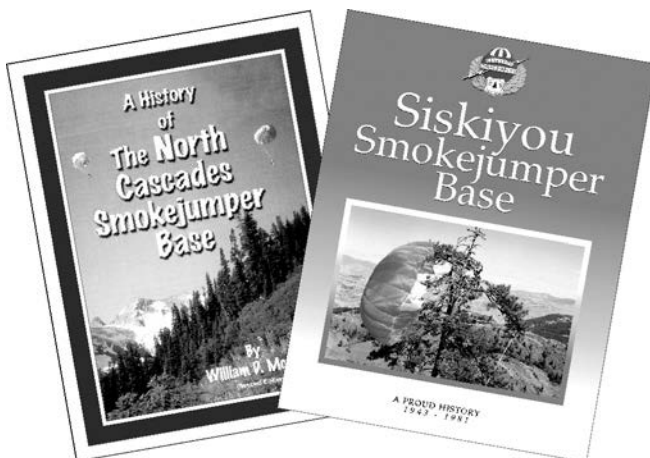
All issues are in PDF form, from 1993-until the present. Magazines have simple search capability:

https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_mag/

Publications on Smokejumping

Presently there are three volumes of stories from Civilian Public Service personnel who served as Smokejumpers during WWII. In the future, this section will fill out with other publications both Service oriented and commentaries about smokejumping:

https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumping_pubs/



Written publications on base histories: NCSB and Cave Junction.

Smokejumper Base Crew Portraits

This collection will fill out, too. Presently, crew pictures for La Grande, Cave Junction, Redmond, and Silver City are posted. Crew Pictures from, hopefully, all bases will eventually be available online:

<https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumpers/>

Smokejumpers: Firefighters from the Sky

This section presently encompasses the multiple panels that are also the traveling Smokejumper Exhibit and a 25-minute YouTube video loop highlighting the longer 2-hour 2000 NSA production of *Smokejumpers: Firefighters from the Sky, a 60 year history of men and women firefighters*:

https://dc.ewu.edu/nsa_exhibit/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnJtAxy46gw&feature=youtu.be>

Tom Carlson Films on Smokejumping

A series of 4 films unearthed by Tom Carlson (MS-70). Films include 1950 training films and original film from the 1939 Experimental Program at Winthrop, WA, that initiated smokejumping:

<https://dc.ewu.edu/carlsen/>



The original one-piece jumpsuit was initially used in 1939. It was quickly modified to a two-piece suit, similar to the jumpsuit used today.

Triple Nickle Photographs from the National Archives

Photographs of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion during 1945 when the troops were trained by the USFS for wildland forest fires, also known as Operation Fire Fly:

https://dc.ewu.edu/nara_555/

NSA and EWU are still

in the follow-through and preparation stages of Smokejumper history yet to be posted:

- National Archives and Francis Lufkin photos of the 1939 Experimental Project conducted at Winthrop that determined the feasibility of “smoke chasers.”
- A series of publications that provide the history of bases at North Cascades and Cave Junction with the hope to entice histories of other bases.
- Ongoing acquisition of crew photos from other bases. Alaska’s and Boise’s crew pictures are being prepared.
- A publication by Fred Cooper (NCSB-62) documenting the months of October and November 1939, when trials verified that aerial fire suppression by parachute was possible.
- A vast photo collection from Doug Beck (CJ-70) during his nine jump seasons at Cave Junction.

Many of you readers have history markers of smokejumping that would likely fit this growing archive collection: unique pictures; Super 8 or 16mm movies, reel film, or other; or, knowledge of people or decisions that have been consequential to smokejumping.

Help the NSA to continue to archive smokejumper history. Contact Chuck Sheley at cnkgsheley@earthlink.net with content or suggestions. 📧

Get *Smokejumper* One Month Earlier

Many NSA members are switching to the digital version of *Smokejumper* delivered by email instead of the printed edition. It is sent as a PDF identical to the hard copy issue.

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To request email delivery contact Editor Chuck Sheley (CJ-59) cnkgsheley@earthlink.net. 📧

Retired Jumper Is Subject Of Arizona Radio Article

by Scott Thybony, KNAU – Arizona Public Radio

Smokejumpers have one of the most extreme jobs in wildland firefighting, parachuting into fires in remote areas. It takes a special kind of person to hurl himself or herself out of a plane and into the path of a forest fire – a person like **Bobby Montoya** (IDC-62).

The longtime smokejumper – now retired – told me that missing the job feels like he's lost part of his body. Montoya is the focus of this month's Canyon Commentary.

* * * * *

My brother, **John Thybony** (BOI-76), left the Grand Canyon one spring and headed to Boise, Idaho, to begin his first season as a smokejumper. His job would be to parachute into remote wildfires, unreachable by road, and stop them before they could spread.

Montoya, a veteran smokejumper, watched John park his stakebed Ford and climb out. He had let his beard grow and wore his hair tied in a Navajo knot.

Not cutting the rookie any slack, Montoya shouted, "Here come the Clampetts!" and started singing the theme song to *The Beverly Hillbillies*. It was the beginning of a close friendship.

Years later I was on an assignment at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise. I called Montoya, and we met after work at a bar next to the smoke-jumper base.

His hair was ash-gray, and he had a parachute tattooed on his biceps, half-covered by the sleeve of his t-shirt. As the two of us entered, aircraft mechanics in the corner shouted his name, the waitress gave him a thin smile, and a pair of young smokejumpers stopped their conversation to watch him take a seat.

Montoya told me he had a thousand stories of fires and jumps, and I settled back expecting to hear every one. "But they're not important," he said. "It's not about falling out of a plane. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in them, the smokejumpers. I want to know about their parents, about their wives and girlfriends, about their children."

His response surprised me, and I asked him to tell me about growing up outside Silver City, N.M. The smokejumpers operated a base there during fire season, and they would fly right over his mother's house.

"I knew it was them because the airplane didn't have a door. I used to stand outside the house, looking up at those planes and wishing I could be up there.

"Be careful what you wish for. Two years later I was flying over and looking down at her house with my heart thumping 90 miles an hour and wishing I was down there with my mother. We were on our way to jump a fire, and I was scared."

When I asked about the dangers they faced, Montoya described parachuting into a fire along the Salmon River. "The first man to jump, landed in the trees, and by the next pass his chute was on fire and he was running for his life."

"Sometimes you just don't know what a fire is going to do," he added. "When no one gets hurt, you laugh about it. When you're in your 20s, it's a thrill. *Somos immortales* – we're immortal. That's how you think."

During his jumping career, Montoya broke 26 bones and finally had to leave the U.S. Forest Service on disability.

"Somebody asked me if I was afraid of crashing, and I said, 'no, I'm afraid of dying,' " Montoya explained. "I have gone to too many funerals. Those guys about to die – I know what they're thinking. They can't breathe, it's so hot. The fire is sucking the air around you – your clothes and hair start vibrating with the air rushing by you. There's no oxygen. The fire is sucking it out of you.

"At the last moment you're not thinking about fire. You're thinking about air."

Getting up to leave, I asked if he missed smoke-jumping.

"When I started this," Montoya said, "it was an adventure. We were all Amelia Earharts – we wanted the adventure. In that airplane there were 15 of us, and we were undefeated. Nothing was go-

ing to stop us.”

He paused, thinking back on those 20 fire sea-

sons. “Yes, I miss it. I miss smokejumping like I miss my own heart beating.” 🕯

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Movie inspired many young smokejumpers

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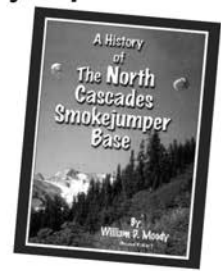


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Oriented Strand Board and Fuel Reduction

by George B. Harpole (Missoula '49)

Historically, logging and wood processing residues have offered a utilization challenge for those involved in the harvesting and manufacture of wood products. Logging operations typically left stumps, tapered log butts, tree tops and limbs for forest fires to remove, or to compost into bedding for destructive forest insects.

Even after the delivery of logs to a sawmill or plywood plant, residue materials used represented as much as 60 percent of the log volumes delivered. Thus, commercial efforts have attempted to utilize as much of these residue volumes as possible with production of charcoal, poultry bedding, heating fuels, and so forth.

Forest fires, tepee burners and burn piles have often provided a quick answer for getting rid of the surplus accumulations of forest and processing residues.

Today, with the increased use of logging residues and wood chips that are used for the production of oriented strand board – OSB – panels, 80 percent or more of the wood volumes removed from the forest are processed into marketable products, according to Wikipedia.

The pathway to OSB production started in the 1920s with the production of hardboards from pulp mats that were produced from wood chips. This was the beginning for making panel products from wood-residue types of materials.

Following hardboard production, and skipping the pulping step for producing hardboards, the utilization of waste materials was increased in the United States in the 1940s by the production of non-structural and appearance grades of particleboards.

Even as a non-structural product, the particleboard industry in the United States is relatively new compared to plywood. But with the decline in the availability of timber suitable for plywood production in the 1970s, the development of technologies for production of structural types of particleboards

became a top priority for wood products research.

Technological advancements were made, and along with these advancements came a sequence of products that identify the evolutionary steps forward to the development of OSB boards – e.g., from particleboard, to NOVOPLY, to waferboard, to flakeboard, and finally to the OSB panels that we speak of today. Thus, OSB emerged as the “structural particleboard” of the 1980s – emerging from random oriented, structural “flakeboard” panels of the late 1970s.

With this technology, U.S. Forest Service and university research was conducted in reference to the utilization of a variety of softwoods and low-density hardwoods found in different regions of the United States.

The results from research in the 1970s were extremely promising. Research by the Forest Service, associated universities and private cooperators was brought together and presented with economic assessments of the commercial potentials for such products. On June 6-8, 1978, the Forest Products Laboratory sponsored a symposium in Kansas City, Mo., to report and to summarize the development and applications of “flakeboard” as a structural particleboard.

This was the first time such a broad program of research was brought together addressing the joint research accomplishments of the Forest Service, associated universities, and private cooperators. Within three years after the Kansas City symposium, there were 19 new flakeboard plants operating and, after five years, there were 25 plants operating.

Then a slightly differentiated product evolved. OSB became a leading competitor for structural sheathing markets in the 1980s, and a major contributor to improved forest management by way of utilizing overwhelming volumes of logging and manufacturing residues.

OSB products set records for market adoption in North America by moving production and con-

sumption from 751 million board square feet (Bsf) in the 1980s to 7.6 billion Bsf by 1990. This figure for U.S. production rose to 11.2 billion Bsf in 2016 and is expected to rise to 15 billion Bsf by 2021.

This is where our forest and wood processing residues are going today—in competition with demands for pulp chips, energy, landscaping and other uses. OSB's success has also been good news for our forest management programs that are focused on mitigating our annual surge of forest fires by utilizing the forest materials that contribute most to the uncontrolled spread and escalation of forest fires.

So, can you believe that our fuel reduction pro-

grams might lead to shortages in the future for the wood supplies needed to produce OSB and to fuel catastrophic forest fires?

Too bad the Forest Service can't collect royalties for their part in giving birth to OSB. 🌲

Author's note: A detailed accounting for the evolutionary history of OSB was published in February 2015 with authorships shared by John I. Zerbe, Zhiyong Cai and George B. Harpole – as a Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) General Technical Report (GTR) 265. This GTR publication is available for free downloading from the Forest Products Laboratory's website.

FORMER SMOKEJUMPERS HONORED FOR THEIR SERVICE

The following is a shortened version of the excellent article by David Lowe in the May 21, 2019, issue of the "Lampasas (TX) Dispatch Record." Thanks to Ken Hessel (MYC-58) for sending it along. (Ed.)

About 90 people attended a memorial program on May 18, 2019, in Lampasas to honor former residents **Darrell Eubanks** (IDC-54) and **John Lewis** (MYC-53) who died in a plane crash in Laos in 1961. Both were working for the CIA and were recently honored with a star on the Agency's Wall of Honor. *There are four former smokejumpers honored with stars on that wall. (Ed.)*

A granite monument to the men stands in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Lampasas. Both Eubanks and Lewis were graduates of Lampasas High School Class of 1954. Lewis' father was mayor,

county attorney and county judge.

American Legion Post 277 Commander Jack Sheldon gave the keynote address describing the men as "quiet heroes."

Leah Lewis Hessel (sister of John Lewis) thanked the memorial committee for the monument that is a "remarkable tribute to her brother and Eubanks. Today is the day that recognition of their lives becomes a permanent part of the history of their beloved hometown of Lampasas."

Ken Hessel, who served in Laos from 1963-75, described Eubanks and Lewis as quiet men, but strong leaders. "I would say that their leadership helped out in several tight situations, both in the Forest Service and overseas, when they were CIA employees. You could always depend on them to have your back in tight situations." 🌲

John S. Lewis—Honored Smokejumper

By Ken Hessel (McCall '58)

He packed a lot of living into his short 25 years—bronc and bull riding in Texas, smokejumping in Idaho, Bay of Pigs Invasion

in Cuba, night missions over Tibet, and missions in northern Laos.

John was born in Lampasas, Texas, in 1936. His early years

were spent enjoying the normal pursuits of young boys living in a small Texas town. In high school, where he excelled as a student and athlete, he heard

Darrell and John were popular, stellar students and athletes for Lampasas High School (LHS'54). The two close friends, while working as United States Forest Service Smokejumpers fighting forest fires in the mountains of the western United States, were recruited by the CIA to serve their country. Together, they worked as parachute drop officers for the CIA in Tibet and Laos. John was also involved in the Bay of Pigs assault in Cuba in 1961. On August 13, 1961, Darrell and John were killed in a plane crash while attempting to resupply the anti-communist Hmong Army in Northern Laos.

The two Lampasas heroes are recognized on the CIA's Wall of Honor in Langley, Virginia.

It took 56 years for the CIA to publicly honor the deaths of Eubanks and Lewis. On May 22, 2017 marble stars were carved into the agency's iconic Wall of Honor at CIA Headquarters in Langley, VA. This high honor is reserved only for CIA employees who died in the line of duty since the agency was created in 1947.

This public acknowledgment by the CIA lifted the cloak of secrecy associated with their service and answered many questions surrounding the death of these two smokejumpers from Lampasas Texas. This 2017 revelation by the CIA allowed the Lampasas community, with the help of the American Legion Post 277, to finally acknowledge in a meaningful manner, John and Darrell's ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country.

The monument will not only memorialize the two men, but constantly remind people that the freedom we enjoy in the United States of America is preserved by heroic acts. These heroes each have their own story, and this is our solemn tribute to them. Each was a warrior, a patriot, a friend, and a professional that answered the call to duty.



stories from older friends about fighting forest fires in Idaho. What fascinated him the most were the ones about smokejumpers—being an adventurous soul, he decided he was going to become a smokejumper, come hell or high water.

At 16 years of age and a junior in high school, his plan was to head to Idaho as soon as school was out. As my wife, Leah, tells the story, it was with great trepidation that she and her mother drove John a couple miles outside Lampasas and let him out on Highway 183

North. Once out of the car, “John told us to head for town and don’t look back.”

Undaunted by the nearly 1800 miles ahead of him, John stuck out his thumb and arrived at McCall three days later. On June 8, John signed on as a “brush crew smokejumper” along with nine other men. The crew included **Stan Tate** and **Miles Johnson**, who were to become John’s close friends. Veteran jumper, **Reid Jackson**, was the ramrod of the crew. In the middle of July 1953, Jackson was named foreman at

the McCall Smokejumper Base and made the decision to bring the 10-man brush crew in for smokejumper training.

John made his first fire jump August 16, 1953, on the Nethkin Trail Fire. At that time, he was 17 years, two months old—the youngest smokejumper? His last fire season was in 1959.

John attended the University of Texas during the winter months of December 1959. He had obtained a private pilot’s license, which he used to manage his cattle business. In December 1959, John was asked if he would be interested in a job with the CIA. Needless to say, he jumped at the chance and was soon making night drops of arms and ammunition to Tibet and other missions in Laos supplying Vang Pao’s Hmong Army.

In January 1961, he was on his way to Guatemala to help with the ultimate invasion of Cuba. By May 1961, John was back in Laos and engaged with supply flights to the Hmong troops. On August 13, 1961, he died in a plane crash while involved with these missions. Also killed in the crash were smokejumper Darrell Eubanks (John’s close friend from Lampasas) and Dave Bevan, a Missoula smokejumper. These three smokejumpers and the two pilots were among the first killed in the Laotian theater of the Vietnam War.

In March 1994, John was one of four Americans awarded a Medal of Valor by the Cuban Veterans Assault Brigade.

In November 2002, the CIA posthumously awarded him the

Agency's Medal of Valor. The medal was presented to John's sister, Leah, in LaGrande, Oregon, by a CIA emissary.

Finally, in May 2017, almost 56 years after the fatal plane crash in Laos, the CIA dedicated three stars on the

Agency's "Wall of Honor" to the smokejumpers who died in the 1961 crash in Laos. Agency Director Mike Pompeo presented individual marble stars to each of the families during the ceremony. Leah Hessel accepted the star on behalf of the

Lewis family.

John, Darrell, and Dave will be forever remembered for their ultimate sacrifice. The addition of the three stars on the "Wall of Honor" finally completes the life stories of three dedicated United States patriots. 🇺🇸

My First Fire Jump

by Mark Romey (Missoula '75)

I was in the New Man Class of 1975 at the Missoula jump base.

We spent our time learning how to parachute into the forest environment to fight fire. We learned how to read the terrain and fire in picking jump spots, how to maneuver the chute, how to rappel in case we got hung up in a tree, and how to adapt to changing situations. Little did I know all of these situations would come into play on my first fire jump.

The fire was up Anna Creek on the Lolo National Forest. We were going to jump it at daybreak. There were 16 of us – a full DC-3 load – going to the fire.

We were to meet at the jump base at 4 a.m. for breakfast. We loaded up and were in the air as the sun was coming up. As we arrived at the fire, we could not see the fire; it was covered with low clouds and ground fog.

The ceiling over the fire was about 500 feet, meaning we wouldn't see anything until we were 500 feet above the ground.

Dick Hulla (MSO-75) was also a "new man" and this was his first fire jump. The spotter – Bill Meadows (ANC-66), I believe – told us since we couldn't see the ground, we should steer for the voices. He told the first two-person "stick" to start yelling as soon as they hit the ground.

Dick and I gave each other a funny look. "Oh, sure – our first fire jump and we can't even see the ground," we said.

We circled and circled the fire until the first stick got a glimpse of the fire. The pilot used



Mark Romey (Courtesy M. Romey)

a base course and triangulated, lining up three mountain peaks to drop us out.

He did a pretty good job getting in the same area before we were kicked out, but we couldn't see the fire; there was no jump spot – just voices.

There were 16 smokejumpers onboard. I was No. 12. That meant there were 11 guys ahead of me on the ground yelling. It wouldn't have been so bad if they were in the same place, but they were in 11 different places scattered over a big area.

My jump partner was Les Holsapple (MSO-73). I watched him disappear in the clouds, hoping I would see him on the "other side."

When I broke through the clouds, I was over the fire. Before I knew it, I only had enough time to turn and back into an 80- to 90-foot spruce tree. I was hung up 40-50 feet above the ground. I pulled on the risers of my chute to see if I was solid enough to rappel down.

All of a sudden, I slid down the side of the tree and landed on my back on a punky log, surrounded by smoldering fire. Les was getting his gear together nearby, asked if I was okay and said, "You're pretty entertaining, Romey."

The rest of the time on this fire was also pretty entertaining. 🇺🇸



BLAST FROM THE PAST



by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)
The Daily Missoulian
February 2, 1951

Smokejumper Now Is In Army Working On Newspaper

Keith Owens (MSO-50), smokejumper who entered the Army last August, is stationed at Fort MacArthur, California, where he is working on the



fort's newspaper. He was a University journalism student.
Owens and Susan Hay-

ward of the motion pictures were central figures in a poster used to promote a project of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, called "Give A Lift With A Gift For The Boys In Korea."

Owens lived in Deer Lodge before coming to Missoula. In receiving smokejumper training last summer, he was the object of a helicopter lift to the Garden City after being injured in a parachute jump. 🦋

Afterthoughts

by "Swede" Troedsson (Missoula '59)

I wound up the 1988 fire season as an air support supervisor on a fire near Cooke City, Montana. I had dinner in Cooke City one evening with an Evergreen helicopter pilot. I was telling him about managing helicopter pilots.

I always tried to get them into a motel, and if they *had* to get to a telephone – this was in the days before mobile phones – on the pretense of getting a mechanic or a relief pilot, I tried my best to get them to a telephone.

Many of these pilots were on their second marriages, or working on their third. I suspected they really wanted to talk to their new girlfriends, or their attorneys. I didn't need their problems distracting them from safely transporting our firefighters.

The Evergreen pilot said this was called "AIDS" in their profession. When I asked him what "AIDS" meant, he said it stood for "Aviation-Induced Divorce Syndrome." I told him I knew some former smokejumpers who'd suffered from that same affliction.

SOME TIME AGO, I was dating a woman in Red Lodge, Montana. She introduced me to a friend who retired as a commercial pilot with a major airline. I am impressed with the number of commercial airline pilots who retire and decide to buy or build fancy homes and live in Red Lodge.

Her friend was hosting a barbecue and we were invited. As I was sitting there, sipping a G&T and nibbling on fancy snacks, the host pointed me out to several of his retired commercial airline buddies. He told them, "That fellow was a smokejumper."

One of them inquired as to what type of planes I'd used ...

That caught their attention, and one of them inquired as to what type of planes I'd used for jumping. I replied, "Ford Trimotor, DC-2, DC-3, Travelair and Twin Beech."

They exploded in laughter. I admitted that this no doubt dated me. 🦋



Smokejumpers utilize technical manuals to improve chain saw and Pulaski skills. On the job training - Red Shale Fire 1979 (Courtesy Karl Brauneis)

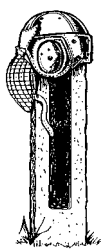
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Off The List

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Doyle W. Gerrard (Missoula '53)

Doyle, 89, died April 17, 2019, in Missoula. Moving from Ohio, he came to Montana to attend college. Doyle served with the Marine Corps in Korea.

After earning his teaching credential, he taught in Montana, Wyoming and other western states. Doyle took up distance running in his late 40s and ran marathons and 10K races. Upon retirement from teaching, he lived in the Bitterroot Valley, became a skilled hunter, and was an advocate for the Friends of the Bitterroot. Doyle jumped at Missoula during the 1953-55 seasons.

Stanley K. Underwood (Missoula '67)

Stan, 74, died May 2, 2019. He graduated from the University of Montana Forestry School in 1967 and jumped at Missoula during the 1967-68 seasons. Stan started his career with the USFS in 1968, retiring in 2006 after working in Silviculture and Forest Management on the Nez Perce, Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests.

Stan remained active in fire, including seven years as an independent contractor and 12 years as an operations sections chief on a Type II team.

Wes G. Schroeder (McCall '61)

Wes, 82, died January 27, 2019. After graduating from Bemidji (MN) High School, he joined the Army and served as a medic with the 82nd Airborne. Wes graduated with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Degree from the University of Minnesota in 1964 and started one of the first exclusively equine practices in the state in 1966. In 1972 he cofounded and operated Minnesota Equine Associates in Maple Plain where he worked for 48 years.

In 1981 the Minnesota Horse Council honored Wes as Horseman of the Year. He was active in Endurance and Competitive Trail riding and

teaching horse management classes.

Wes jumped at McCall during the 1961-62 seasons.

Gary D. McMurtrey (McCall '73)

Gary "Big Mac" McMurtrey passed away on June 21, 2019, after weeks of declining health. For many years, Big Mac ran the Alaska Smokejumper Welfare Fund with an iron fist and a heart of gold. Many are the smokejumpers that ended up on the short end of a deal with Big Mac. His motto in running the welfare fund was "Caveat Emptor," Let the Buyer Beware.

Behind the irascible, gruff exterior was a man of kindness and generosity, a loyal friend, and a hardworking smokejumper. Gary jumped at McCall in 1973, Alaska 1974-78 and 1980-84.

David R. Pierce (Redmond '65)

Dave, 75, died from complications of pancreatic cancer on June 1, 2019. Dave was a smokejumper in Redmond 1965-66, a Missoula Smokejumper 1967-68 and 1981.

During 1970 Dave worked as a skydiving instructor, jump pilot, and master parachute rigger for Parachutes Inc., Orange, Massachusetts.

Dave was a BLM Alaska smokejumper 1971-80. From 1980 until his retirement in 1998 Dave worked in the National Smokejumper Technical Position at the U.S. Forest Service Technology & Development Center (MTDC) in Missoula. While at MTDC, Dave oversaw projects that developed an array of smokejumping equipment and procedures. This included development of the FS-14 parachute, multiple smokejumper aircraft evaluations, and production of training videos for smokejumper pilots, spotters, and smokejumper canopy handling procedures.

In 1991 Dave received the Forest Service "Chief's Award" for transfer of new technology

to the Smokejumping Program in Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

Steven T. Johnson (Cave Junction '62)

Steve died May 5, 2019, at his home in Kailua Kona, Hawaii. He served in the 304th Air Force para-rescue unit and retired as a Battalion Chief with the Portland, Oregon, Fire Bureau in 1993. Steve and his wife, Kathy, moved to Hawaii in 1996. Steve jumped at Cave Junction 1962-63-65 and Redmond in 1964.

Andrew G. Nielsen (McCall '46)

"Ace," 96, died May 22, 2019. He attended Boise Jr. College where he played shortstop on the baseball team. Ace later graduated from Idaho State. He was a Naval aviator during WWII, and you can see his display at the Nampa, Idaho, Warhawk Air Museum.

Ace was involved in the Idaho Dairy Association and was President of the Meridian Dairy Days. He was a regular attendee at the local smokejumper gatherings. Ace jumped at McCall 1946-48.

Richard B. Terry (McCall '58)

Dick, 81, died May 10, 2019. He graduated

with his PhD in Biology from the University of Illinois and spent time as a professor at the University of North Carolina. Dick ended his career working at the Boise Interagency Fire Center as the center manager, coordinating wildfire training classes and other training of new jumper recruits. He retired and lived outside Eagle for over 46 years. Dick jumped at McCall 1958-63.






Howbert W. Bonnett (Cave Junction '49)

Hobbie, 88, died April 29, 2019. He was raised in Sacramento and graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in forestry. Hobbie spent 36 years with the Forest Service in positions from Timber Management, District Ranger, and retiring as assistant to the Forest Service Chief of Administration in Washington, D.C.

After retiring, he moved to North Carolina, where he ran a computer consulting business. Hobbie jumped at Cave Junction during the 1949 season.

Homer B. "Smiley" Williamson (Missoula '46)

Smiley died June 26, 2019. His truck driving career began in 1963 and lasted 32 years and five million accident-free miles. Smiley jumped at Missoula during the 1946 season. 🇺🇸



NSA

History Project

Give Us Your....

Films... Photos... Tapes... Footage...

National Smokejumper Archive Established

NSA has established a Smokejumper archive to reside at Eastern Washington University. The archive will be the **prime national record** for Smokejumper history. NSA needs your help to gather any form of record that involves you and your knowledge of smokejumping: films, photos, articles, books, oral histories, personal jump records....

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