

January 2021

Smokejumper Magazine, January 2021

National Smokejumper Association

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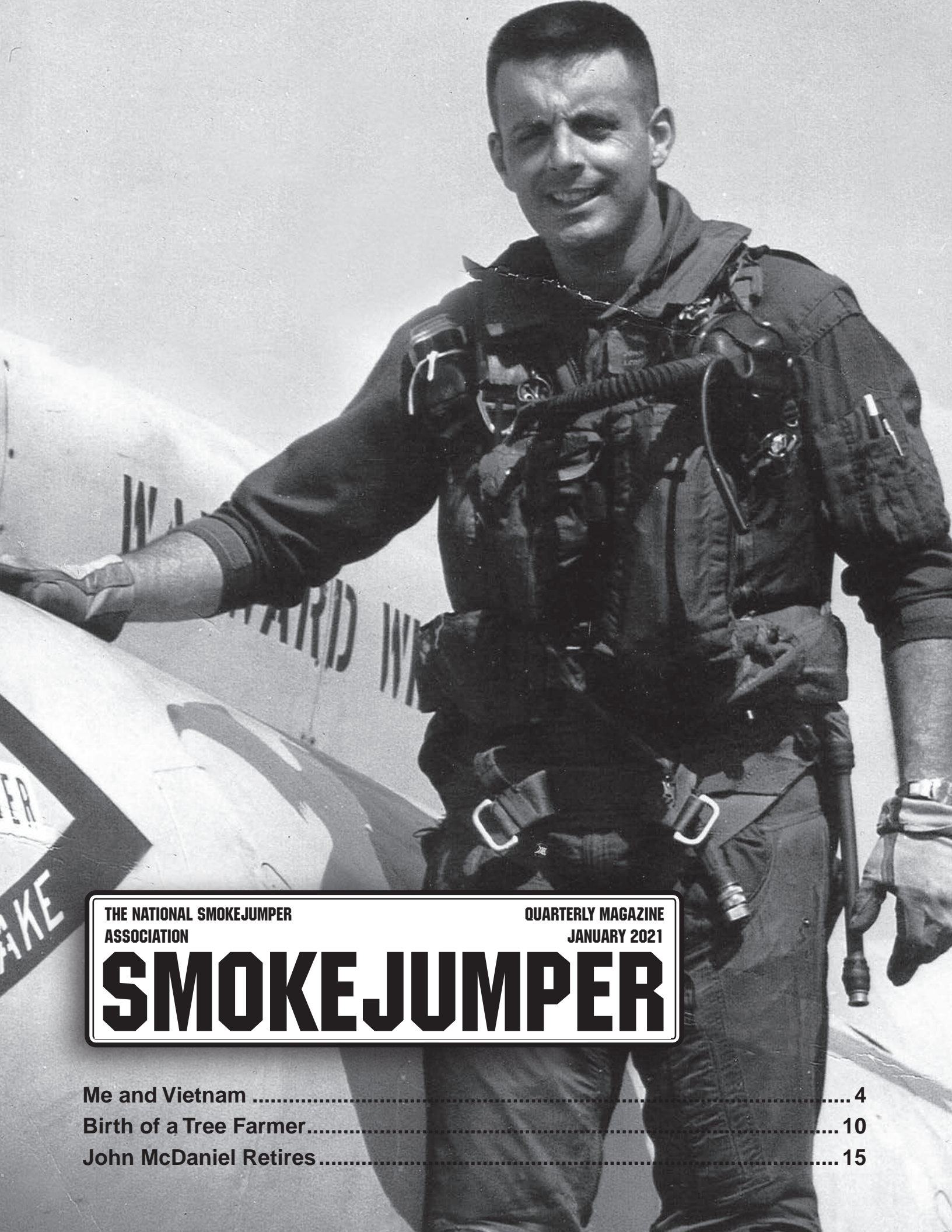
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National Smokejumper Association, "Smokejumper Magazine, January 2021" (2021). *Smokejumper and Static Line Magazines*. 127.

https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_mag/127

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2021

SMOKEJUMPER

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SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE No. 111, JANUARY 2021
ISSN 1532-6160

Smokejumper is published quarterly by:
THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION
c/o 10 JUDY LANE
CHICO, CA 95926

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Check the NSA website



Message from the President



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

MOST WHO LIVE in my community, the Portland metropolitan area, likely believed they were immune to the dangers of wildfire. After all, this is the Pacific Northwest where rain is no stranger, and this is the city.

That notion met its demise this past September. A persistent drought, coupled with hot, dry weather, and strong east winds often in excess of 50 mph (a highly unusual weather event) resulted in 500,000 acres burned by fire to the east between Portland and Salem.

Some of these fires were very close to Portland. Suburban cities of Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Happy Valley, and Wilsonville were all, for a time, in Evacuation Zone 1: Get Ready (to evacuate). Communities further to the east, Estacada and Molalla, were evacuated. And, some smaller outlying communities were significantly damaged.

Of course, there were other

major fires in Oregon. Across the state a sum total of 1 million acres were burned, thousands of structures were lost, and several rural towns were leveled. After two weeks of fire and smoke, significant rainfall gave firefighters an opportunity to engage in serious containment of most larger Oregon fires, at least those on the east side of the Willamette Valley.

During the course of these fires, some 40,000 people were evacuated, most in close-by rural communities. And, for a time, 500,000 people across the state were under at least one of three evacuation warning stages. Then came the smoke! For several days after the wind subsided, smoke rendered Portland as having the most dangerously polluted air in the world.

California was not so fortunate. As I write this in early October, California has burned a staggering 4 million acres with seemingly no end in sight. Upon sharing with our magazine's editor, Chuck Sheley, that we had received significant rain, I could hear the dismay in his voice as he told me there was no rain on the horizon for northern California. Chuck also shared with me that he lives approximately 35 miles from the fire that is 1 million acres to date and 15 miles from one that is over 300,000 acres.

The magnitude of these

fires is close to beyond comprehension. The destruction they leave is incredible.

Articles in previous issues of *Smokejumper* have touched on various aspects of this situation including fuel overload, forest management, initial attack, etc. Most notably, two recent articles address what scientists indicate as the primary driver of these mega-fires, climate change: *Wildfires and Global Warming: A Continuous Cycle of Destruction*, Michael Rains, *Smokejumper*, April 2020 and *Wildfire Trends In The US and Adaptation Strategies To Increasing Wildfires*, Tania Schoenagle, PhD. *Smokejumper*, July 2020.

If you have not taken the opportunity to read these articles, consider doing so. They may be found online at the National Smokejumper Association web site (<https://smokejumpers.com/index.php>).

Sadly, this situation is not predicted to improve. In fact, scientists believe the severity will only increase in the coming decades. Moreover,

this is not a situation that affects just our nation. It is global. One example was the record setting fire season in Australia this year, widely reported in January. Another is that Siberia had record temperatures and fires in 2020 as reported in the July issue of National Geographic (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/07/heat-wave-thawed-siberia-now-on-fire/>). Then, there's the issue of fires in the Amazon.

Given all that is at stake, isn't this a situation that deserves significant national—even international—attention and leadership? That is not the case at present!

Other Stuff:

An attempt is ongoing to identify members of the smokejumper community who have been significantly impacted by this year's devastating fires so that we may offer some assistance. At present we have identified only one individual who lost his home. If you are aware of members of the smokejumper family that have been similarly impacted and whom you believe we have not been in contact with, please let us know. You may either contact Chuck Sheley or me. 🙏

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Having Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important

In order to save the NSA time and money, I'm mailing the merchandise flyer to you via email. There is a significant amount of money spent in printing and inserting the merchandise flyer into the magazine. Sending via email is a good cost-efficient move.

In addition, I did over 5,000 reunion mailings last year. Remember that the National Reunion has been postponed until June 24-26, 2022, in Boise. With good email addresses, we can cut that USPS mailing in half.

To see if we have your correct email address, go to the NSA website at www.smokejumpers.com. Click on "News and Events" at the top of the page. Click on "Jump List" on the pull-down, type in your **last name**.

That will bring up the email currently listed for you. Please contact me if we need to update your email. My contact information is in the left column on this page. (Ed.)

Smokejumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	GrangevilleGAC	MissoulaMSO
Boise.....NIFC	Idaho CityIDC	Redding.....RDD
Cave Junction.....CJ	La Grande.....LGD	Redmond.....RAC
Fairbanks.....FBX	McCall.....MYC	West Yellowstone WYS
		Winthrop.....NCSB

Me And Vietnam

by Steve Smith (Associate Life Member)

Back in 1997, the NSA was looking to do a short video about smokejumping. It was going to be a low-key project, and we didn't really know how or who was going to put this together.

Fred Rohrbach (MSO-65) had a friend who could and would do this job. I'm certain that none of us on the NSA Board of Directors had any idea that this project had moved into the big leagues with Steve Smith taking it on.

A four-time Emmy nominee and 16-time Telly Award winner, Steve has created over 200 documentaries for home video and the networks. What was supposed to be a short one-year project turned into a couple of years. The end result was the 120-minute production "Smokejumpers—Firefighters From The Sky."

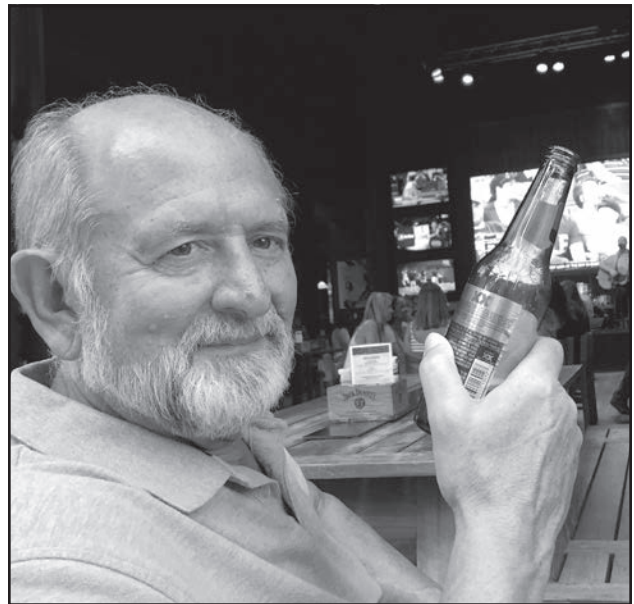
In my opinion, I feel that Steve's work will be remembered as one of the major contributions to smokejumping and its place in U.S. history.

I've visited with Steve over the years and asked him to recount his experiences in Vietnam as a 19-year-old Marine. The following piece is something that we all need to read, remember, and learn from. (Ed.)

When I came home after serving in Vietnam, I found a country that was struggling with the political issues of participation in a war in far-off Asia. That quickly became personal on the bus ride from San Francisco to Eugene. I was still in uniform and many around me weren't welcoming, especially those in my 20-year-old peer group who tended to brand the returning veterans as immoral.

I was about to start using the GI Bill to help pay for college. This was my original reason for joining the Marine Corps. I made that decision in April 1964 as a senior in high school. My parents faced the expense of three kids in college at the same time. To help with expenses, I decided to serve in the military and have the GI Bill.

Mom and Dad were both WWII vets. Mom was a Marine, Dad was in the Navy. I followed mom's lead. There was no war in April 1964. Three of us high school seniors joined the Marine Corps:



Steve Smith (Courtesy S. Smith)

Mike Webb, Jimmy Parker, and me. We all played together on the Springfield High School (Oregon) football team.

I don't need to dwell on Marine Corp boot camp; it has a well-earned reputation. Mike and Jimmy and I survived. Only one incident stands out. One night a recruit peed out the door of our quonset hut because he was not allowed to go to the bathroom. He got caught. The next morning, the drill instructor took a canteen cup and had the guys pee in it. Then the offending recruit was instructed to drink it after a lecture about getting out of your bunker in a combat situation. It was gross and never should have happened.

After boot camp, I was assigned as a radio operator to the First Light Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion at Twentynine Palms, California. Six days after I arrived, my new unit mounted out in the middle of the night. Greyhound buses were used to move us to the USS Vancouver, destination unknown. We were told not to tell our families any details except we would be out of touch for a while. It was very hush-hush.

Why? Because in November of 1964, one presidential candidate was a "peace" candidate and the

other was a “war” candidate. The peace candidate won. However, he was sending a battalion of Marines to Vietnam only a week later. He didn’t want the American public to know. The North Vietnamese knew, as we learned from “Hanoi Hanna” when we arrived in the South China Sea.

The trip to Asia was marked by my most useless assignment of all time—guarding our vehicles in the hold of the ship. There must have been someone aboard who was trying to steal our trucks and drive them off into the sea.

As we entered the South China Sea, some scofflaw wrote on the blackboard, “I think we are headed to Vietnam.” You’d have thought he attacked the ship’s captain the way they investigated all of us to find who wrote it.

Not far from Danang, we joined a nine-ship convoy that included the aircraft carrier Ticonderoga. We turned north and landed in Okinawa; no one ever told us why. Camp Hague had an enlisted men’s club, and there I learned a lot about beer, before they kicked me out during a Christmas Eve riot. The highlight of the riot was when my team leader took the Commander of the Guards’ jeep for a joy ride.

In early February, we left Okinawa for Vietnam. I was awake the night we landed. The moon on the bay, the fog avalanching down three mountains, and the twinkling lights of Danang were about the most beautiful things I’d ever seen. We were about to become the first Marine unit to land in Vietnam.

Landing went off with just one hitch—no one brought any food. The CO and a driver went to the airbase Officers Club and liberated steak and chocolate milk. That was the first and last time I had steak or chocolate milk in Vietnam.

My first night in Vietnam, I was in a machine gun tower hunched behind an M60 machine gun. I was very alert. Tracers were flying about a half mile from our new base. My first month in Vietnam was characterized by filling thousands of sandbags during the day and long nights on guard duty filled with tracers and parachute flares.

In early April, the ammo dump beside us blew up, which left me wearing the tent I’d been sleeping in. That same month, a drunken mess sergeant decided to “go hunt VC.” He became my unit’s first casualty.

In June I started training on a new weapon, a 3.5-inch rocket launcher, an updated bazooka. That

kinda made you the baddest guy in the neighborhood. It also put me out on the highway because the 3.5 is an anti-tank weapon. Fortunately, the Viet Cong were short of tanks.

One night during a rocket attack, I was out on the highway with my 3.5” rocket launcher and saw a portly figure running towards us. Even at 200 yards, I recognized my inebriated sergeant returning from “Dogpatch.” I won’t speculate what he was doing there. But I did my job. I raised the rocket launcher to firing position and yelled, “Dung Lai,” Vietnamese for halt. When he saw the 3.5 pointed in his direction, he became instantly sober and tried desperately to remember the password.

He failed with the password but succeeded in providing many funny moments for the guys. “Please, Smith, don’t shoot. Oh my God, don’t shoot.” I thought that made a pretty good password.

In July I saw Mike and Jimmy (buddies from high school) at the end of the airstrip. The troop buildup was in full swing. That night the VC overran their position, and one of my buddies was wounded. Several aircraft were blown up during the raid. In mid-July a tin of cookies arrived from my grandmother’s VFW group. They were sent for the 4th of July but arrived a couple of weeks late, but a



We were young once. (Courtesy S. Smith)

cookie is a cookie and the guys ate 'em up.

At the end of July, an amazing thing happened. I was assigned to operate the battalion switchboard overnight. It gave me access to a military switchboard in Hawaii. I did the logical thing, I called home. My brother answered. Unfortunately, Mom and Dad were away, and he'd been drinking.

In early August, I took up playing poker at night. During the day, I was on a work party (what a phrase) taking our garbage to a nearby dump. As we were departing the dump, someone, somewhere, took a shot at me. I didn't know where it came from, but it missed me by about 18 inches. I decided it was my lucky day and I should play poker—lost \$17.

Operation Starlight started in August with the Marines moving into the Chu Lai area to create a second airbase. We were told to be ready to move to Chu Lai, but I was scheduled for R&R.

We cornered a Viet Cong sapper team in the barbed wire. One of our guys tried to get them out of the fence, but he got kicked for his effort, so he beat the crap out of the VC.

I flew to Hong Kong on a C-130. The aircraft blew an engine while landing. I was scheduled to be in Hong Kong for four days but ended up being there for six days due to engine replacement. I bought everything in sight: a stereo tape recorder, speakers, Canon zoom lens, camera, sweaters, slacks, sapphire ring, and china. I spent about \$600 and sent everything home.

Back to Vietnam, my unit moved to Chu Lai. We had a beautiful spot on the beach, living on sand with the sea for our backyard. In October I had my nineteenth birthday, and my girlfriend sent me a "Dear John." Asking a young woman to wait for you for a year is a bit much. I wouldn't have done it, so why should she? But it was sad. It was the rainy season. However, growing up in Oregon prepared me for endless rainy days. My diary suffered a week of entries that said, "I don't remember, just another day less."

My last entry for the month: "I went to sick bay got stuff to get rid of crabs." That night I was put on a heavy machine gun crew for base defense after a VC raid blew up a couple of airplanes. Some 155mm self-propelled howitzers were brought in, and my friend Larry Rice was on one of them. It made my day to see him. I also got a letter from Jim Parker (high school buddy) saying he and Mike

Webb were at Chu Lai.

November 7th Larry Rice and I went to see Parker and Webb. We talked about going home. Mike asked me to visit his family if I got home before he did. Mike had been on the outs with his father, but they had patched things up in letters and were looking forward to seeing each other. I told him I would talk to his father.

Larry had guard duty, so I decided to stand it with him. I sat in his bunker on a case of hand grenades and listened on headphones to the latest music from the states, "The Eve of Destruction" by Barry McGuire. That was as good as it gets in Vietnam.

November 30th my replacement showed up from the states. I came down with a bad case of short-timer syndrome, but the gunny told me I wasn't going home on Dec 7th, but maybe by the 19th. I was seriously pissed.

There were no more diary entries until May 6, 1966. But the events during that five months are vivid in my memory. I finally got home on December 22, 1965. I went out drinking (I was 19) and got very drunk. That night I woke up needing to throw up. I knew I wouldn't make it to the toilet, so I leaned over and filled my shoe, then went back to sleep.

In the morning, I woke up with a hangover and noticed that the mess I made was cleaned up. My father never said a word. He knew something about coming home from war. It was an unspoken bond that stayed with me forever.

On January 7th Dad woke me up to tell me that



Hawk Missiles (Courtesy S. Smith)

Mike Webb was killed. While I was in Vietnam, I promised Mike I would talk with his family, but now the timing was going to be painful. I spoke with his Dad about how Mike was looking forward to seeing him again. I shared pictures of Mike in Vietnam. What his dad said to me was unforgettable, "Why wasn't it you...or Jimmy?"

At the end of my thirty days leave, I joined the Seventh Marines at Twentynine Palms. It was a good unit. They were scheduled to go to Vietnam in May. They asked me to go back. I decided there was a chance that I could even the score for Mike, so I went back to Vietnam.

We shipped out on the USS Ogden, and a week later we had liberty in Hawaii. Five Marines in a jeep with a pink fringe around the top. Nothing good can happen with that. Then it was time to sober up and sail away.

We landed on June 6th which was D-Day twenty-two years earlier. We unloaded the ship at Chu Lai. I visited my old unit just to let 'em know I was back in the neighborhood.

The first tour in Vietnam was kinda quiet because both sides were still building up troops. It was clear from the activity level that this tour was going to be much more active. From letters and newspaper clippings, I could tell that the war in Vietnam was getting very controversial at home. People went out of their way to say they supported the troops, but the guys understood what was going on at home.

An incident happened in town and two Marines were being held for trial. They killed two people in town and also murdered a fellow Marine. I was called in from the field to guard them. There was no brig. We sat looking at each other across a ten-man tent. It was made clear to me by my commander that I was authorized to "please" kill them if they tried to escape. During our first few minutes together, they told of their intention to kill me and escape to Cambodia. The following night, there was a physical confrontation. If I needed justification to kill them, I had it. I had them marching to chow and standing at attention. They were afraid of me and they were right to be. After a week, they were sent back to the US for trial. There were guys in the unit disappointed that they didn't go home in a pine box.

Some of my buddies were headed out on Operation Colorado, but at the last minute I was cut from those going. I traded radio teams to go out on

Operation Fresno. We headed south to Quang Ngai. The VC blew up every bridge the night before we left, so it was a slow trip. We set up in the hamlet of Mo Duc, about 20 miles from Quang Ngai.

After two weeks, the operation merged into Operation Golden Fleece. Everything was going well until I came down with dysentery. We were operating with a Vietnamese unit, so I went to the Vietnamese medic for help. He gave me a drug and told me to lie down as soon as possible. I woke up 24 hours later feeling great. I don't know for sure, but I think that was my only experience with opium.

This opened a social window with the Vietnamese troops we were assisting. We were tired of C-Rations, so we tried eating Vietnamese food. I liked it. While we were eating with the Vietnamese, the enemy dropped mortars on our location. One hit about 30 feet from where I normally ate. It didn't explode. It just made a dent in the ground. When I saw it, I made the joke, "Ok, Minh, now walk back to Hanoi and get another one."

I was kinda sad to head back to Chu Lai. I felt like the Vietnamese soldiers that I met at Mo Duc were good guys and I was just getting to know them. This would be my only chance to work with the Vietnamese troops.

All was quiet back at the ranch. I was promoted to corporal and got our equipment ready for another operation. Operation Rio Blanco took us back to Quang Ngai. We kinda sat this one out in a back-water area near the airstrip. We got back to Chu Lai for Thanksgiving.

In early January, my life was about to change in a way I could never image. I had thought about the idea of being shot, or the prospect of getting killed, but NEVER anything like my next mission.

I was called into the Captain's tent and told that my next mission was very dangerous, but important. On January 16, we flew out to a mountain near the town of Duc Pho. We were testing our radios to see if we could communicate with the Chu Lai fire control center sixty-five miles away. This was an eight-hour mission.

The area was surrounded by a North Vietnamese regiment. There were just seven of us. I was the radio team chief and Charlie and Tony were with me. We were guarded by a four-man fire team led by a black staff sergeant. We didn't know these guys.

We set up our radio and got communications

loud and clear. We tore down the antenna and waited for the chopper to pick us up. It never came. We dug in for the night. The next day was rainy and cold. We waited all day and the chopper never returned to pick us up. We were running low on food and water. We made contact with some South Vietnamese soldiers, and they gave us some cooked rice. So, we ate rice and drank rainwater. It was a long day of waiting, but the choppers never returned to pick us up.

Two of the guys we didn't know were getting anxious and angry. They blamed the black staff sergeant, who was in overall command of the recon operation, saying he did something wrong and that is why we were stranded here. I didn't see any reason to blame him. Charlie, Tony, and I stayed out of it.

The third day came and went, and it became clear that these guys were from the south. They were racists and were openly talking about killing the black staff sergeant and blaming the North Vietnamese. I spoke to the black staff sergeant about the problem, urged him to stick close to me, and made it clear to the two troublemakers that there was no way in hell I was going to let them kill the staff sergeant.

I had very little sleep, and we were very low on food and running out of rainwater. We knew there was a special forces camp in a nearby town. We decided that walking to their compound might be our best bet if we didn't get picked up on the fourth day. Charlie was a Native American and a very observant guy, so he and Tony volunteered to go first. Charlie and Tony made their way down the hill. There were land mines on the route down the hill, and there was a serious possibility of running into an enemy patrol.

We watched until they got out of sight. Then the five of us started down the hill. It was a tense trip, but we made it without incident. The special forces guys shared their food, they even had beer. I slept inside four walls under the stars; the roof had been blown off.

On day five, I awoke to a decent breakfast. There was an artillery barrage mid-morning after an Air America chopper got shot down. That afternoon the commanding officer of the Third Battalion, Seventh Marines, landed nearby. He was there in preparation for the planned operation and didn't know anything about us, but he offered a ride back to Chu Lai.

On the way home, the bird dog (observation aircraft) flying alongside us was shot down. We landed and picked up the pilot, but incoming mortars chased us out of the area. About two in the afternoon, we landed at Chu Lai and received a red-carpet welcome. We got word that we would be going back to Duc Pho when the operation started.

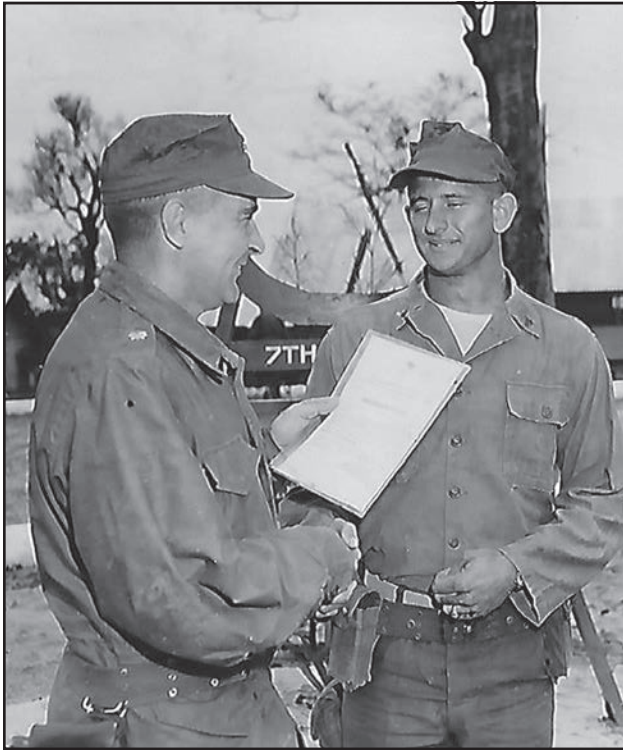
On January 26 the colonel called me into his tent. No one else was there. He had received a written report of the events on the hill from the black staff sergeant. That report praised my leadership and recommended me for a combat award. The colonel was very direct, he couldn't put me in for a medal for stopping a racial problem because writing it up would cast the Marines in a bad light. He didn't know what to do and asked me what I thought. I was so taken aback, I simply said, "I'll just take the money, Sir" trying to make a joke. He paused and said, "Good idea, we'll make it happen." I didn't know what he meant but since I really wanted to be anywhere else other than standing in front of my commanding officer, I said, Thank you Sir, saluted and left.

On January 27 I once again flew back to the same hill where we set up radio communications once again. We dug in and sandbagged our gear. We had plenty of food and water. Sleep would become an issue because three 105mm howitzers were moved to a spot about 50 yards from our new bunker home.

Operation Desoto went on for three months. The Seventh Marines experienced about eighty men killed and about 400 NVA killed. One night our new master sergeant flew out to visit. That night we got hit with mortars, and two marines were killed and fourteen wounded. I watched from my bunker as he ran across an open area to help the wounded. I remember saying, "This guy isn't going to last too long if he keeps doing that..." Top Rogers, a Korean War veteran, was one of the most courageous men I've ever met.

On the 9th of February during mail call, a young Marine sat down to read the letter from home but accidentally sat on a huge landmine. He was unrecognizable. The loss made me hurt all over. Two others were wounded by the blast. I also realized we'd all walked past that mine every day of the operation.

On Sunday the 12th of February, a helicopter picked me up and took me back to Chu Lai where a three-star general promoted me to sergeant in front



Meritorious combat promotion (Courtesy S. Smith)

of the entire battalion. It was a Sunday morning, it was raining, and everyone would rather be sleeping, including me. But the colonel said some nice things about me, and, I'm told, I was one of the first meritorious combat promotions for the Marines in Vietnam. So, four months after I was promoted to corporal, I was promoted to sergeant. But the really big news was that I won \$5 at our poker game that night.

I was soon back out at Duc Pho. A broken 50-caliber machine gun was left with us. Tony worked on it and got it to fire a single round at a time. We took a bunch of tracers and set it up on the hillside. Through scopes we could see the enemy setting booby traps and mines about two miles away. So, we used the 50-cal to fire at them from long distance.

We had no expectations of hitting them, but if we could scare them from booby trapping the trails, we considered it a success. After firing about a dozen tracers arching off into the distance, an enemy 51-cal machine gun opened up on us. Rocks were flying all over the place. We hid behind a boulder and laughed about the long-distance firefight we were in.

For two months, Operation Desoto settled into a routine. About the end of March, I was replaced

and flew back to Chu Lai. The next day, I saw my replacement back in Chu Lai. Top Rogers told me that my replacement pulled himself out of the operation and flew back to Chu Lai to get away from the war. He was court martialed and discharged from the Marine Corps.

With about 70 days left in Vietnam, I started applying to colleges. I was trying to fit into my unit as an NCO. I had to learn to only say what needs to be said. I would have ended up a pretty smart guy if I'd learned from all the mistakes I made.

I was assigned to riding shotgun on convoys. It was a chance to see the area and get away from the base. My time in country was coming to an end. I was accepted at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University and looking forward to experiencing college life.

I was discharged on June 7, 1967 and decided to go out for freshman football at Oregon State. I wasn't very good, but I was glad I tried out. I declared history as my major.

My first history class included a forty-five-minute rant by the prof about the immoral war in Vietnam. He made the statement that it was the 17-year olds who were dying in Vietnam. I held up my hand and informed him that you had to be 18 to go to Vietnam. He told me that wasn't true. I told him I knew it was true because I was there.

The prof told me to see him after class, where he informed me that I wasn't going to do well in his class and should consider dropping it. I not only dropped his class but dropped history as a major. My roommate was a broadcasting major and suggested I should consider broadcasting. I tried a class and enjoyed it, so I changed my major and went into television.

After graduation I went to Portland to look for a TV director's job, but there were no openings. I was offered a job as a news cameraman with the promise that when a director's job opened up, I would get it. I started shooting news at KGW TV. It was totally addictive. Thirty years later, I put down the camera and became an assignment manager, newscast producer, and managing editor in a Seattle newsroom.

In 1989 I left local news to produce documentaries and work as a cameraman for ABC News. My first three documentaries were related to Vietnam. It was not intentional that I backed into this topic.

I asked a veteran to get some vet buddies together

to review a new movie. He asked five vets who were members of his PTSD therapy group. All the vets checked themselves into the VA Hospital after seeing the movie *Platoon*.

I became aware of the problem of suicide among Vietnam vets who were unable to put the war behind them. I had a buddy who was having nightmares, and he decided the way to stop the nightmares was to sleep with the barrel of his gun in his mouth. If he dreamed about the war, he might pull the trigger and end the problem. When his wife confirmed this behavior, I set out to change it.

The PBS documentary *Two Decades and a Wakeup* followed his PTSD therapy group back to Vietnam to see if returning to the now quiet battlefields would help them put the war behind them. We traveled from Hanoi to Saigon, stopping along the way where guys could walk their old battlefields. It made a big difference. Seven of the eight veterans were able to put the war behind them and move on. My buddy Bill told me several times that the experience saved his life. His wife told me she was amazed at how much he changed after the trip.

The second documentary was *Kontum Diary*. During the war, Paul Reed tried to kill a North Vietnamese soldier named Nguyen Van Nghia. Nghia was badly wounded but escaped into the jungle, leaving behind his backpack. Paul sent home

souvenirs he found in the backpack which included a diary. Twenty years later, Paul rediscovered the items in a closet. Paul had the small handwritten diary translated. When Paul read the diary of his former enemy, he saw they shared many of the same feelings about the war.

The documentary followed Paul's journey to Tien Hai, Vietnam, to return the diary to the enemy soldier he tried to kill. Paul and Nghia became good friends and traveled together back to the Kontum battlefield where they had tried to kill each other.

The third documentary, *The Journey Home*, followed up on Paul and Nghia. Paul brought Nghia to Dallas, Texas, to have doctors treat the injuries Nghia suffered during their battle. Nghia's son Dien went along to help his father during his recovery. However, as we prepared to return to Vietnam, Dien defected to the United States. Because of this, Paul was not allowed to escort Nghia back to his home in Tien Hai. It only served to cement their friendship. Paul has returned to Tien Hai, Vietnam, several times since then to visit his friend, Nguyen Van Nghia.

I produced, wrote, and shot another dozen documentaries before retiring at 71. One of those docs that I enjoyed producing was the two-hour *Smokejumpers Firefighters from the Sky*. The history of smokejumping was the primary focus of the show. 🦘

Birth of a Tree Farmer

by Doug Stinson (Cave Junction '54)

My wife and I live on a tree farm on a ridge above the Cowlitz River, thirty miles west of Mount Saint Helens. This morning I built a fire in our woodstove, did my yoga, and went to work in the woods, as I do every day. I drove my pickup out to a thirty-year-old alder stand about a half mile from the house. I cut down brush and stunted trees to open an old trail in anticipation of some young visitors later this summer. After I burned a tank of gas, (at 87, this is my daily limit), I rigged up a 100-foot rope to rappel down a particularly steep part of the trail. Every day I wake up and feel immensely grateful to be here on our family's farm, Cowlitz Ridge Tree Farm. The dream for this farm

began in the Missouri Ozarks.

I was raised in Mountain View, Missouri, on a hard-scrabble farm. My mother was a loving woman who was fond of the forest and wildflowers, and my father, a hard-working man, always managed to keep food on the table.

In the late 1940s, when I was a teenager, the Missouri Conservation Commission took on a new mission. At the time farmers were burning forests to create grasslands for grazing animals. The Commission wanted to eliminate grazing on forest land and began promoting growing timber as a crop. The Commission constructed a fire lookout three miles from our farm, and an active firecrew could quickly respond to any smoke. They also started



Doug and Fae Marie Stinson (Courtesy D. Stinson)

planting shortleaf pine on state forest land. My buddies and I loved to climb the lookout and, as I watched the pine grow, I decided I wanted to plant my own. My folks gave me ten acres on a rocky hillside and, at fifteen, I planted my first forest. I knew then I would be a forester.

The summer after my senior year in high school, I worked the wheat harvest in Kansas for a family called Boylan. I had mentioned my plans to go to college and study forestry, but as fall approached, I wasn't taking any steps toward leaving. One night after dinner, Mrs. Boylan said, "Douglas, you need to go to school. We'd love for you to stay, but it's more important to go to school." I packed up my stuff and drove my 1931 Model A back to Missouri. I sold the car and my mother took me to the University of Missouri at Columbia. It was two weeks after the start of the school year, but somehow, they let me in.

In 1952, after my freshman year, I came to Sutherlin, Oregon, to work on a fire suppression crew with the

Douglas Forest Protective Association. Our fire camp was located in Upper Hinkle Creek next to a Weyerhaeuser logging camp. The fire boss, Lloyd Thorton, quickly whipped the crew into shape by having us run through forest trails and cut endless cords of firewood. Our tools were crosscut saws, wedges and splitting mauls. The summer was a hot one, and it wasn't long before I saw my first crown fire.

I was on one of several crews sent to battle a fire burning near the logging camp. A large cold deck of logs was down in a steep canyon. Lloyd sent me and a buddy into the canyon with a fire pump and hose to spray water from a creek onto the cold deck. Just before we dropped down into the canyon, Lloyd grabbed my shoulder and said, "If you see any smoke coming out of the cold deck, drop everything and get up to the ridge as fast as you can."

After one hour of spraying the deck of logs, I saw a wisp, and then two minutes later, a larger plume of smoke. Lloyd's words flew through my mind. We shut off the pump and scrambled up to the ridge. Within five minutes of reaching the top, the cold deck exploded, and flames roared toward us through the tops of the trees. Dodging flying embers, we jumped into the fire trucks and headed to the next ridge, several miles off, where we finally managed to control the fire.

During my sophomore year in college, another forestry friend, **Howard Wolf** (MYC-53), and I went to see the movie, "Red Skies Over Montana." As we walked out of the movie, I said, "I want to be a smokejumper." He said, "Me, too." He jumped McCall in 1953 and I rookied at Cave Junction in 1954.

Oregon was love at first sight—big timber, mountains, and rivers. I knew I wanted to live and work in the Pacific Northwest. I started dreaming of my own patch of forest land.

Upon graduating with a degree in Forestry, I had the choice of being drafted into the Army or joining a service of choice. I chose the Marine Corps, arriving at Quantico on January 1, 1956, for Officer Candidate School. I served four years with time in Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines.

After leaving the Corps, another Marine and I decided to homestead in Alaska. It was 1959 and Alaska had just become a state, and there was free land. Our plan was to make a fortune near Talkeetna. To keep the land, 160 acres each, we were required to build a small shack, clear ten acres of brush, and plant a crop. We spent two months bushwhacking and camping while looking

for possible farm sites. The land was low quality, and no markets existed for any crop, so we decided against our plan. But “the fishin’ and huntin’” were good.

I moved to Juneau and got a job as a Junior Forester with the Forest Service. In the fall of 1959, I transferred to Ketchikan where I met a beautiful auburn-haired teacher named Fae Marie, who became my bride. We lived in logging camps in Edna Bay and Craig, Alaska, and soon had two children, Steve and Ann.

We loved our “kingdom by the sea,” but there is very little private land in Southeastern Alaska, and my urge to become a tree farmer was growing. We purchased 640 acres of timberland near Bonners Ferry, Idaho, and I planned to get a job nearby. But plans do not always work out. There were no “nearby” jobs, and I went to work as a timber cruiser for US Plywood in Roseburg, Oregon. We sold the Idaho land and purchased 200 acres in Roseburg. Our third child, Julie, was born there.

In 1970, US Plywood asked me to move to Washington State. After two years in Seattle, we found our land above the Cowlitz River in Toledo, WA. Since our marriage in 1960, Fae Marie and I had moved twelve times. It was time to settle down. We built a house in 1971, and it has been our home since.

In 1973 we did our first logging in Toledo, and I was hooked. With the profit, we were able to purchase more acreage in Mossyrock, WA. By now, I had a few guidelines for purchasing new ground: no steep ground (maximum side slope of 40%), no more than thirty miles from home, and high quality soil. With the purchase of land near Mossyrock, I was getting a very strong desire to become a full time tree farmer, but I still needed outside income. Tree farming is a long-term business. Tree farmers are usually timber rich and cash poor.

The children were 11, 9, and 7 when we moved to the tree farm and soon learned to work pulling tansy, mulching trees, planting trees—there is always work to do on a farm. I think our children learned to read in the woods. We mulched newly planted seedlings with newspaper. On Saturdays we would all be out mulching and, suddenly I’d realize it was a little too quiet. I’d look around to see them reading the local sports news, national politics, or Dear Abby.

In 1978, I left US Plywood to work for Conifer Pacific, a small veneer and plywood company near Elma, WA. Conifer Pacific did not own timberland; we purchased US Forest Timber sales to sustain our mills. I was in charge of timber procurement and the logging operations. My plan was to do this work for five years.

Due to the major economic downturn in the 1980s, I stayed thirteen.

In 1990 at age 57, it was time to fish or cut bait. I traded my shares in Conifer Pacific for the owner’s half interest in a 320 acre timberland we had purchased together. He threw in a D-4 Cat and a pickup, and I was in business. With this addition, we had four tracts totaling 1200 acres.

In 1994 we named our forest Cowlitz Ridge Tree Farm and drew up our first management plan. At that time, our son, Steve, was finishing his degree in Environmental Science at Evergreen and Julie was completing a degree in Forest Resources at Oregon State University. We put our heads together and wrote our goals: to earn a living, to live in balance with nature as a “partnership with nature,” and to educate the public and other land-owners on the values of good forest stewardship

We based our philosophy on the belief that diversity in our forests was important. Timber, watershed, soil health, wildlife, and recreation were values integrated into our management plan. We believe that through the integration of these values we would be leaving the land in better ecological condition than when it was purchased. All waters on the tree farm drain to the Cowlitz River, a steelhead, chinook and Coho salmon stream. Forests like ours were essential to providing clean, cool water for fish.

In 1998, Steve received a master’s degree in Silviculture from the University of Washington. I was so pleased that he had decided to follow in my tracks as a forester and tree farmer. He took Cowlitz Ridge Tree Farm to a new level. He was instrumental in converting a 33-year-old Douglas Fir Stand, severely infected with root rot, into a Ponderosa Pine and Western Red Cedar plantation. He started the practice of leaving snags in clearcuts to attract woodpeckers and other birds. He negotiated with state and federal agencies to procure alternate plans, allowing us to log closer to streams while still protecting the fish.

We worked together every day for many years. On one small logging job (2-3 acres), Steve fell the trees and I yarded the logs with our Model 21 Garrett Skidder. It was very satisfying for us, a father/son team, to produce a load of logs. We hired a self-loading logging truck to move the logs to the mill. Many times, at the end of a long day, we would relax in our wood fired sauna, drink a beer, and plan out our next Cowlitz Ridge adventure. The sauna became our “think tank.”

One idea we discussed often was how to pass the tree



Steve and Doug Stinson (Courtesy D. Stinson)

farm to the next generation. In 2012 we created a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) as the legal entity to govern the tree farm. At this time Fae Marie and I transferred the tree farm to Steve, Ann and Julie. Steve became the manager, and we continued working together daily.

Late in 2012, after experiencing discomfort he thought was a hernia, Steve was diagnosed with leiomyosarcoma, an aggressive soft tissue cancer. After two years of a bitter fight, he passed away at 52. His death was an earthquake to our family.

We decided to dissolve the 2012 LLC. In the end two parcels were sold to Port Blakely Tree Farms, a 175-year-old-forest resource company with a reputation for “doing the right thing.” We are very happy our land will remain in timber. In 2016, Ann and Lou Jean, my daughter-in-law, formed a new LLC with the remaining tracts. I am the senior advisor for long term planning and handle much of the day to day work.

As the three of us work in the forest tending seedlings or thinning young trees, we see deer, elk, coyotes, porcupines, and evidence of black bears and cougars. Eagles, Osprey hawks, Red-tailed hawks, ravens, wild pigeons, swallows, mourning doves, Saw Whet Owls, and pileated woodpeckers go about their daily lives in the trees.

This year, I discovered a Red-tailed hawk nest eighty-five feet up in a Cottonwood tree. The adult hawks feed in a twelve acre clear-cut we logged in 2018 and fly a half mile to their nest. I have placed two chairs in the woods out of sight of the nest where Fae Marie and I come to watch the nest in the evenings.

As I’ve lived in the forest with my hands in the dirt every day, I’ve become a keen observer. Two major changes have occurred since 1971: Our annual rainfall has decreased, and our summers are longer and drier. Every morning at seven for the past thirty years, I’ve recorded the rainfall; the average from 1990-2017 was 53 inches. In 2018 we received only 41 inches, a 23% decrease. In 2019, the rainfall was only 35 inches, a 34% decrease. In the seventies, it was standard practice to move logging operations from dirt roads to rocked roads by the 15th of September; now loggers run on dirt roads through October without being muddied out.

That’s a plus for the loggers, but the lack of rain and increased, sustained heat is stressing our native tree species. Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar, and Red Alder are all under duress.

Trees are like humans. When their immune system is weakened, they are vulnerable to disease. This lack of moisture is particularly a problem on droughty sites, like our Toledo site. The soil here is a glacial outwash with about one foot of topsoil, then twenty feet of gravel and sand. This lies on top of hardpan clay. Rain perks too fast through the gravel, then, when it hits the impenetrable clay, flows horizontally.

We have seen increased damage from laminated root rot, fir twig weevil, and a variety of fungi, all “opportunistic” diseases that attack stressed trees. With adequate rain, trees can still grow well, but with our reduced rainfall we have begun to change species. Eight years ago, we planted one hundred acres of westside Ponderosa Pine; the seed source is the Willamette Valley. A little known fact is that the earliest mills in the Willamette Valley cut Ponderosa Pine. Our pine is doing well.

In January of this year, we thinned a ninety-year-old stand in order to remove dead and dying Western Red Cedar. This is the first time mature cedars have died on this tract in our fifty year ownership. We replanted with drought resistant species—Incense Cedar, Port Orford Cedar, and Western White Pine, mixed in with Douglas Fir and Western Red Cedar.

We love visitors to come walk through our woods. We let the forest tell its own story as they walk the trails. If you’d like to come visit, please drop me a line at tree-man@toledotel.com.

I am most grateful to my daughter Ann for giving of her time and skills to make this article happen. 🙏



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

I'VE HAD A couple readers ask why I don't just write about fire and smokejumping in this column which I've written for over 20 years. The answer: There are more important things in life than smokejumping and fire.

Smokejumping was and is a key to a big part of my life. I would never trade the experiences and lessons that I have gotten from smokejumping and my work with Type II fire crews. However, when it comes down to important things in life, teaching and coaching young people has to move to the top. To me, there is nothing more important and ignored in this country than our young people.

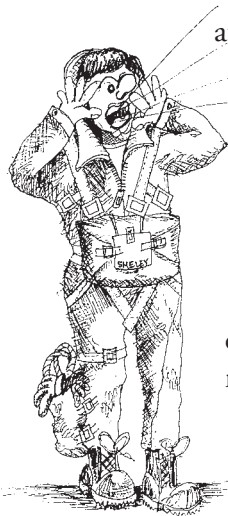
Today I received an email from one of our female jumpers who had a career with the USFS and is now retired. She told of her efforts to adopt her sister's four-year-old grand-

son who is now in foster care. I could not stop thinking of how important this is and what will be in the future of this young person. What happens now will determine what type of a person this young man will be when he is 18.

I taught at the Jr. High School level and coached Track and Cross Country at Chico High School. This gave me the opportunity to work with kids from the age of 11 to 18. Add on those students that went on to my fire crews, and I worked with them into their 20s.

When I first started teaching, an older and very wise teacher pulled me aside and said, "Sheley, you can't save 'em all." It was good advice. You do the best you can with all the students, but you have to pick and choose ones that you deal with over the long haul.

I taught boy's P.E. for 36 years in the era where we didn't have co-ed P.E. Young men at this age have endless energy, are in many cases, impulsive, and do a lot of stuff without thinking of the consequences. I found that at the high school level, I was able to talk and reason with my



athletes. Much harder at the Jr. H.S. level. Much like "containing ants in a can."

I was talking with my daughter recently, and she said the students always thought that I was a Marine Corps Drill Sergeant. Not the case, not a Marine, and was not a Drill Sergeant. The key with the Jr. H.S. students, where we had 120 in class with three instructors, was keeping control over a large group that could emotionally explode in seconds. Fights were common place. However, with a tightly run ship, I could stop a fight with just using my voice and telling them to "break it up." That was good as there were a good number of them that were over 200 pounds.

What I found to be a key in the young men with problems was the absence of a good home. Toward the end of my career, I wondered if Dads, and not the Spotted Owl, should be put on the endangered species list. I was very thankful for the Hispanics as the Mexican families were close and supportive of their children as a whole.

For the most part, I was at school for seven days a week. The gym and my office were open for a number of hours on Saturdays and after the 49er games on Sundays. Besides the ones who were gym rats,

there were a number who just wanted to come into my office and have someone to talk to.

The next important factor is early education. If these kids do not get the fundamentals and have success in the early grades, it leads to disaster at the Jr. H.S. level. Once they fall behind, many act out to get the attention that a bully gets by starting a fight. This makes up for their frustrations in the classroom. Society talks about the importance of a college education—definitely important. But we fail to realize that the foundation is built in the early grades. We lose them there and we probably won't get them back.

I've got my fingers crossed that my smokejumper friend can get her sister's grandchild out of foster care and into a

supportive environment. That will be key to what this child becomes.

One of my students from the '60s is a Native American. My first encounter with him was breaking up a fight. After I broke it up, he turned, and I thought he was going after me next. He then ran Track and Cross Country for me but did not participate when he moved to the high school. Another teacher, also a smokejumper, took him to Alaska one summer and got him on a fire crew for a bit of time.

Over the years he has been in and out of jail and has had numerous drug and alcohol problems. At first I made the mistake of giving him money for food before I caught on that it was just going toward the next drug purchase. On

numerous occasions, he would park in front of our house as he "slept it off."

He has cleaned up now and is getting close to 70 years old. I've been his friend for nearly 60 years now. His passion is to do "sweat lodges" for the Native American tribes in Northern California. Recently he said he wants to join my Wednesday morning coffee group once this COVID thing clears up. Sometimes it takes a little longer to achieve some success.

Being a smokejumper gives us the tools to do other things in life. I wish that the education of these young people would become a priority for the country. Remember, there are more important things in life than smokejumping and fire. 🇺🇸

John McDaniel Retires As NSA Membership Chair

by John McDaniel (Cave Junction '57)

I have been asked to chronicle the events that led up to my taking on the job of Membership Coordinator some sixteen years ago, and more importantly, what led me to smokejumping and my 29-year career in the U.S. Navy as a Naval Aviator.

When I was in the eighth grade back in West Virginia, I became interested in forestry through my involvement in the Boy Scouts. I was further encouraged by my 8th grade teacher, Mrs. Baughman, whose husband attended West Virginia University School of Forestry. He was killed in WWII but left all his books and papers. Mrs. Baughman, knowing of my interest in forestry, gave me those

books, some of which I still have.

Sometime thereafter, I read a book titled *Hank Winton—Smokejumper*. That did it! I resolved to apply when I was old enough and had some woods experience.

During my high school years (1951-1955), I was a member of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard and was trained as a parachute rigger.

I was a Freshman at the West Virginia University School of Forestry in 1956. During that school year, I worked part-time for the West



John McDaniel

Virginia Conservation Commission fighting fires and planting trees and anything else to earn some money. That summer I was hired by the USFS on the Monongahela NF as a laborer. A lot of ax work and lots of time dodging rattlesnakes!

In my sophomore year, 1957, I applied to and was hired by the USFS Siskiyou NF Smokejumper Base at Cave Junction, Oregon. There began a love affair that I have kept to this day. My time on the Gobi taught me a lot, not only how to best fight fires but how to be a man. With **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) in the lead, we were all over Oregon and Northern California and made many jumps. The next year was more of the same with plenty of fires and jumps into some very rugged terrain, not to mention some very tall trees, some of which I managed to find.

The third year was different, a whole lot different. Jim Allen called me at school and asked how soon I could get back to the Gobi. He had a special project on which he wanted to send me. After two finals, it was off to Cave Junction again with my interest running high. A quick three jumps and then load onto the Twin Beech with Red Scholtz and a flight to Baker, Oregon (now Baker City).

The job was to fly “bird dog” for a contractor spraying bugs in old WWII aircraft. There was a PBY, a DC-2 ½ (that’s a DC-3 wing and a DC-2 fuselage) and a TBM. We, that is the contract pilot and me in a Cessna 180, were to lead the spray planes into the area and then overfly the action in case they got into trouble. Should there be a crash, I was to parachute into the scene and render what help I could. How I was supposed to jump from the 180 with all my gear remains unknown. I guess I could, but thankfully I never had to. This was an all-summer event with infrequent returns to Cave Junction where Jim Allen was kind enough to give me a couple practice jumps. No fire jumps obviously, but I did get a lot of “stick time” in the 180. The contract pilot liked to doze.

College graduation came in January 1960 and, lo and behold, the USFS rehired me as a professional forester on the Siskiyou Powers Ranger Station. I was invited back to the Gobi to refresh just in case I would be needed to oversee any fires. Much to my disappointment, my Ranger would

not let me jump saying that I would be no good to him if I got hurt (never did in three years of jumping). Thus, after about a year, I decided to follow a different career.

I had always wanted to fly, so I took the written and medical tests for the Navy, passed them, and was given a class date starting in six months at NAS Pensacola.

The following is a capsulated chronology of my 29 years flying for the US Navy: I arrived in Pensacola in the spring of 1961 for sixteen weeks of pre-flight training. Lots of PT and classroom work under the guidance of a US Marine. Then, finally a Commission in the USN.

Primary training at Saufley Field was a “weed out” for those not adapted. We flew the T-34 trainer for 16 weeks while attending ground school.

Off to Basic training at Whiting Field, Milton, Florida, in the T-28. This aircraft is a handful for a young pilot. At 1,425 hp, it’s a goer. What followed was familiarization, basic instruments, radio instruments, formation, and air-to-air gunnery. If one managed to get through this, it was off to Saufley Field again for Carrier Qualifications in the T-28C. What followed was a very intense training schedule. Once completed it was off to the Training Carrier (USS Antitum) for two touch and goes and six arrested landings. What can I say—it’s a blast. Might even replace sex.

Following the carrier work, I was assigned to Advanced Training at Corpus Christi, Texas. Some people split off and went to jets, some to multi-engine, and others with great flight grade (yes, me) got their choice. I chose single-engine attack, the AD-6 Skyraiders. There we did more instruments (got our instrument cards), formation, gunnery, air-to-ground bombing, and all-weather night flying.

In July 1962, I got my wings. I went through rather quickly. Primarily because of my past experiences and great instructors who figured I could handle an accelerated pace. I will always remember my primary instructor, LT George Nimela, who said, “You know how to fly—now I will teach you to fly the Navy way.”

What followed was a one-year tour in Milton, Florida, as an instructor teaching formation flying. Lots of T-28 time.

My first fleet assignment was at NAS North Island, San Diego, flying the AD-5W, followed by two deployments to the western Pacific on the USS Bennington. It was then that I was selected for a regular commission.

The Vietnam War was smoldering, and I was needed at Alameda NAS, Oakland, California, to fly the AD-5Q. And so, I deployed to the Pacific on various attack carriers to provide Electronic Countermeasure coverage to the bombers.

It was while at Alameda, I met the Commanding Officer of an A-4 outfit that was created to fly cover to assets in Vietnam. He needed some help training his pilots in carrier work. I had become a qualified Landing Signal Officer, which he needed. If I could train his pilots, he would check me out in jets (A-4 Skyhawk).

Thus, I became a qualified jet pilot. When the Bureau of Naval Personnel learned of my qualifications, that was the end of my AD-5 flying, and I received orders to NAS Lemoore, California, to teach jet instruments. The Navy needed Light Attack jet pilots as the war dragged on. Losses were fairly high.

About a year, and lots of jet time, the Bureau of Naval Personnel learned of my Landing Signal Qualification (LSO) and, much to the chagrin of my CO, shipped me off to the Replacement Air Group. There I flew the A-4 and instructed day and night carrier landings. It was about this time that I had the opportunity to check out in other airwing aircraft. I flew the F-8 Crusader (supersonic fighter), the Twin Beech, and other twin-engine aircraft.

Now I was in the light attack community where I wanted to be. How I pulled this off would not be possible in today's Navy, but it worked for me then. Soon I transitioned to the A-7 aircraft, which is just a fat A-4 with more fuel and bomb-carrying capacity. An opening occurred in an A-7 squadron. I volunteered and was deployed to Vietnam for the third time (with a combat waiver as two tours were the limit). After the tour to Vietnam was over with, it was time for shore duty.

Capt. Jim Busey, CO of Attack Squadron 125 (VA-125), was having trouble with some pilots during the day/night carrier qualifications which led to some accidents. He wanted it fixed and asked me if I would return to the RAG (Replace-

ment Air Group) to help put a stop to the accidents. It took a personal request from the CO to the Bureau to get me. I was viewed as having too much flight time.

Nevertheless, I got orders to VA-125 again. I have to say the accidents stopped after a few asses were kicked. After a successful tour, I was posted to the LATWING Staff as Safety Officer working for a wonderful man, ADM Bill Lawrence, who had been a POW in Hanoi for seven years. I received a big surprise in 1975 when I was notified that I had screened for a squadron command and would return to Kingsville, Texas, to take over an Advanced Training A-4 squadron.

Following two years in Kingsville, I received a call from The Bureau telling me my next assignment was "long and grey" as "Carrier Ships Company." The flying was over. My assignment was as Air Officer (Air Boss) on the nuclear carrier USS Eisenhower where I made two deployments and a full training cycle.

In the Spring of 1981, my orders were to the US Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, for a one-year study and was selected to attend the NCC (Naval Command College) as the U.S. Navy's representative in an international class of senior officers from all over the world. It was a great year and I made many friends from all over the world. We graduated in June 1982.

New orders: I was assigned to Plans and Policy in the Pentagon. I spent two years in foreign travel and dealing with the Navy higher-ups. After that experience and dealing with the Washington bureaucracy, I decided to retire, which I did in June 1984. Thus ended 28 ½ years of service.

In retirement my wife and I moved to Virginia. I got re-acquainted with the NSA and in June 2004. I attended the Missoula Reunion where I met **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) and volunteered my services. That's how I became the Membership Coordinator. We have made some changes on how we do business, but for the most part I haven't messed with the procedures that were originally established. We are some 1500 members strong, but we lose older jumpers every year and the younger guys don't show interest in joining.

Many thanks for your kind words and support over the years. Hope to see you at the next reunion. 🙏

As I Best Remember It

by Mike Bina (Missoula '68)

Being retired—and now with COVID ‘stay-at-home’ social-distancing—I have found time to go through valued old treasures in the attic, including long forgotten photographs. I came across this one.

This unique moment, captured on film 52 years ago, vividly flooded my mind with most, but not all the details. I had to think hard to fill in the blank gaps. One would think that if “a picture is worth a thousand words,” I wouldn’t have to think so hard.

As such, my description of this event is “As I best remember it.” I hope a fellow jumper on this

fire will recall this very moment, telling us as Paul Harvey used to say, “The rest of the story.”

I was thrilled to be one of about 15 Missoula jumpers to be dispatched to Alaska in the summers of 1968 and 1969. After we jumped this fire on July 3, 1969, near McGrath doing initial attack, the BLM began helicoptering in additional firefighters.

When doing PLFs on the tundra, I noted how soft the “landing pad was,” but how difficult the tundra “clumps,” or “the tussocks” as Tom Boatner (FBX-80) reminded me, were to walk on. I recall getting nowhere fast with my feet slipping



(Courtesy M. Bina)

off the tussocks down to the solid permafrost. Perhaps this will account for what happened to the helicopter.

We were making steady progress beating the advancing flames down with our black spruce boughs. Keeping our full focus on the fireline, we paid no attention to the silence being broken by the incoming Hiller helicopter's loud engines and circling rotor blades slicing the air.

The helicopter landed. Suddenly, one side of the helicopter skid slipped off the tundra tussocks, tipping the aircraft enough for one of the rotor blades to hit the ground. The rotor blades and the unique sound they produced stopped instantly. With the engine running and the rotor in gear, the sudden stop of the rotor caused such great force that the metal drive shaft sheared—emitting the subsequent impossible to describe eerie, distressful, ear-piercing sounds. Simultaneously, the helicopter was hurled 15-20 feet in the air and then harshly crashed down with a thunderous thud coming to rest on its side. The engine was turned off. Total silence of the wilderness returned.

With the fast-approaching fire and yet-to-be-determined status of the firefighters and aircraft crew and with the aviation fuel on board with some possibly spilled, imminent danger prevailed.

Jumpers did what jumpers are trained to do. Though not trained specifically for this type of emergency, they responded with calm and determined resolve. They assessed the situation, rendered first aid, and safely evacuated the aircraft crew and fire fighters. But the fire continued to advance toward the downed helicopter. It was no more than a few minutes away.

A nearby retardant plane heading to another fire was radioed. Fortunately, it was diverted. Better than any Hollywood movie script could detail, the retardant plane came in, circled once, and then dropped its on-target load accurately putting retardant between the fire and the helicopter. Danger averted.

Stepping back awaiting the retardant drop, I snapped this picture using my trustworthy Kodak Instamatic. Very soon thereafter, I recall my spruce bough back in hand beating the fire—playing what had just happened over and over in my mind.

Thanks to **Denny Breslin** (NCSB-69) for finding the NTSB accident report. There was one serious injury. The report found, “The pilot selected unsuitable terrain. Landed on muskeg humps while his attention was diverted from operation of the aircraft to cargo on rack.”

Sharing this story with Tom Boatner, he wrote, “For the years I was in AK, all of our helicopter contracts required the ships to have tundra pads bolted to the bottom of the skids. The skids were tubular and didn't have much flotation on soggy or tussocky ground. The tundra pads were long sheets of metal, maybe 8 to 12 inches wide, bolted to the bottoms of the skids to provide the flotation and stability required in lots of Alaska tundra or muskeg.”

Tom continued, “I can easily envision a helicopter with no pads slipping through tussocks and going cockeyed. Maybe that accident you were a part of led to the tundra pad requirement. Can you tell from your photo whether the ship had pads bolted to the skids?”

As can be seen in the photo, the helicopter had no such tundra pads bolted to its skids. This, as Tom suggested, might have been the last of the ships without tundra pads. This is “As I best remember it.” 📷

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Helping Other Smokejumpers

and Their Families

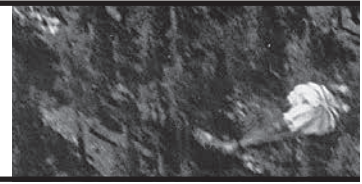
Send us your Smokejumper or other pins, Trail Crew pins, and/or patches that are hiding in your sock drawer. We'll sell them to collectors on eBay with all money going into the NSA Good Samaritan Fund and acknowledge you in a later issue.

*Send to: Chuck Sheley—10 Judy Ln—Chico
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THE JUMP LIST

MEN OF THE '40s



LEO P. COMPTON (MYC-47)

Leo enlisted in the Army during WWI right out of high school in 1943 and was assigned to the Army Air Corps where he was trained to be a B-17 pilot. After the war Leo enrolled at Boise Jr. College and played two years of football. He jumped at McCall in 1947 and got eight fire jumps. At Idaho City in 1948, Leo got two fire jumps.

Leo was injured on a fire jump in Idaho when his chute was collapsed by a tree and he dislocated both ankles and a wrist. He has to wait 24 hours for a rescue team to jump in and carry him out.

Leo graduated from Idaho State University with a degree in education and taught for 20 years. He received his master's degree in 1968 and went to advertising where he worked until 1985 when he retired. Leo then substitute taught in the school system until he was 85. He was 94 in July 2020.

HARRIS A. WILTZEN (MSO-48)

Harris was born and grew up in North Dakota and graduated from Deering H.S. in 1939. He joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and entered Dakota College School of Forestry in 1942 the same year he joined the Army Reserve Corps. Harris was called to duty in 1943 and served in

the Pacific Theatre with the 8th Army.

After his discharge in 1946, he moved to Missoula and enrolled in the Univ. of Montana and graduated with a degree in Forestry in 1949. Harris jumped at Missoula during the 1948 season. His first job was with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), where he worked until 1969 planning and planting farmstead and field windbreaks.

In 1971 he and his wife bought two woodland tracts and began their tree farm work. Over the years, they developed sound, progressive forestry practices e.g. thinning, salvage and horse logging, grass seeding and streambed awareness. Harris retired from the SCS in 1980 to devote more time to improving his woodland units. In 1984 he received the Montana Tree Farmer of the Year Award.

From 1986 through 1988, he bought three more units, totaling over 1,000 acres. Harris continued to manage his units on a daily basis by removing blowdown, beetle and drought kill, and weakened trees. From 1992 to 2002, he was an advisory member of the Sanders Country Board of Supervisors and was awarded the Life Achievement Award by the Montana Tree Farm Association in 2004.

His daughter, Barbara, said

that Harris continued to work his tree farm until he suffered a broken leg in 2015. He is living in Bozeman, MT. and, at age 98, is still talking about going back to work in his woodlands. Harris' goal has always been to create sustainable forestry with ample wildlife habitat and beauty.

WILBUR R. "BILL" GROPP (MSO-46)

Bill started summer work for the Forest Service in May of 1940 (shortly before he turned sixteen) doing trail maintenance, smokechasing, and as a lookout. In a 2020 interview with *Smokejumper*, "I was visiting my brother, Howard, with my father and the Assistant Ranger came by. It was a bad fire season and the Ranger asked my Dad if it was okay if I was hired. Dad was okay, so my USFS work started. I graduated from high school in 1942 and worked as a lookout the rest of the summer.

Bill then went to a welding school and worked at the Kaiser Shipyard in Vancouver, WA. He joined the Marines in May of 1943. "I was in the battle of Iwo Jima and luckily to come out in one piece." He was discharged in March of 1946.

"I had been accepted to return to lookout duty, but my brother, Howard, was returning to

Missoula for smokejumping (he had jumped in 1942) and needed transportation, so I took him. At Missoula, Earl Cooley offered me a job, so I cancelled my lookout job and started training as a smoke-jumper.” Bill jumped the 1946 season with two fire jumps.

“My brother and I went to Farragut College & Technical Institute to learn the ‘body and fender’ trade. We planned on opening our own shop. The work didn’t suit me, so I applied for work at several utilities. I was hired by the Washington Water Power Co. and started an apprenticeship as a Hydro-Power operator—did a three year ‘on the job’ stint and ended up as a power dispatcher for them. In 1962 I took a job with Bonneville Power Administration to get away from shift work.”

Bill moved to the Seattle area and eventually ended up in Albany, OR. where he worked until retirement in 1983. He was 96 on June 14, 2020.

GEORGE B. HARPOLE (MSO-49)

George was a rookie smokejumper in 1949 and also jumped during the fire seasons of 1950 and 1952 to help pay his tuition to earn a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration from the University of Montana. He had 11 fire jumps over those three seasons. Later he earned a Master’s Degree in Forestry Economics from the University of California at Berkeley.

George then spent 25 years

working for the U.S. Forest Service as a Forestry Conservation Economist in Berkeley, California, and Madison, Wisconsin, followed by another 25 years as an independent consultant focusing on the creation of Stewardships in the forested areas of New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado.

His focus as a consultant was related to the fire mitigation removals and utilization of small diameter trees and flash fuel materials by the way of creating Stewardships that could be contracted with the Federal, State and/or private forest authorities. George formally retired at the age of 85 upon the publication of his co-authored Department of Agriculture Research Paper (General Technical Report 236), entitled “The Evolutionary History of OSB Board” published in February 2015. He is a Life Member of the NSA.

LLOYD A. “CHUCK” PICKARD (MSO-48)

Seventeen-year-old Marine Lloyd Pickard lost his sea bag during the invasion of the Mariana Islands in the South Pacific. A friend, Charles Armstrong, gave him a spare combat jacket with the name “Chuck” stenciled on the back. The young Marine wore it everywhere, even in college after the war. Soon, everyone was calling him “Chuck.” They still do.

Born in Brockton, Massachusetts, September 29, 1925, Chuck was a contemporary of Rocky Marciano. “Same

neighborhood, different gang. It was an Irish-Italian thing.”

Interviewed by *Smokejumper* magazine in 2004, 60-plus years later, Chuck’s booming, still Boston-accented voice filled the big enclosure.

He quit high school in 1942 to join the Marines, spending 27 months hopping from one Japanese-held tropical island to the next. Familiar names like Saipan, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Eniwetok and Tinian, and the not so familiar Nuku’alofa and Funafuti. Once the Japanese were supposedly chased off an island, Chuck’s anti-aircraft battery was brought in to protect American airfields, bombers and their crews from Japanese nighttime bombings. The reality was that his battery was regularly attacked by fanatical Japanese soldiers bypassed by the Marine assault forces. Chuck’s best friend from high school, who had joined the Marines with him, was killed in action.

Discharged exactly four years after Pearl Harbor Day, Chuck enrolled in Massachusetts State College, studying forestry. The summers of ’46 and ’47 found him working for the Forest Service in exotic (especially for an Easterner) places like Priest River Falls in the northern tip of the Idaho panhandle. He visited the last of the big Rocky Mountain logging camps in their heyday. Diamond Match Company drove huge white pine logs hundreds of miles down rivers, across lakes, and, where necessary, through spectacular

flumes to mills in Newport, Washington. It was the old Wild West, and Chuck saw it all.

Chuck joined the Missoula jumpers in 1948, making squadleader in his first year. In 1949 he trained most of the jumpers that perished at Mann Gulch. "They were college kids that arrived late for training, and that's why I got them." Chuck made six fire jumps over three seasons.

Another time, Chuck's crew jumped the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. **Fred Brauer** (MSO-41) offered Chuck a choice of hiking out 18 miles to Yellow Jacket or attempting to raft down the river, using war surplus rubber rafts that would be dropped in. Sliding down the steep slope of the canyon toward the river, Chuck hoped that the rafts would arrive intact. They did, and the first rafting trip down the Salmon was soon history.

Chuck left jumping in the fall of 1950. He and a buddy traveled to Florida to visit an aunt. Three weeks later, he was wearing the uniform of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. "Badge #25. Lots of gunplay." After six months he donned the plain clothes of a detective. Thirteen years later he formed his own private detective agency, selling out in 1977.

Chuck's fond memories of jumping were not exclusively those of falling out of airplanes. He would occasionally visit downtown Missoula, often in the company

of **Gar Thorsrud** (MSO-46), to mingle with the city's café society. "Bunch of red-nosed loggers and cowboys would play in a string band on the street outside the Silver Dollar. Some of them were pretty good." *Written in 2004 by John Helmer (RDD-59)*

ROBERT J. "BOB" SCOFIELD (CJ-49)

Due to wartime enlistments and lack of manpower, Bob started working with the Forest Service at age 16 and had two seasons working in Blister Rust Control and two as a lookout before he went to smokejumping. He was a student at Oregon State in Forest Management and, being very familiar with the Siskiyou NF, Cave Junction was a natural for him to enter the smoke-jumper program.

Bob jumped the 1949 (five fire jumps) and '50 (three fire jumps) seasons, but at the end of the 1950 season, he didn't go back to school and was drafted. He was a Sergeant First Class in the Army Signal Corps stationed in Germany.

When he came back from the military in 1953, Bob did his refresher training along with rookie and future astronaut **Stuart Roosa**. He remembers Roosa as a "sharp go-getter." They jumped out of Medford that year, and he made seven fire jumps.

In 1954 he made squadleader and had three fire jumps—a slow season. 1955 was his last year as a jumper, and he made four fire jumps. Foreman **Cliff Marshall** (CJ-

46) also stands out in Bob's memory. Marshall, **Charley Clemensen** (CJ-48), and Bob jumped a fire. Unknown to the other two, Marshall broke his leg. The ex-paratrooper told Bob and Charley to take care of the fire indicating that he would be along later.

In 1955 he graduated from Oregon State with his degree in Forest Management and started a career with the Forest Service as District Ranger on the Routt NF in Colorado. He continued his career with the Forest Service retiring in 1984. Bob currently lives in Medford, OR.

GENE E. HINKLE (MSO-47)

Gene graduated from Missouri State University with a degree in Business Administration. He started his career in the financial field but changed to real estate in 1954. Gene was selected as the Outstanding Young Man of Albuquerque in 1957 and the same honor for the State of New Mexico in 1958.

In 1958 he started the real estate firm of Walker and Hinkle and was its President for 20 years. The firm was the largest all-purpose firm in the state, employing over 100 salesmen.

Later Gene started the Hinkle Corporation, Hinkle Income Properties LLC, Hinkle Homes and Hinkle Investments. He managed income properties for over 60 years.

He was 92 in July 2020 and he and his wife celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in Nov. 2020.

Gene jumped at Missoula in 1947 with four fire jumps and is a NSA Life Member currently living in Albuquerque, NM.

JONATHAN L. "SCOTTY" SCOTT (MYC-48)

Scotty graduated from Homedale High School (ID) in 1948 where he lettered in football, boxing, basketball and track. He then went to the College of Idaho on a football scholarship, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1952. He was Captain of the football team and Student Body President his senior year. While attending college, he jumped at McCall 1948-51 making 30 fire jumps including an impressive 14 fire-jump season in 1949.

Scotty was among the first group of smokejumpers recruited to work for the CIA. After two years working in Taiwan, he went into the USAF and pilot training. He finished in 1955 flying F-86 Saber Jets at Nellis AFB.

In 1955 he started in the management training program at Albertson, Inc. and was President and CEO by 1965. 1975 found Scotty as President and CEO of A&P, headquartered in New York, NY.

In 1980 he started JLS Enterprises Inc., developing shopping centers in the south, mainly in Texas and Florida. 1987 found him as President and CEO of American Super Stores, headquartered in Pennsylvania. After a move to Salt Lake City, he retired in 1992.

Between 1981 and 2001,

Scotty was a consultant with Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz, and later his son, as they built the largest supermarket chain in Saudi Arabia. He is a NSA Life Member.

JAMES L. "JIM" MURPHY (MSO-48)

In high school, Jim worked three summers as a lookout fireman for the USFS in the Lolo District. In 1948 he became a smokejumper for the three summers while in college making nine fire jumps.

Jim graduated from the Univ. of Montana in 1951 with a degree in accounting and went into the USAF as a 2nd Lt during the Korean War.

After release from active duty, he worked for the Univ. of Nevada and then joined a local CPA firm as an accountant.

During his accounting career, he became a partner in the firm which eventually merged with the big national firm of Grant Thornton. "In the many years until I retired, and I actually still work, I was President of the Nevada CPA organization. I was elected to the Executive Board for six years at Grant, which involved the management activities for the then 360 partner firm."

"After being separated from the Air Force, I remained in the reserve forces for a full 30 years and went on active duty annually and occasionally during the year. The last 12 years, until I retired in 1981, I was assigned to the Air Force Academy as a Liaison Officer, became a Colonel, and was the

leader of these activities for the state of Nevada, a fairly stressful activity during the Vietnam War."

"After stepping back from my accounting career, I was elected to the Board of Directors of a major utility company and served for 12 years on various committees including the Audit Committee. I also became a trustee in 1983 of the Bill and Moya Lear Trust (the Learjet founder and other aviation projects) and am currently still active in that position."

"I credit the USFS for the three summers when in high school and the three summers as a jumper for creating much of my successes in life through all of the fun and adventure that has been so important in my life."

"In 1948 the Missoula jumpers had some 160 active jumpers, especially those men who visioned and brought to life the whole organization. Many of my high school classmates became jumpers, including my brother, as it was the thing to do in those years."

"In my first year, some of our chutes were of the old army types and were quickly discarded. Because of the large group at Missoula, I did not get a lot of fire jumps. I was lucky to have missed the Mann Gulch fire as I had just made the jump list after returning from a fire in Idaho."

"One of my jumps was for a movie that became 'Red Skies of Montana.' Another was in October to find a lost hunter in the Middle Fork area

of Idaho, which was written up in the Missoula paper. So, I have concluded that all of the many experiences I had as a

teenager gave me the confidence and encouragement to do most anything that was productive. It was a great time

in my life, and I am proud to have been a jumper all those years ago.” Jim is NSA Life Member #8. 🧑‍🚒



RECORDING SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY



The 1940 Crew—The Pioneers NSA History Preservation Project

James A. “Smokey” Alexander (Missoula ’40)

The last member of the original 1940 smoke-jumper crew, Jim Alexander, died June 23, 2014. Smokey was one of the thirteen original smoke-jumpers trained in 1940. He was a graduate of the University of Montana and the forest service employee who represented the Cabinet NF in the first smokejumper training group.

From a 2004 interview with *Smokejumper* magazine: “To choose who would be the first smoke-jumpers, (David) Godwin decided to choose ten men, one to represent each of the ten major forests. He wanted each man to have a minimum of five years experience fighting fires. The supervisor chose me in the spring of ’40 to represent the Cabinet National Forest.

“We were at a place called Blanchard Flats, just north of Seeley Lake. Each new jumper made six practice jumps: three jumps at Blanchard Flats and three jumps at the landing strip before any were made in timber. We had two minor injuries during the training. One was a sprained ankle. The other was one guy’s ripcord got caught in the shroud lines, and he pulled his shoulder pulling the ripcord. Another guy didn’t pull his ripcord until 2,000 feet, and Frank Derry sent the guy on his way. The guy didn’t want to continue jumping anyway.”

On July 20, 1940, he and Dick Lynch (MS0-40) jumped the third fire in smokejumper history on the Cox Creek Fire, Bitterroot NF. They found

the fire by coordinating azimuth readings from two lookouts and put it out shortly after smoke started appearing above the trees. The fire was so isolated that it took them 19 hours to walk about 40 miles to the nearest ranger station.

Smokey began Intermountain Business Forms in 1960 while living in Boise. After moving to North Carolina in 1989, he and his wife, Dorothy, returned to Boise in 2005.

Earl E. Cooley (Missoula ’40)

Earl, 98, died November 9, 2009, at his home in Missoula. He graduated from Corvallis (Montana) High School in 1930 and started Forestry School at the University of Montana in 1937, graduating in 1941. Earl was a member of the first smokejumper group trained in 1940 at Seeley Lake, MT. There were seven trainees selected from Region 1. One failed his physical, the other dropped out, leaving four trainees in at Seeley Lake. Rufus Robinson completed his training earlier at Winthrop. Earl completed his training with seven jumps.

On July 12, 1940, he and Rufus Robinson made the first fire jumps in U.S. history on the Marten Creek Fire on the Nez Perce NF.

Earl started work as a District Ranger on the Nez Perce NF in 1950 and returned to Missoula as Smokejumper Base Superintendent in 1958. In 1971 he became a Regional Equipment Specialist, retiring in 1975 to pursue a career in Real Estate.

Earl was founder and past president of the National Smokejumper Association.

Chester N. Derry (Missoula ’40)

Chet, 31, died April 20, 1947, when the John-

son Flying Service plane he was piloting collided with another plane over the airport at Hamilton, Montana. He was born April 19, 1916, in Wenatchee, WA.

Chet was one of the four professional parachute jumpers to participate in the USFS 1939 experimental parachute program at Winthrop, Washington. The USFS smokejumper program starting in 1940 was the result of the success of the 1939 experimental program.

Chet made the first smokejumper rescue jump on July 15, 1940, when he parachuted to a downed Johnson Flying Service Travelair on the Bitterroot NF. Pilot Bob Maricich was on a cargo run when a wing clipped a tree. He was killed and cargo kicker Del Claybaugh was seriously injured. Chet had three fire jumps that season and two more during the 1941 season.

Chet went into the Army Air Corps in 1943 and was a pilot with the Air Transport Command in China and Burma flying the "hump." Upon his discharge from the military in 1946, Chet returned to Missoula and joined the Johnson Flying Service as an instructor and pilot. He is buried in the Missoula, Montana, Cemetery.

Frank Derry M. (Missoula '40)

Frank Derry died August 2, 1968, in Kalispell, Montana, five days after his 64th birthday. He was a resident of Bigfork. Frank was born July 27, 1904, in Wenatchee, WA. Frank spent the summer of 1922 as a smokechaser on the Wenatchee NF.

In 1934 Frank moved to California and worked for Northrop Aircraft in the Los Angeles area. Frank established the Derry Parachute Service business in 1936 and became the west coast distributor of Eagle Parachutes.

In 1939 Frank, brothers Chet and Virgil, and Glenn Smith provided the professional expertise for the USFS experimental parachute project in Winthrop, Washington. All four were professional parachutists from the Los Angeles area.

The USFS smokejumper program, born in 1940, was a result of the success of the 1939 experimental program. Frank is responsible for the development of the static line system in 1941 and the steerable parachute in 1942-43. The addition of "Derry slots" and guidelines allowed

any standard flat parachute to be converted into one which fit the needs of a person parachuting into rugged terrain. Frank continued on with the smokejumper program until 1945.

Frank's contribution to the smokejumper program can't be overstated. He was head instructor to an estimated 400 smokejumpers. His development of jumpsuits, harnesses, and parachute canopies was key to the new smokejumper program.

Virgil W. Derry (Winthrop '40)

Virgil, 86, of Sun City, Arizona, died January 31, 1995, after a brief illness. He was born in November 1908 in Chelan, WA. Along with Glenn Smith and his brothers Frank and Chet, he was one of the four original members of the 1939 USFS experimental parachute program which led to the establishment of the smokejumper program.

"I was driving a laundry truck in Wenatchee, WA, in 1939 when Frank contacted me and asked if I wanted to make some money?" That took him to the experimental program at Winthrop. "The first tree I landed in was about a 100-foot pine. I stayed there for about two hours trying to get up enough nerve to climb down. The ground crew told me to come down by wrapping my arms and legs around the trunk and sliding down. Didn't make sense at first, but I tried it and it worked. After that, they gave us ropes to use."

Virgil only jumped the 1940 season at Winthrop. On August 11, 1940, Virgil and George Honey jumped the second fire in Region 6 history. It was his only fire jump of his short smokejumper career.

He later worked in Spokane as a parachute technician rigging for the Army pilots until the war was over. Virgil went to Belfast, Ireland, in 1944 to instruct Army parachutists and riggers in preparation for the invasion. After the war, he owned and operated a couple motels, owned a couple shrimp boats in Texas, and lost it all in a 1970 hurricane. He moved to Hawaii and started hang gliding at the age of 65 for ten years until the authorities refused to allow him to continue.

Virgil retired to Sun City, AZ, in 1991.

George P. Honey (Winthrop '40)

Smokejumping lost one of its original pioneers

with the passing of George Phillip Honey on Dec. 3, 2001, in Entiat, WA, at the age of 95.

George began his career with the Forest Service in 1940, jumping out of Winthrop. He was also a spotter and cargo dropper and patrolled the wilderness for fires. From 1943 to 1946, he lived at 8 Mile Ranch and managed the ranch and the Forest Service horses and mules. During the '40s, George and his partner, Francis Lufkin (NCSB '40), trapped in the Pasayten area and hunted cougars.

In 1948 he went to work for the Road Department and became Construction and Maintenance Foreman for Roads and Trails in the Chelan National Forest, which at that time included the Okanogan National Forest. His first project after becoming foreman was the "Great Flood of 48" and he was deluged with work on washed-out roads and trails. He continued with the Road Department until his retirement in 1967.

George was born on Feb. 10, 1906, at Fort Walla Walla, WA, to Allen and Anna (Enfield) Honey. That same year George moved with his parents and two older brothers by riverboat up the Columbia River to homestead on Tunk Mountain near Conconully, WA. He attended school in Conconully and Pleasant Valley.

George was an avid horseman and worked at that trade for many years, participating in many area rodeos. He enlisted in the Army and served in the Philippine Islands. While in the Army, he became a boxer. Returning from the Army, he boxed professionally under the name "Soldier George Honey." On Sept. 7, 1932, he married Hazel Zackman. They had two sons, George, Jr. and Raymond.

After retiring from the Forest Service, he worked for Wagner Lumber as foreman in the rock crushing operations, as well as for Rollie Schrier's Cement Plant and Archie Walter's feedlot in the Basin. George was an avid hunter, bagging many species of big game. His favorite hunting was in British Columbia with his brother, Leonard, and son, George, Jr.

Francis B. Lufkin (Winthrop '40)

Francis, 83, died on February 12, 1998, in Bellingham, WA. He was born August 1, 1914, in Auburn, WA. Francis graduated from high school

in 1933 and went to work seasonally for the USFS. During the winter, he worked as a faller/bucker and ran trap lines in the Methow Valley near Winthrop.

Francis was one of the USFS employees assigned to the 1939 experimental parachute program as a climber to help get parachutes out of the trees. One thing led to another and, after 30 minutes of instruction given by Frank Derry, he made his first parachute jump on November 10, 1939.

In 1940 Francis, George Honey, Dick Tuttle, and Rufus Robinson were trained at Winthrop for the first smokejumper crew. On August 10, 1940, he and Glenn Smith made the first fire jumps in Region 6. In 1941 he went to Nine Mile RS for refresher training and to learn parachute rigging before returning to Winthrop to be dispatcher for the Chelan NF and manage cargo dropping operations. This pattern continued for the 1942-44 fire seasons.

In 1945 he became the Chelan NF Parachute Project Officer, and the Winthrop Base opened with a crew of conscientious objector jumpers (CPS-103).

Francis went on to manage the North Cascades smokejumper base until 1972 when he retired after 33 years with the USFS. He is buried in the Sullivan Cemetery, Winthrop, WA.

Richard Charles Lynch (Missoula '40)

Dick was born December 8, 1908, in Shakopee, Scott County, Minnesota. By 1930, he moved to Columbia Falls, Montana, working as a laborer in a lumber camp and by October 1940, he was working for the Flathead NF as a Forest Guard. He was one of the seven selected representatives from several forests in Region 1 to start the smokejumper program in 1940. Richard was the representative from the Flathead NF. One of the men in the original group did not pass the physical and the other dropped out during training.

Dick was 32 years old when he rookied in 1940. In his second year, he was the squadleader for the crew at Big Prairie RS and had 13 jumps when he ended his smokejumping career at the end of the 1941 season. He was the spotter for half of the 34 fire jumps made in 1941. Dick

married in Minnesota in March of 1941 and returned there after the 1941 fire season. He died June 22, 1944, at the Glen Lake Sanatorium, Hennepin County, Minnesota. The sanatorium was primarily a treatment center for tuberculosis in 1944.

Leo Paul Martin (Missoula '40)

Leo, 38, died in a plane crash October 25, 1942, at the Army Airfield in Walla Walla, Washington. He graduated from the Creighton University School of Medicine in 1927 and was a Captain in the Army Medical Corps at the time of his death.

Captain Martin was a well-known physician and surgeon from the Anaconda and Philipsburg (MT) areas. He and his pilot instructor were killed when the plane struck a power line.

Dr. Martin was born in the Flathead country of Montana in 1903 and received his license to practice in Montana in 1934. He was practicing in Missoula prior to his enlistment in the Army medical corps.

Dr. Martin took smokejumper training in 1940 in order to be able to parachute for rescue operations. He might have been the first doctor in the United States to do so, and his training marked the initial milestone in rescue jumping. He is buried at St. Mary's Cemetery in Missoula.

Rufus P. Robinson (Missoula' 40)

Pioneer smokejumper Rufus Robinson died May 3, 1987. He was born in 1905 at Wallowa, Oregon, and his family moved to Turlock, California, in 1919. Rufus was the first of the 1940 Missoula crew to receive smokejumper training, going to Winthrop, Washington, to do so. He then returned to Montana to start construction of the parachute loft at Moose Creek.

On July 10, 1940, Earl Cooley, Jim Waite, Jim Alexander, Dick Lynch, and Chet Derry joined Robinson at Moose Creek. Merle Lundrigan, not a jumper at that time, was assigned as the squad leader for the group.

On July 12, 1940, Rufus and Earl made the first fire jumps in the United States on the Marten Creek Fire, Nez Perce NF. **Jim "Smokey" Alexander** (MSO-40) recounts the first fire jump in a 2004 interview with *Smokejumper* magazine:

"They went 'eeny-meeny-mieny-mo' and then decided on Rufe and Earl. Rufe, because he was an older man, about 35, and Earl had to be about 22.

"We were all looking up to Rufe as the more experienced. He was the guy that had a lot of experience fighting fires and kind of calmed us down. [He was] easy-going and completely unflappable."

Robinson only jumped the 1940 and '41 seasons before moving on to pursue work in the roofing business. Rufus had the high number of fire jumps for the 1940 season with five.

He married in 1942 and lived in Santa Cruz, California, and Pasco, Washington. In 1958 he moved to Klamath Falls, Oregon, and in 1966 to Lenore, Idaho, where he worked as a roofer until he retired. He is buried in the Wallowa Cemetery.

Glenn H. Smith (Winthrop '40)

Glenn, 73, died of natural causes in Tucson, Arizona, March 28, 1988. He was born June 1914 in Paden City, West Virginia, and moved to California during the 1920s. Glenn graduated from Garden High School in 1934. During high school, he suffered an eye injury in a basketball accident and lost the sight in his left eye.

In 1934 he made his first exhibition parachute jump at Gardena Valley Airport in South Los Angeles with Frank Derry as spotter. He joined Frank's group and became a barnstorming parachutist. Glen worked in the local oil fields and also in the Derry Parachute Service Shop. Glenn and Frank jumped airshows from Mexicali to Arizona.

When the contract was awarded for the experimental parachute program in 1939, Glenn went north with Frank. Although he was hired primarily as a parachute rigger for the project, he was injured on his 2nd jump, preventing him from further jumping in the project.

In 1940 Glenn was hired by the Chelan NF as a "Smoke Jumper-Rigger."

The forest also hired the Derry brothers, George Honey, Francis Lufkin and Dick Tuttle. After training at Winthrop, Glenn and the Derry brothers went to Seeley Lake to train the Region 1 jumpers. Glenn and Virgil returned to Region 6 after the training. On August 10, 1940, Glenn

and Francis Lufkin made the first fire jump in Region 6.

1941 found him being hired by Region 1. There was a large amount of paperwork and administrative problems dealing with hiring a smokejumper with one eye—but he was hired. From 1942-44 he was a civilian employee of the Army Air Force in Arizona and California. He returned to smokejumping in May 1944.

1946-51 found Glenn working as a Foreman, parachute technician in Region 1. In November 1951 he resigned from the Forest Service and transferred to the CIA as a GS-11 Administrative Assistant. He worked in Japan from 1952-55, and Okinawa 1958-61. Glenn moved to Marana, Arizona, in 1963 where he was loft foreman for Intermountain Aviation until about 1967.

Glenn made his last parachute jump in 1964 on his 50th birthday at the Marana Air Park. His two sons, Ben (MSO-64) and Mike (MSO-69), were also smokejumpers.

Richard E. “Dick” Tuttle (Winthrop ’40)

Dick, 46, died March 25, 1964, in Hoquiam, Washington. He was born in Fort Thomas, AZ. He was one of the 16 members of the USFS Smokejumping Experimental group in 1939 and participated as an employee of the Eagle Parachute Corporation.

For several previous summers he, along with Al Honey, were smoke chasers on the Chelan NF. The two of them made their “first-timer” jumps on October 16 from about 3,000 feet in 30-foot Eagle parachutes. Dick made eleven jumps during the experiment. The local media named Dick and Al the “The Original Jumping Smoke Chasers.” After the experimental jumps ended, Dick went to Pennsylvania to work for the Eagle Parachute Corporation becoming an “expert jumper,” a licensed rigger, licensed to train other jumpers, and making exhibition jumps.

Dick returned to Winthrop in 1940 and trained to become one of the five smokejumpers on the 1940 Winthrop crew. On June 27, Dick was seriously injured when he fell from a tree, adjacent to the Winthrop Ranger Station, while installing an antenna in the top of a tree. The injuries from the fall prevented him from being able to make any more parachute jumps.

Although not able to make parachute jumps, he worked as a parachute rigger for the F.S. the summer of 1940, and later as a parachute rigger instructor for the Civil Aeronautics Administration. In 1958 Dick was living in Spokane, Washington, working as a construction worker.

In 1964 he committed suicide after being in the county jail for one day. Dick’s ashes are buried in the Sullivan Cemetery, Winthrop, Washington, with the grave marker inscribed “Pioneer Smoke Jumper.”

James Vernon Waite (Missoula ’40)

Pioneer smokejumper Jim Waite died June 4, 1999, in Walla Walla, Washington. Jim was born in 1917 in Okanogan, WA, and grew up in Kooskia, Idaho. In 1940, Jim represented the Clearwater National Forest in the initial smokejumper program and continued his jumping career through the 1951 season. He and Rufus Robinson made the 2nd fire jump in US history on July 15, 1940, on the Robin Creek Fire on the Nez Perce NF. Jim made three fire jumps that season.

Soon after, Jim transferred to the US Air Force Air Research and Development Command. His duties included parachute development testing for the Air Force and NASA, including testing of the parachutes for the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo projects. He retired at the end of 1973. At the time of his death, Jim was living in Walla Walla, WA.

From a 2004 interview with *Smokejumper* magazine, Smokey Alexander remembers Jim. “Jim Waite came off the Clearwater NF. He had been a smokechaser and lookout. I don’t believe he ever went to college. He came out of high school and went to work for the Forest Service. Jim was a squadleader for the CPS (conscientious objectors) jumpers during WWII.

“I first met Jim when we took our physicals for smokejumping. He was very quiet, very unassuming. In addition to being a nice guy, he was very handsome. Lucky for the rest of us, he had a steady girl back in Idaho. After our physicals, we all went up to the Seeley Lake Ranger Station and got ready for our first parachute jump. Jim was the first rookie in our group to make a jump.” 🙏

Four NSA Members Clear Trails In Eagle Cap Wilderness

by Russ West (Grangeville '78)

Four NSA members teamed up with the Wallowa Mountain Hells Canyon Trails Association (WMHCTA) and cleared 90 logs out of two wilderness trails in Eastern Oregon. Prior to the project, the trails were impassable. I'm president of the WMHCTA and I recruited **Gary Cordy** (LGD-75), **Mark Lewis** (LGD-75), and **Jon Larson** (FBX-89) to help with the trails project.

The WMHCTA had devised a COVID-19 mitigation plan that was approved by the Forest Service and enabled the WMHCTA to work on trail projects if the volunteers used social distancing and cooked separately.

I reached out to **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) of the NSA Trails Program but was unable to schedule a formal collaboration between the two organizations due to COVID-19. Fred and I hope to organize a joint trail project in NE Oregon in 2021. I got on the phone to some of my jumper friends, and Gary Cordy and Mark Lewis answered the call. Jon Larson and his wife, Randi Jandt, were active members of the WMHCTA and had already taken an interest in the project. Three other WMHCTA members, including my wife, Mary, joined the team.

We met at the North Catherine Creek Trailhead SE of Union, Oregon, and packed our gear on five mules. Five crew members hiked and three rode the five miles to base camp at the Catherine Creek FS Cabin at North Catherine Creek Meadow. We avoided a near disaster when we encountered mud bogs at Catherine Creek Meadow that were impassable to the mules and horses. One of our team members, Haney Jenkins, scouted and marked a detour on higher ground enabling us to safely make it to base camp.

From July 11 to July 13 we worked on the trails and cleared out 90 logs (two of

which were over 30" and many in the 18-24" range) and over 100 saplings that were blocking over four miles of trail. The jumpers worked well with the other five volunteers to safely accomplish the mission. We used three crosscut saws including a 6' bucking saw, a 5' falling saw, a 4' single bucking saw, and numerous hand saws and wedges. Randi Jandt and Jon Larson made quite the team and never seemed to run out of energy. Gary and Mark had not forgotten their crosscut skills and were able to get a lot of work done. Mark Lewis and Brent Lewis (no relation) teamed up with loppers to clear the brush, saplings, and



L—R: Brent Lewis, Russ West, Randi Jandt, Jon Larson, Mark Lewis, Gary Cordy

limbs from the trail to comply with the 10' x 8' spec requirement. Their work will extend the life of the trail by eliminating the low level grow back. Mark used his whitewater rescue skills to use a "Z" pulley

system to pull a large log off of the trail.

My wife, Mary, not only worked all day on the project but had the coffee hot and started the fire every morning by 6 a.m. Everyone pitched in

to help feed and water the eight head of mules and horses that supported the project. At night we sat around the campfire and shared many jump stories and memories, from six feet apart, of course! 🍷



ODDS AND ENDS



by Chuck Sheley

Congratulations and thanks to **Bob Arndt** (MSO-65), **Milt Fredenburg** (MSO-67), **Jim Durtschi** (FBX-82), **Dan Emry** (BOI-79) and **Mike Durtschi** (FBX-79) who just became our latest Life Members.

Gene Jessup (NCSB-57): "I, along with our small group of ex-jumpers, really appreciate the work you are doing to bring to light the changing policies of the Forest Service and their 'modern' and ineffective approach to firefighting. Keep up the great work, Chuck. You have a large number of fans out here."

Chuck Sheley: At the time of this writing (Sept. 9), Chico is under smoke and ash, close to what we were during the Camp Fire a couple years ago. It's been dark all day.

I just put in a call to **Jim Klump** (RDD-64) who lives up in the hills at Forbestown, CA. I had talked to Jim earlier in the year about the hazards of living in the forest. Jim told me he had hose lines strung out on his property.

They are closing the roads up to Forbestown as they do in major fire situations. You can go out, but you can't get back in. The big problem I see at this point—Jim is only one person when a crew would probably be needed if and when the fire gets to him.

Sept. 9: Talked to **Larry Boggs** (RDD-63) before I called Jim. We were thinking that if we



could take 50 years off our age, we would be heading up the hill with a case of beer and two Pulaskis ready to kick butt. On second thought, we would need two cases of beer. That way we could die as happy campers.

Sept. 10: After the Camp Fire which destroyed a town of 27,000 and killed 85 people, I wrote an article in *Smokejumper* advocating establishing "Safe Zones" where people could shelter in time of uncontrolled wildfire. I got the idea from **Dave Nelson** (MSO-56). Keep people off the road system.

I was able to sell the concept to the County Sheriff and actually started working on going out to the local mountain communities and presenting it to their fire councils. COVID set in and I was only able to make one presentation to a group in the community of Berry Creek. On the drive up to Berry Creek, the road got narrower and narrower and the fuel load was tremendous. My thought: "This is a disaster waiting to happen."

Nine months later in this morning's (Sept. 10) newspaper: "Driven by strong overnight winds, the Bear Fire exploded on Wednesday morning, destroying most of **Berry Creek** and leading to **three known deaths**. Everything on both sides of Bald Rock Road from Olive Highway to Rockefeller Road was either burned or on fire."

Sept. 11: The Bear Fire (North Complex Fire) started August 17 in the Plumas N.F. at

approximately 0900. There were 35 jumpers available in Redding, a short flight time away, but none used. The fire is now 244,000 acres. **Death toll now at 10** in this morning's report. Since the fire moved off the Plumas N.F. and into Butte County, Cal Fire is handling this end which is at 0% containment.

Sept. 15: Death toll now at 15.

Steve Smith (Associate Life Mbr.): "For two years you have been writing about the increased fire danger caused by forest fire management practices in the west. The day you warned about has come. No one is sitting here saying, 'I told you so.' You personally were impacted by the fires, and I can tell by the effort you put into *Smoke-jumper* magazine stories, you hoped this fire storm in the West would never happen.

"Please don't stop. Maybe those politicians who are trying to duck any responsibility by blaming 'climate change' will get the message. I kinda doubt it, but please keep trying. You're doing important work here."

Gary Shade (MSO-69) Medford, OR: "Last Tuesday (Sept. 8), the temps were in the hundreds again, but this time a 20+mph hot, east wind was blowing with 6% humidity. Any fire start was going to be catastrophic. When I stepped outside that morning, and sensed the weather, I thought, 'Oh Dear God, any fire start today will bring disaster.' "*The Alameda Fire was started by arson around 11:00 a.m. (Ed.)* "The local numbers being used are 600 homes lost in Talent and over 1000 homes lost in Phoenix, OR. Deaths 4. The miracle is only four dead. I don't know how it wasn't 400. Those affected had 10 minutes at most to leave from a neighborhood exploding from a fire storm."

Greg Kreizenbeck (IDC-69): "A bit of Jumper lore—we 1969 IDC jumpers, led by Ken Smith, Francis Mohr, and Bobby Montoya, orchestrated the idea to create and bury a jumper time capsule on Main Street. If I recall, the monument included a river rock base & informational plaque and pole hoisting the USA flag. The ceremony & party was typical ID—great fun lasting long into the night.

"The significance is to recognize in 'X' years that the USFS Jumper facility resided in Idaho City, to be relocated to Boise the following year

(1970). Unfortunately, I have no information of the capsule's existence."

From the book *Toucan Man* by **Bill Mader** (BOI-75) (shortened just a bit for space): "She nodded and they stepped off the porch. 'How'd you get interested in flying? Military?' "

"No, their standards were too high. I started my flying career leaving airplanes, that is jumping out of them over mountains paying my way through college. Rough terrain parachuting they used to call it."

"You were a smokejumper? A nomadic existence. Little rough on the bones though isn't it," inquired Jonsey.

"If you don't live your life on the edge, you're taking up too much space."

Sent to me by a source in Washington: "The smoke-jumpers at Winthrop told our Local WSU Extension Forester that they were considering not returning for future work as jumpers because they did not jump on small fires because of the let-burn (if lightning caused) policy. If the fires grew to 100s of acres, they were not engaged because they were required to be available for small fires. As a consequence, they remained idle during a serious fire season while IC folks made the big money and they made low wages."

In the October issue of *Smokejumper*, I ran "spoof" photo of a person standing on the wing of a bi-plane. Captioned it "Aerial delivered firefighter during COVID." The man standing on that wing is Gary Jensen. I was his track coach back in the mid-60s. From there he went to Hollywood, the movies and stunts. Gary, over the years, has appeared and done stunts in so many films it would be hard to count. He was the first to ride a motorcycle out of the back of an airplane at a couple thousand feet. He, of course, no longer does stunts. Gary dropped by today and we talked knee replacements among other things.

Gary is currently directing safety/security for a large crew doing the Chicago series—Chicago P.D., Med, Fire. He has made a couple substantial donations to the NSA History Preservation Fund. His son, Ethan, flies Blackhawk helicopters for the L.A. County Fire Dept. I love to re-connect with my former students—great part of teaching and coaching. 🙏

Forest And Fire Management: *A Call To Action*

Some Key Points About A National Crisis

by Michael Rains (Associate)

Note: This was prepared initially in August 2019. While another year has gone by, the reality is things are not changing very much. Case in point: the 2020 fire season. Nothing changes except more people die, more communities are destroyed, and landscapes are being forever altered. Sometimes a glance back may influence some forward thinking. As a former forest chief said, "Now is the time. Now is our time [for change]." When is enough, enough?

- **National crisis.** Large, high intensity wildfires throughout America – especially in the west – have created a national crisis.
- **Losses to taxpayers.** Annual losses in wildfire-related damages to infrastructure, public health, and natural resources is estimated to be \$70 to \$350 billion.
- **Don't forget about smoke.** In a 2017 study by Jeffrey Pierce, increases in wildfire-specific PM may alter the "health burden" on the US population. Specifically, as America's population is expected to decline between 2000 and 2100, the mortality attributable to wildfire smoke is expected to triple between now and the end of the century – from as much as 25,000 to about 75,000 deaths per year. More conservative estimates show this range to be from about 15,000 to 44,000 annual deaths. The rate of increased mortality due to wildfire smoke is the same, about 3 times the current rate if things do not change. Let there be no doubt, smoke from wildfires is a killer – far more than most have ever considered until now.
- **The cause.** The three primary reasons for this national crisis are, with a tie for the top spots, lack of forest management, the impacts of a changing climate, and the expansion of the Wildland-Urban Interface [WUI].
- **It's not just numbers and acres.** When you look at the numbers of fires and the acres burned, a criti-

cal change is taking place. The size of individual fires and their intensity is larger than ever before. Wildfires today are destroying everything in their paths.

- **The "new normal": Reject it!** The 2018 fire season was not that much different



Michael T. Rains

than many of the prior years. While 2019 might have offered a small reprieve, it looks like the 2020 fire season will be historic. Some are calling the current situation the "new normal." Reject that notion because what is happening now does not need to happen. We have in our control the power to change wildfires from being destructive behemoths to an effective forestland conservation tool. This can be accomplished through sound forest management.

- **What's forest management?** Go to the current website of the United States Forest Service. 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.

- **Unhealthy landscapes.** The health of our forests are in decline. For example, there are now about 90 million acres of National Forests that are "high risk to fire." In 2001, this figure was 38 million acres. Wildfires have destroyed lives and property, reduced air quality and killed millions of animals needlessly for too long. Forests in declining health, an expanded WUI, and a changing climate have created a volatile mixture that has led to the current

national crisis.

- **Pace and scale.** Now, it is time to step forward with a “campaign of our campaign” and address the 19-20 million acres annually of forests across our country that need some type of restorative action – about 8 million acres each year on the national forests [double the current effort].

- **Fires have no boundaries.** Clearly, part of the wild-fire problem in California, for example, is the lack of management of the federal forests. It may be cliché, but fires do not adhere to boundaries. 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.

- **Why not increase forest management?** The Forest Service has a direct and indirect role in the stewardship [management, protection and utilization] of about 80 percent of America’s 885 million acres of forestlands. However, over the last 25 or more years, funding has been shifted *away from* management actions *to* the fire effort. These funds have not been restored. So, the Forest Service is becoming the *Fire* Service. A paradox has been created. The work that helps reduce the size and intensity of fires has been significantly reduced [by about one-half] in order to fight large, high intensity fires [that are getting larger and more intense].

- **A catchphrase.** The current administration talks about the “lack of forest management.” But it has become a catchphrase – “no action required.” For example, budgets are flat or reduced. In 2019, approximately \$2.2 billion [includes the Forest Service’s indirect role in the stewardship of nonfederal forests] was available; about the same as 2018. The 2020 proposal for the same forest management accounts is approximately \$2.1 billion or a proposed reduction of \$90,582,000. For fire, the 2019 budget is approximately \$3.1 billion. The 2020 proposal is (up to) \$4.7 billion [including the “fire fix” that is supposed to begin in 2020]. That is a possible increase for fire of about \$1.6 billion. Thus, the current funding priorities 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 not getting through.

- **Funding requirements.** The current budget for the Forest Service is woefully inadequate to change this. The Forest Service alone needs a minimal increase

of about \$2.2 billion annually for the next 5-7 years to help restore the gap in forest management work that has been created by decades of shifting budgets for fire suppression. Without this increase, things are simply going to get worse; they have and they are.

- **Hazardous fuel reduction.** In the late 1990s, a General Accounting Office (GAO) report noted that “the most extensive and serious problem related to the health of forests in the interior West is the over-accumulation of vegetation, which has caused an increasing number of large, intense, uncontrollable, and catastrophically destructive wildfires.” When *Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment*, the National Fire Plan was written. It was thought that about \$850 million annually was required to more effectively address the issue of hazardous-fuels removal. More recently, a 2013 Congressional Research Service report suggests costs for a comprehensive hazardous fuels treatment program for the National Forests could exceed \$2 billion a year. Relying on taxpayer dollars, the Forest Service has managed an average of about \$300 million annually for hazardous-fuels treatment. *Note point No. 8.* In 2001, there were 38 million acres classified as “high risk to fire” on the National Forests. Now there are about 80 to 90 million acres. So, with about \$5.7 billion expended in 2001 through 2019, hazardous fuels have increased by about 140 percent! This key job cannot be accomplished with such meager resources.

- **Raking leaves won’t do it.** The president believes that raking leaves from the forest floor will stop forest fires. In December 2018, the president signed a *historic* [his word on July 8, 2019] executive order [EO], promoting much more active forest management to prevent catastrophic wildfires. To say this EO needs to be strengthened would be a profound understatement. It includes no real actions and no funding; nothing except rhetoric and the notion that an EO was signed, so therefore forest management to address the risk of wildfires must be a priority. What a profound opportunity lost.

Then, what will do it? A call to action
We need a *call to action* to address this national crisis, including:

- An unprecedented national federal, state, and local commitment to aggressively manage America’s for-

ests along the complex rural to urban land gradient.

- A commission to lead the way.
- Additional funding.
- A long-term commitment [minimum 10 years].
- The campaign should be given a brand: For example, “Trees Control Fires – Help Them Succeed.”

The commission should recognize this (lack of forest management contributing to wildfire that destroys everything in its path) is a national crisis and calls for the formation of a commission-type group to gather facts, describe the story, and deploy solutions. A driving question of the commission should be: “... how do we stop the current level of destruction caused by large, high intensity wildfires across America’s rural to urban landscapes?”

The commission shall craft a “Statement of Intent.” For example, “... America’s land management agencies will become much more promotional in the way they carry out their conservation missions. Members of this commission will be more aggressive in actions and seek opportunities to make new progress to improve the land it is dedicated to care for and the lives of the people it serves.

It is largely accepted that the lack of forest management across the country has greatly contributed to the current wildfire situation and the associated impacts on people’s lives and their communities. This is going to change. The work of this commission will be the beginning of a long-term campaign to ensure our forests become more resilient to disturbances. We will be counting on aggressive, promotional leaders to ensure that the direct and indirect roles in the stewardship of America’s forests are achieved, now and ahead. We will be relentless in leading the way.”

The group must tell the story and shape a vision for change.

The commission must also outline new resource requirements for the *Trees Control Fires – Help Them Succeed* campaign. For example, the Forest Service alone will require, minimally, an additional \$2.2 billion annually for at least 5-7 years with the following distribution [the commission shall confirm this amount and distribution]:

- \$97 million for “federally assisted state programs [the Forest Stewardship Program] to address the “... strengthening the stewardship of private lands”, as stated by USDA Secretary Perdue.
- \$600 million for hazardous fuels reduction [this brings the overall level for the Forest Service to \$1.05 billion]. Not the \$2.4 billion per year called for in some estimates but an important increase none-the-less over the completely inadequate \$450 million being proposed in the 2020 budget.
- \$26 million for fire science and technology development [including defensible space protection in the Wildland Urban Interface].
- \$45 million for the cooperative fire programs.
- \$14 million for forest health protection [specifically, invasive species control].
- \$1.385 billion for management actions on the National Forests.
- \$33 million for biomass uses that include wood-based nanotechnology [cellulose nanomaterials], specifically addressing low-value wood, such as hazardous fuel.

The commission must then deploy the campaign. This will require a cohesive 10-year plan shaped by the commission. It must also monitor, evaluate, and adjust the plan as needed. 🔧

Remembering Matt “Blue Leader” Kelley (FBX-71)

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

“What though the radiance, which was once so bright, be now forever taken from my sight, though nothing can bring back the hour of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower; we will

grieve not, rather find strength in what remains behind...”

These words are from William Wordsworth’s “Immortality Ode.” They came to mind as I sat

down and began thinking what to write about our special Blue Leader friend.

Matt's wife, Janelle, wrote this in June of 2020, three months after Matt's passing: "Mathew's birthday is coming up July 18. He would have been 71. Funny how old that sounds, but he never paid attention to numbers. He was always in motion, physically, mentally, and spiritually, just as I assume he was as a smokejumper, and definitely as my companion for 39 years. I have been reminded that he did have high blood pressure even as a young man and believe that explained his drive to keep everything in check. Feb. 10, 2020, after a trip to the Dr. and the ER to run a few tests, it was determined that he was possibly suffering heartburn. By 4:00 that afternoon, after a very uncomfortable busy day at work, he called to say he might go back to the ER for more tests. Matt had a massive heart attack while on the way there."

Work that day was at the Verde Valley Sanctuary near Cottonwood, Arizona. For those of us who worked with Matt as Alaska smokejumpers, this will likely come as no surprise. From his days in the old T-Hanger until he left 13 seasons later, Matt was always interested in what helped people feel comfortable and live healthy. Of course, being smokejumpers, the Bros made fun of that, just like they did everything else. Not long after Matt started his TM (Transcendental Meditation) group, where they met in a corner of the T-Hangar and sat in a circle of silence contemplating their secret mantras and hoping to tap into the realm of the spiritual, **George Steele** (NCSB-72) started his group, MT (Mental Trauma).

While Matt and his devotees sat serenely in one corner, George would gather his group in the other corner and begin shouting their mantras harshly at each other—things like Boing, Boing, Boing, Ribbit, Ribbit, Ribbit, Wainwright, Wainwright, Wainwright. When Matt came up with the idea that he could teach students how to levitate, I think some went along with it imagining how it might help out on tough packouts.

No one seems to know for sure how Matt's nickname, Blue Leader, came about. **Rod Dow** (MYC-68) related that a rumor circulated in the Old Shack at one time about a briefing Matt had given a group of Zulie (Missoula) boosters in which he had stated very plainly that, from now on, he would like them

to refer to him as Blue Leader. And since, as most of us know, one of the worst things you can do as a smokejumper is try to give yourself your own nickname. Things eventually worked out quite well for the Blue Leader on that score.

I remember in 1973, and this is in *More or Less Crazy*, when we arrived at NCSB at 6:00 AM, after an all-night flight from Fairbanks and a week-long run of fires. We were exhausted and laying back on our gear bags near the ramp, waiting for breakfast, when suddenly a PT group of Winthrop jumpers appeared before us and began doing these vigorous jumping jacks and yelling out things, like hup one, hup two, hup three, love it, love it, want more of it.

It was clear. These men, several of whom became our best friends, jumping up and down in arrow-straight lines, all wearing black "Can't Bust 'em" and white t-shirts, were not just welcoming us but putting us on notice that this is not only what NCSB jumpers were, but what any-worth-a-shit smokejumper ought to be.

For the next twenty minutes this went on, breaking into sweats, always loving it, hooping one thing after another. Without warning they suddenly stopped and fell at ease. Matt Kelley got slowly to his feet, turned to them and smiled. "Wow," he said calmly and with great sincerity "You guys must be sexually frustrated." That caused some chuckling in our Alaska group and some grunting objections in theirs.

"That's okay, though," Matt went on. "I'm Blue Leader and I instruct in Transcendental Meditation. I can instruct you in ways to cope with the psychic injuries associated with being oversexed and underappreciated." The Alaskans laughed. The welcoming committee stiffened. As the laughter died down, the Winthrop guys lit out on their morning run. Clearly, as jumpers, we all had a lot of fun with Matt Kelley.

Again, from Janelle: "Mathew and I met in 1981 on a TM course in Washington D.C. The following February, I came to Alaska with him for his 13th year jumping. Everything I learned about Mathew was larger than life. I was in awe and remain so to this day. My memories are 'nuts, guts, and speed,' 'Kelley jumps from planes and ascends.' All true! It was a busy fire season, so I was solo most of it, but he'd tell me jump stories years after when I'd ask him. One of the best was of Erik the Blak and his

bear-greased boots and a jumper (Erik, I think) treed by a bear that had to be discouraged by the 'foul air.'

"Of all the different roles/careers Mathew had, he was always a smokejumper. The very best parts of him realized and cultivated in that experience. He admired and respected everyone he worked with and never again felt that depth of friendship with anyone. Mathew's whole life was a high point, although he would never describe it that way. Every step was influential, progressive, outside the box, ahead of his time."

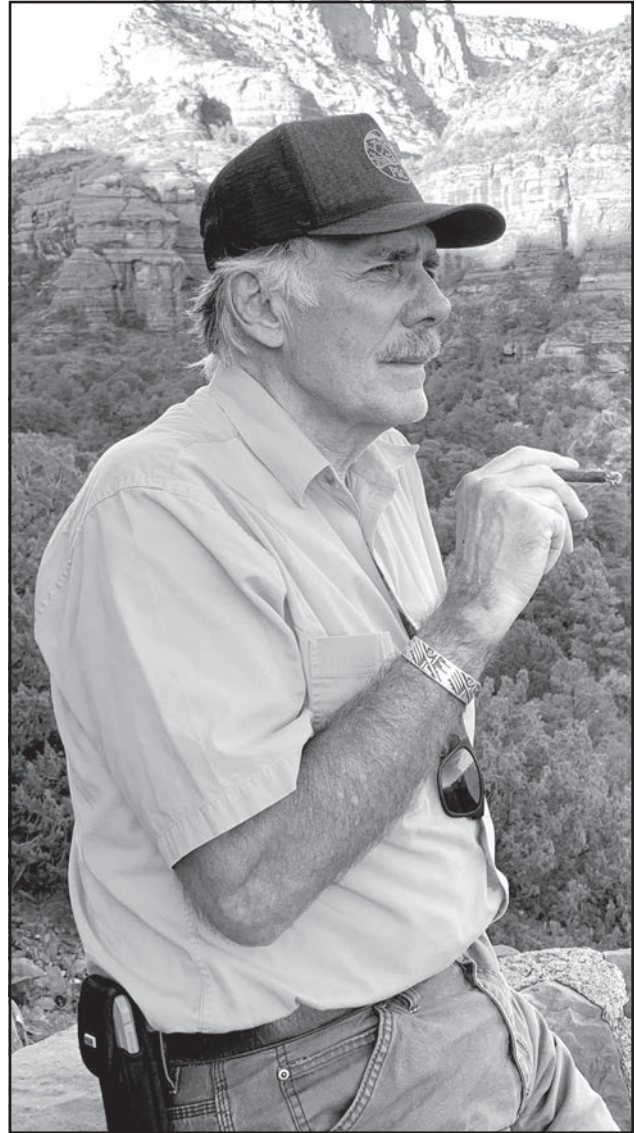
Janelle went on to explain that Matt had mediated with farmers against the destructive practices of oil companies in Oklahoma, developed Think Tanks in California, researched UFO phenomena in Arizona, and did a lot of Clinical Psychologist work for Native Americans in substance abuse programs in New Mexico. "His descriptions of those days were always interesting and colorful, usually uncovering a depth and warmth in humans not found elsewhere. He broke many barriers, changed lives, and saved some, as well.

"He was always researching, reading, speaking, writing, working, thinking, but always steeped in silence. Human doing, human being. I think those are the things for which Matt would like to be remembered.

"And," Janelle concluded, "he had just finished and self-published his first book. He loved to tell stories and this book was to be the first of several he wanted to write. The book's title: *Turquoise Man*—now available on Amazon."

The Bros emailed me a few stories about Matt, but this one by **Andy Anderson** (MYC-74) is my favorite. I think it best typifies what we enjoyed most about the Blue Leader.

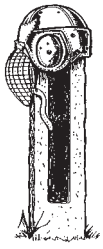
"In 1975, I was on the first booster made up of McCall, Boise, and Redding jumpers. It was my first trip to Alaska and after being interspersed on the jump list with AK guys, our Volpar load was dispatched to the Kenai/Soldotna Airport for standby. Matt was a very interesting character. He lived summers in a box van outside the T-Hanger. He drove an old foreign motorcycle. He was very much into Transcendental Meditation and claimed he had once seen someone levitate. Of course, this got everyone's attention, and he went on to say he was always aware of his surroundings as he meditated. We called BS, but he insisted it was true. We



Matt Kelley (Courtesy Janelle Kelley)

were just laying around waiting for a fire call when Matt sought some privacy to meditate and moved 30 yards away with his back turned towards us. Of course, with nothing else for entertainment, **Bill Neumeister** (MSO-68) decided to sneak up on Matt in order to test his stated belief. Bill crawled quietly, around behind, sneaking thru the willows, and then carefully out onto the ramp to within five feet of meditating Matt. Just then, without turning around or making a move of any kind, Matt calmly exclaimed, 'Don't even think about it. I know you're there.' "

We all howled having witnessed the whole thing. It took a while to stop laughing. It was welcome to Alaska and Alaska Smokejumpers for me. I came to know Matt Kelley as a kind, thoughtful, special person, and a unique character for sure. 🙏



Off The List

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

Chuck Sheley
10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95926

Our research team of Fred Cooper (NCSB-62), Jim Cherry (MSO-57), Denis Breslin (NCSB-69), Jim Damitio (RAC-69) and myself have recently added over 150 obits to the NSA website as part of our History Preservation Project. None of these have been published before. Check our website obits for this new information. (Ed.)

Wilfred C. “Jack” Larson (North Cascades '46)

Jack, 95, died September 11, 2020. He was born June 25, 1925, in Ferndale, Washington. At age 17, Jack enlisted in the US Army during WW11 and served as a paratrooper in the 17th Airborne Division. He saw combat in the Battle of the Bulge and Operation Varsity, the jump on the Rhine that remains the largest airborne operation in military history. Jack received the Purple Heart for wounds suffered and was awarded the Bronze Star for gallantry.

Unable to find work when he returned home, Jack hitchhiked to Winthrop, Washington, where he found work as a smokejumper, working for pioneer smokejumper Francis Lufkin. Jack jumped at NCSB 1946-47.

Frank D. Halverson (McCall '67)

Frank died August 15, 2020, at his home in Haley, Idaho. He was born April 28, 1945. While in high school at Snake River, he was a championship wrestler and calf roper. Frank attended Idaho State University Pocatello earning his bachelor's degree in architecture in 1968 while working full-time including jumping at McCall in 1967 and Idaho City in '68.

Frank served in the Army Corps of Engineers 1969-79 including assignments in Vietnam, Panama and Japan. He was an Airborne Ranger-Special Forces, spoke Vietnamese and was awarded the Bronze Star. Frank obtained his master's in

Civil Engineering from Oregon State while in the service.

His professional engineering career started in 1979 with Corning Glass Works in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, with work in France and China. In 1988, he moved back to Idaho and joined Power Engineers in Hailey managing multi-million dollar projects. Frank went on to become Power's chief operating officer and was on their board of directors for 26 years retiring in April 2020.

Michael Guy Sessions (Redmond '75)

Mike, 65, of Fayetteville, North Carolina, passed away on August 17, 2020, at First Health Hospice House in Pinehurst, NC. He was admitted to the hospital on July 22, 2020, and was shockingly diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer. He was born on February 23, 1955, in Spokane, Washington. Mike graduated from Shadle Park High School in Spokane, WA, in 1973. He attended Wenatchee Valley Jr. College and went on to graduate from the University of Washington with a Bachelor of Science in Forest Management and Forest Science. He jumped out of Redmond 1975-77 after which he joined the Marine Corps as a 2nd Lt.

Mike loved serving his country and had a distinguished career for twenty years in the Marine Corps. He attended the Army Special Forces qualification course as a Marine Major and was awarded a Green Beret and Army achievement medal. His military education included Amphibious Warfare, USAF Special Operations, International Terrorism, Reconnaissance, and Army Special Forces Green Beret.

After serving in the Marines, Mike worked as a contractor for Army Special Forces Green Beret training and went on to work Northrup Grumman for five years and Gander Mountain for ten years. He retired at 62.

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Memory Of/Honor of</u>	<u>Donor</u>	<u>In Memory Of/Honor of</u>
Lee Gossett (RDD-57)	Scholarship Fund	Mike McCracken (CJ-60)	Dale Schmaljohn (MYC-60)
Lynn Coe	Good Sam Fund	Mike Patten (MSO-87)	Good Sam Fund
Larry Swan (MYC-68).....	Dale Schmaljohn (MYC-60)	Ben Musquez (MSO-56).....	Ron Stoleson, Robin Twogood, Jim Clatworthy (all MSO-56)
Bill Tucker (MSO-50)	Bob Derry (MSO-43)	Greg Kreizenbeck (IDC-69)	Dale Schmaljohn (MYC-60)
Larry Edwards (MSO-02)	Paul Chamberlin (MSO-71)	Vic Congleton (CJ-67).....	Good Sam Fund
Les Tschohl (MSO-66).....	Charley Harsh (MSO-66)		

Contributions since the previous publication of donors October 2020
Total funds disbursed to smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$232,590
Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:
Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926

Paul George Chamberlin (Missoula '71)

Paul, 69, died July 1, 2020, in Missoula after a long battle with cancer. He was born in Oakland, CA, in 1951. Paul was a hurdler in high school and was also on the San Jose State track team for a time. He started his firefighting career with Cal Fire in Santa Clara County (CA) before heading to Missoula and smokejumpers.

Paul jumped at Missoula 1971-99, had 450 jumps, 227 of which were fire jumps Paul served as an Incident Commander and was best known for his safety innovations and incident investigation processes, ultimately traveling around the world lecturing large groups of firefighters on the simple yet effective concepts of L.C.E.S., a streamlined method to ensure everyone is safe on even the most dangerous forest fires.

Paul was a skilled sailor and enjoyed sailing his Catalina 25 on Flathead Lake. His many other interests included stargazing with the local astronomy club, supporting the Missoula Symphony Orchestra and sitting on its Board, aiding the Missoula's Discovery Area children's science museum, and giving back to his community through other projects such as the bicycle path he created.

Thomas E. McFadden (Pendleton '45)

Thomas died June 27, 2020. He graduated valedictorian of his high school class and attended Alabama A&M University. Before completing his degree, he was drafted into the US Army. After

basic training he volunteered to become a paratrooper and became a member of the first black parachute company, the 555th Parachute Infantry Company located at Camp McCall, North Carolina. Thomas attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, and graduated as a commissioned US Army 2nd Lieutenant.

James Malone Coleman (Missoula '53)

NSA Life Member the Rev. James M. "Jim" Coleman died May 4, 2020, in Baton Rouge, LA. He was born August 26, 1929, in Memphis, TN, and was educated at Christian Brothers High School, graduating in 1947.

After serving in the U.S. Army, he continued his education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He later obtained a Master of Divinity at The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and a Doctorate of Ministry from the Seminary of the Southwest at Wake Forest University.

After his ordination in 1957, Jim served as priest in the towns of Lebanon, Gallatin, Johnson City, and Memphis, Tennessee as well as Martinsville, Virginia. In 1975 he was called to serve as rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he remained until 1989. He served as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, Memphis, until 1993 when he was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of West Tennessee and served as its Bishop from 1994

until his retirement in 2001.

He held close the memories of daring, work-intensive adventure as a smokejumper during the 1953 season for the U.S. Forestry Service in the Pacific Northwest. Jim hiked the Appalachian Trail with his sons and friends every year for over 40 years. One of his crowning outdoor achievements was a trek to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Africa in 1989.

Ray Clifford Shubert (Missoula '60)

Ray died March 7, 2020, in Houston, Texas. He was born August 10, 1937, in Lewiston, Idaho. Ray was raised in Lewiston where he graduated from high school and later graduated from the University of Idaho with a mechanical engineering degree. He jumped at Missoula during the 1960 season.

Ray served in the Navy during the Vietnam War and was an attack pilot off the USS Kitty Hawk. After the Navy, he was a pilot with Continental Airlines for 31 years and retired as a 757 Captain. He was married to his wife, Carol, for 44 years. Ray was an avid outdoorsman who loved hunting and spending time in the Colorado Mountains.

Larry Bruce Howard (Missoula '50)

On January 3rd, 2020, Larry B. Howard, Ph.D., 91, of Colorado Springs, CO, passed away peacefully. Born in Seattle in 1928, Larry grew up in western Montana. Larry attended Menlo High prep school near Palo Alto, CA, where he was a scholar-athlete, finishing in three years and lettering in football, track and field, and swimming.

In 1945, Larry enlisted at 17 to join the WWII effort with the 11th Airborne Division. The war ended before he was deployed, so he ended up in the occupation forces on Hokkaido as a medic. After completing military service, he returned to the US and obtained a BA in Chemistry and Microbiology at the University of Montana in 1949. He jumped at Missoula 1950-53 and 1955.

Larry moved to Minneapolis, where Larry obtained his Ph.D. in Pharmacology at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Upon graduation, Larry accepted a position as the Assistant Director of the Georgia State Crime Lab

in Atlanta.

In Atlanta, Larry added post-doctoral education in multiple medical sciences at Emory University, where he eventually joined the staff in the Medical School Anatomy and Pathology Departments. He then spent much of his time driving and flying his airplane all over the state to perform autopsies and investigate crime scenes. In 1969, he became the Director of the Georgia Division of Forensic Sciences and Supervisor of the Georgia Medical Examiner System, a position he held until his Georgia retirement in 1988.

Larry was perhaps best known for his roles in the 20+ serial Atlanta child murder cases in the 1980s. The child murder cases drew national media and FBI attention. He and his Crime Lab forensic team used blood, rug fibers and dog hairs associated with both the suspect and victims to help convict Wayne Williams, who is still in prison. This was the first time technology was advanced enough to successfully match textile fibers and dog hair to help convict a suspect. A lot of this was covered in the Netflix series "Mindhunter."

During his years with the Crime Lab, Larry served as the Vice President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and President of the American Society of Crime Lab Directors. He was on the Editorial Boards of the Journal of Forensic Science and the American Journal of Legal Medicine and Pathology and a member of multiple scientific societies. He also consulted and lectured on various forensic topics, including drug and poison deaths, ballistics and blood spatter patterns.

Larry's numerous honors include Who's Who in America (2007-2012) and Who's Who in the World (2008). In 1973, he was given the American Bicentennial Research Institute Award in Recognition of Professional and Civil Attainment. In 1981 he was voted Man of the Year by the District Attorneys' Association of Georgia and in 2000 received the Briggs White Award for excellence in forensic science management.

After retiring from the Georgia Crime Lab, Larry moved back home to the rocky mountain west and settled in Colorado Springs to help the Colorado Springs Police Department develop, build and manage their crime lab (1990-95). From 1995 to 2018 he worked as a forensic sci-

ence consultant and traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and abroad.

He was a fitness enthusiast and ran and lifted weights regularly into his 60s, resulting in his

being given the nickname “Clark Kent” by the neighborhood. In his 40s he made the technical climb of Grand Teton and later took up scuba diving. 🧒



Good Samaritan Fund At Work

Never in a million years would I have expected to become a widow and a single mother at 37. To lose my bear-of-a-man husband so swiftly and tragically, then afterwards, to be made to fight for our home and tangible resources.

But what I didn't expect was the love, care and support we received from the firefighting/smokejumper community. And what a difference that alone has made in my ability to cope with this tragedy!

The years spent out west (for Han's smokejumping career) were the very best. I will cherish and hold them close to my heart, always.

So, thank you smokejumper family for helping to lift us up. Thank you for your continued support as my boys and I travel this new journey.

Traci Smith—Jacob and Rowan 🧒

Hans Smith died in September 2019 from a fall off a roof while doing storm recovery work near Ely, Minnesota. (Ed.)

Story of Two Wilderness Fire Firsts: Bad Luck and Fitz Creek

by Bob Mutch (Grangeville '54)

Bob Mutch, a pioneer in wilderness fire management, details the initial work. Original article shortened to meet page space. (Ed.)

Following the 1910 fires that burned three million acres and killed 85 people, the Forest Service (FS) followed a policy of fire exclusion over many decades. In 1935 the FS enacted the 10 a.m. fire suppression policy stating that any fire had to be organized for control by 10 a.m. the next morning. This policy was still in place in 1970 when the White Cap Pilot Project was begun in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (SBW) in northern Idaho. The new ingredient was the recent passage of the Wilderness Act in

1964, which stated that natural processes should prevail in wilderness.

In 1972 the new fire management plan for the White Cap was approved as an exception to the existing 10 a.m. policy. The first fire allowed to burn under the plan was the Bad Luck Fire that same year. The Fitz Creek Fire, the first large fire that was allowed to burn, occurred during the summer of 1973.

Bad Luck—the First Fire

Bud Moore, Jim Habeck, and I left Missoula in September 1971 with backpacks stowed in a helicopter. Thirty minutes later we began a several day trip to Moose Creek.

The purpose of the trip was to engage each other about the promise of a wilderness burning as the White Cap Project neared its conclusion and we were about to gain approval for free-burning fires. Bud made a prophetic journal entry about the new puff of smoke we witnessed on a slope west of Footstool Point. He wrote: “Started by lightning, that little smoke was an obvious part of the natural scene. Since its opportunity to spawn a giant conflagration is small, it should burn.”

One year later I made my own journal entry. It went: “There is no news like good news. At 1630 the air patrol came over and announced that the White Cap Wilderness Fire Management plan had been signed this morning by the Chief, so it looks like we really are in business.”

Bud’s journal entry was prophetic because we soon had our first puff of smoke in Bad Luck Creek, reported on August 18, 1972. Yes, we really were in the business of allowing a wilderness fire to burn. The prescription for this Management Zone called for observing and monitoring fires.

The Fire Dispatch office authorized a helicopter to deliver me to the fire, so that my assessment could assist the decision as to whether it should be allowed to burn.

I departed at 0915 on August 19. The pilot put me down above the fire at 0930 and by 0935 I was at the fire. It was immediately apparent that lightning had hit one snag and it had fallen during the night. Surface fuels were light and there was a lot of exposed bare ground.

After observing the snag, it was apparent that fire spread would be minor under the prevailing conditions. It was a simple matter to come to the conclusion that the Bad Luck Fire “deserves to live.” When the fire was declared out four days later, it was about 24 x 24 feet in size.

As I watch this Forest Service “wilderness fire first,” I remembered the time I first encountered a fire in the Selway back in 1954—the occasion being my first fire jump as a rookie smokejumper. It too, was a small lightning fire. As a rookie out of Grangeville, I am jumping with veteran **Ed Wayne** (MSO-53). As we circle following Ed’s exit, **Martin Onishuk** (MSO-51), the spotter, suddenly grabs me and pulls me back into the plane. “Mutch”, he says, “don’t you know you hook up

your static line before you jump. Get with it and we will go around again.” I often wondered what kind of adventure might have transpired if I had to use my reserve parachute?

The decision to allow the Bad Luck Fire to burn was relayed back to me. How rewarding to arrive at this point where fire is to be managed as a part of wilderness, as Elers Koch had proposed 37 years earlier.

My journal entry for August 19 summed up the importance of these feelings: “One week ago, Orville Daniels and I were in D.C., briefing the Chief and Staff on the White Cap Wilderness Fire Management Study. Sitting here on the side of a mountain watching this fire, it is interesting to think about how far we have come in the past two years. This fire in Bad Luck Creek is a pretty non-descript spot, but the support we have gained for the concept of allowing fires, such as this, to burn under fire management prescriptions is significant. Perhaps this is a good first fire—it is the kind of quiet fire we need to bring people along and make them feel comfortable. Ecologically speaking, this fire belongs on the wilderness landscape. Economically speaking, outside the wilderness, there is no reason why similar fires couldn’t be handled under prescription.”

Fitz Creek Fire—the First Large Fire

It was late August 1973 as Orville Daniels, Ed Bloedel, and I scouted the Fitz Creek Fire in the SBW. The fire started on August 10 when lightning struck a Douglas fir and started a small fire. It had spread to several hundred acres and we wanted to check it out. Suddenly, we saw a helicopter land on a ridge above us and then depart. We quickly re-directed our attention to the task at hand—assessing the behavior of this fire. Suddenly, a yellow-shirted firefighter popped into view, making a beeline for Bad Luck Lookout.

“Hey, where are you going?” hails Orville. “I’m heading up to the lookout to get a better look at the fire”, responds the firefighter. “Where are your men?” asks Orville. “Building fireline on the other side of the ridge.”

“Call them off, we’re not fighting this fire.” “But it’s already about 1000 acres,” says the crew

boss in disbelief. “We’re not fighting this one,” repeats Orville. “It belongs here as a part of wilderness. You’re in the White Cap Fire Management Area. Tell your men to pack up their tools and come down to camp with us.”

The crew boss explained that the forest recorded 85 new lightning fires that afternoon—all being fought. In the confusion the crew set down on the largest smoke visible on the horizon, the Fitz Creek Fire. We briefed the young firefighters on the events that produced this free-burning fire. We explained that the plan for the White Cap was approved the previous year by the Chief of the Forest Service.

The Fitz Creek Fire was two days old when Orville first observed it one afternoon. His first inclination was to do what he usually would on a forest fire, turn a burning log to keep it from rolling and scratch a little fireline to keep the fire out of tree reproduction. But as he studied the fire’s behavior, his old firefighting urges were forgotten. He realized that the park-like nature of the ponderosa pine savanna was being reestablished.

Some suppression actions commenced on August 13. The remainder of the fire burned naturally, although some retardant was used to safeguard the lookout tower.

Another day passed and there was an additional retardant drop. About that time, lookout Miles Nelson turned to me and said, “Bob, I’ve read all your stuff, and I am not sure we are doing the right thing up here.”

On August 28 I hosted a visit from writer Don Moser, who was doing a book called “The Snake River Country.” Two decades earlier, Don had been a lookout at Crystal Peak. Our sightseeing journey on the slopes below Bad Luck Lookout became a firefighting journey as we put Don to work improving line that I had scratched with a Pulaski. Our other two-person crew confined the fire west of the ridge.

At one point the creeping surface fire overran our day packs. As we attempted to rescue the burning packs, we discovered our movie camera charred beyond repair. Don was kind enough to omit this faux pas from the book.

The fire became more than our crew of four could handle, and we radioed for reinforcements.

The crew of firefighters from the helicopter was readily engaged in fighting a 1000-acre fire, and the incoming crew boss, red-eyed and weary, arrived at the fireline and said, “I’d like to meet the S.O.B who said we had to let this fire burn. I’d let him have one right in the nose.” I looked at Don and simply smiled as we each realized that not everyone was on the same page yet.

Reactions of others to this first large fire were a mixed bag. Human encounters with the fire and smoke were numerous during the Fitz Creek Fire. Written comments received in 1973 ran the gamut from unbridled support to ridicule.

Montana Wilderness Association: “I congratulate you for shouldering the risk of letting fire play its natural part in the wilderness area.”

Professor, Washington State University: “It was recently brought to my attention that the FS has allowed two lightning-caused fires to continue burning without applying control measures to put them out. The Department supports this action and encourages your backing of this program.”

Idaho Fish and Game: “Since it is true that any match or cigarette can start a holocaust and since it is the avowed purpose of the USFS to burn up the country—we should unite and take all matches away from Forest Service people. We love our Idaho and don’t want it burned up.”

Retired FS Employee: “I am certain you will be interested in the decision of the FS to let northern Idaho burn since fire ‘has always been part of the ecology.’ This is incredible.”

Georgia-Pacific Corporation: “On August 18 Dave ‘Shag’ Aldrich and I are at Bad Luck Lookout to monitor the fire situation. We hear a radio conversation saying that ‘the fire has spotted across the creek.’ We were hoping that the transmission meant the fire is across Wapiti Creek and still in the management area. In moments we see flames and smoke directly south of us as the fire spots across the boundary and is spreading outside the approved management area. We each stare transfixed as the fire races up the slope towards the Snake Creek Divide. The fire makes the ridge top in 30 minutes, and we each contemplate that we may be witnessing two years of intensive planning all going up in smoke. The big lesson learned is that boundary lines need to be on prominent

topographic features, like ridges, rather than disadvantageous places, like creek bottoms, where fires can easily spot across.”

Fitz Creek Fire Escapes Out of The Approved Management Area

Orville Daniels was called out of a meeting to learn the news of the Fitz Creek Fire escape. When Orville made the decision to suppress the escape, my Type 1 Overhead Team was dispatched for this assignment. As I briefed them on the escape, I had mixed emotions. Looking at the free-burning Fitz Creek Fire, I inwardly rooted for its success in leaving a long absent 1200-acre imprint on the wilderness landscape. But working south of White Cap Creek, I reverted back to my earlier training that this fire must be suppressed.

This decision of Orville Daniels was like so many of his decisions over the years—always pushing the envelope of human understanding and human growth. The easy decision for him to make would be to suppress the entire fire. But, no, he does not take the easy path. He allowed the Fitz Creek portion that remained in the approved management area to continue burning. He briefed the overhead team to suppress only that portion of the fire that escaped the approved management area.

His innovative decision expanded the minds of all of us. For me, with one foot fully anchored in the idea of allowing wilderness fires, I have to come to terms with the dichotomy of a “good” fire north of White Cap Creek and a “bad” fire south of White Cap Creek. For many of my overhead team members, they knew that the only “good” fire is a suppressed fire. They were outwardly uncomfortable as they looked north and saw continuing flames and smoke so close to where we were extinguishing flames and smoke. At times I felt sure they must have appeased themselves with thoughts that “surely Orville’s head would roll when the higher-ups came to their senses!” But just the opposite occurred. Yes, Orville did receive a phone call from the Deputy Chief of State and Private Forestry in D.C. asking three questions: Did you have a plan? Was it a

good plan? Did you follow the plan?

Orville answered each question in the affirmative. The FS officials rallied around him saying that these things happen, learn all you can, and reduce the chance of such escapes in the future. The east to west flow of White Cap Creek marked a Maginot Line between modern day fire management flexibility and the entrenched, rigid position of 1910-era fire control.

I was indoctrinated by Orville’s mind expanding decision that there is a dichotomy to fire that included both prudence and promise. Prudence is needed to be able to discern the difference between good fire and bad fire and respond accordingly. The promise for the future enters the equation when we realize that wise fire management decisions can assist us in reaping the benefits from the good fire while minimizing the negative consequences of the bad fire.

In later years fire begins to make some friends. Some ecologists in the FS and academia begin to extol the benefits of fire based on research findings. In the late 1960s such facts as diminishing elk herds and accumulating fuels begin to concern some visionaries to the point where the 66,000 acre free-fire study area is established in the White Cap to help establish a better trail for fire in wilderness.

A carpet of freshly fallen needles on the forest floor in early September prompts one visitor to remark, “I thought forest fires were black!” She has not seen forest fires up close and her pre-conceived impressions are not valid. In fact, tracing the exact extent of the fire is difficult, due to the fresh litter fall. It is good that Chief McGuire approved the wilderness fire plan a year earlier as an exception to the existing 10 a.m. fire suppression policy, because Fitz Creek burned through 43 consecutive 10 a.m.’s.

In recalling the incident with the Nez Perce helicopter firecrew, one has to admire the ambition of the four firefighters as they attempted to control a fire on a landscape that resembled the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. This type of initiative and spirit is just as important as we devise fire management programs for fire-adapted landscapes in wilderness. We will proceed only as fast as we have the ability to prescribe and manage fire when and where we want it.

A Postscript: 30 Years and 40 Years Later

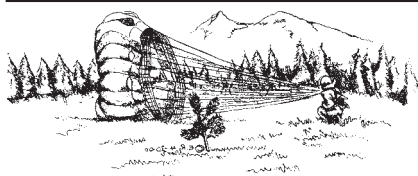
In August 2002, the Bitterroot NF hosted a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the SBW fire management program which got its start in the White Cap Creek drainage. As a current FS manager, District Ranger Dave Campbell had inherited the benefits of the White Cap project.

“The original program was confined to the White Cap Creek drainage, but then it was expanded to the whole Selway-Bitterroot and more recently, we have included some lands outside of wilderness,” Campbell said.

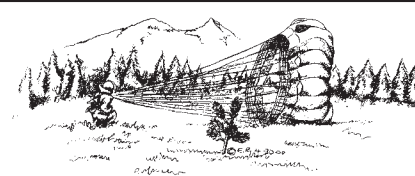
“We have many examples where lightning-

caused fires of the last ten years have run into natural fire events of the previous 10, 20, 30 years. What we see is natural fire influenced by natural landscape patterns operating in a natural way, which is the wilderness objective in these areas.”

The anniversary celebrated the small group of USFS employees in Montana in the 1970s who began blazing a new path for fire management in their agency. While varied in their work and personal backgrounds, each had worked in fire control and understood the importance of sound fire suppression policies and standards. They also had come to realize that the story about fire was much more complex than what the long-standing Forest Service policy of suppressing all fires implied. 🔦



Notes from the Ranks



Pat McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

THE CALIFORNIA AND Oregon smoke is still heavy in the air here in Montana in early October. A cursory glance at the SMKJ Status shows scores of jumpers in the woods as single resources. Some planes have gone off-contract and some fires are pushing acres referred to more easily by fractions of a million acres than thousands of acres. The post-mortem of this

summer's fires is already dominating political discourse as the cultural interpretation of public lands changes with climates, both political and global.

A large fire burned several thousand acres behind Bozeman, MT, up from the College “M” trail towards Bridger Bowl Ski Resort. Few events can shift perception of raw natural power like a wildfire in the hills just above town. Craigslist is flooded with calls for removing “gross” and “ugly” dead trees from properties in the area. Large fires in wilderness areas also are referred to as less beautiful than the previously unburned area. And yet, “the only good fire is a dead fire” sounds eerily similar to policy toward Native Americans as the West was pioneered. What smoke signals

did we similarly miss in a hundred years of fire suppression leading to today's megafires?

As public lands, namely forests, transition from resource-extraction models to recreation models, I think we must also recognize the necessary shift in thinking of the firefighters. Whether or not fire “fighter” itself is an appropriate term (regardless of Bradburian speculation) could be a strong discussion point. Smokejumpers sitting at a base and not being ordered certainly aren't fighting fire. How does the ordering district let jumpers sit and risk a few days of uncontained fire-line for a wildland fire use unit to drive down and hike in? Perhaps the jumpers just aren't the correct tool for the job at the moment. I sat in Silver City for 21 days with no jumps while a

Region One fire use unit initial attacked and staffed fires for most of that tour. When did jumpers stop being sellable?

Smokejumpers are in a specialized niche in the fire world that is fast becoming less in need of a specialized resource. We hear about fires smoldering for days without being jumped, and a percentage of these blowing out for many thousands of acres and perhaps lost lives and structures. What if we could be proactive in our speculation of the fire's particular worth/use and jump it early, perhaps managing it without fully suppressing, perhaps with a few smokejumpers trained as fire observers and effects monitors? Real-time, on-the-ground feedback from skilled folk ready to suppress immediately a day or two ahead of, say, known Red Flag events. Perhaps fire use jumpers can walk that fire down to a valley bottom or management objective during less critical fire weather, burning less area than the high wind event that would otherwise get that fire to that point. This seems like some new thinking for what perhaps seems like a relic resource to some fire managers around the West. Additional exposure for the versatility of the smoke-jumping program, a cognitive shift from fire "specialists" to fire "generalists" like we used to be, and perhaps a slight swing in the pendulum of bias back to proactive management rather than reactive fire use.

Smokejumpers today are coming from, oftentimes, five or more years of fire experi-

ence prior to having a decent chance at Rookie Training. Perhaps all that time on hot-shot crews with large fire experience desensitizes us to the objective facts of initial attack. That three-acre fire that sat for a week before becoming a 100,000-acre fire (how many times have we heard this story?). Well, it was three acres the entire time that first week. A week later, on the news, "This was the fire we've worried about for years." But we can't see the small fire for the huge box we draw around it. The Type II management team, and perhaps a district that would rather have this large fire now and not have to worry about ten smaller fires over the next decade. And yet, good news for the laid-off smokejumpers a few weeks later, "looking to hire crew to clear these ugly dead trees from my property."

What if all smokejumpers were trained in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) that districts use to evaluate if it should order jumpers and suppress the fire or use the fire? What other tools can we SMKJs have in our mental tool baskets to boost the ordering official's confidence that we can get that fire exactly to the objectives the forest wishes? What slight frac-

tion of the dollars spent on fires lost this year could have covered all this training for the few hundred smokejumpers? These are just some ideas that slip around my head like smoke from a coffee-warming fire. I bet the first schematic idea for a chainsaw was thought up in a similar setting.

There are many other factors leading to large fire growth and management, not the least of which is that smokejumpers are typically Type A personalities, and "that's not the way I'd do it" are often our favorite words. I'm just a second-year jumper and was lucky to pick up a permanent position with the USFS after this year—but it's not smokejumping. I think with having had this goal for so long, I've lost sight of the rest of the USFS, perhaps how to relate to the districts we jumpers, ourselves a customer service organization, must cater to for business. A quick Google search and you'll find several "why we do it" articles—but maybe it isn't so much this question we should be asking ourselves as "who are we doing it for?" There's a lot more to the "Caring for the Land and Serving People" motto than originally comes across! 🧑🏻

Having Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important

In order to save the NSA time and money, I'm emailing the merchandise flyer to you instead of mailing it. Last year I did over 5,000 reunion mailings. Remember the National Reunion in Boise has been postponed until June 24-26, 2021. With good email addresses, we can cut that USPS mailing in half.

To see if we have your correct email address, go to www.smokejumpers.com. Click on "News and Events" at the top of the page. Click on "JumpList" on the pull-down, type in your last name.

That will bring up the email currently listed for you. Please contact me if we need to update your email. My contact information is on page 3. —Chuck Sheley



NSA Scholarships 2020

Photos Courtesy Recipients



Anika Leist



Kortnee Nelson



Elizabeth Odell



Maddie Bowers



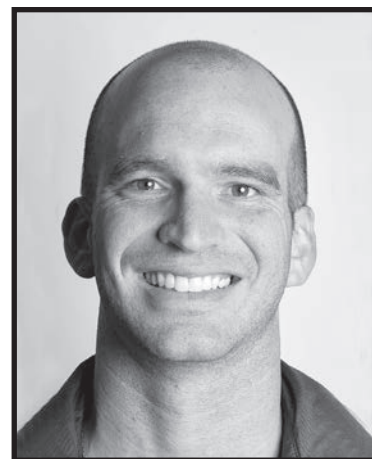
Madalyne Thomas



Jackson Pepion



Elise Stoops



Robert Rosenthal

Layout Design: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)

INTRODUCING YOU TO THE 2020 NSA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES

The NSA Scholarship Committee (**Jim Cherry** (MSO-57), **Larry Lufkin** (CJ-63), **Mike Bina** (MSO-68), and **Mike McMillan** (FBX-96) is pleased to introduce the eight awardees of the 2020 National Smokejumper Association's Scholarships. This program is fulfilling part of the NSA's mission "... by responding to special needs of smokejumpers and their families." These scholarships are made possible through the generous donations of our members to whom we shout out our profound thanks. Hear their appreciation and aspirations in their own words ...

Madalyne Thomas (granddaughter of **Don Thomas** CJ-57) will be a junior at Whitworth University in Spokane, WA.

"Receiving this scholarship is an honor, and I thank you very much for assisting me in my tuition expenses. Your association is founded around humility, reliability, and grit, and I aim to continue to express those same characteristics as I continue on with a summer filled with fire, as I serve as a ground pounder on a 10-person crew out of Baker City, OR, and a school year filled with challenges."

"Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to continue with my schooling in pursuit of a Health Science degree. While the school year awaits, I assure you I am having a blast clearing trails, refining my chainsaw and Pulaski skills, while also learning more and more about fire and all the challenges and triumphs it brings. In doing so I aim to represent the 'Keepers of the flame' with pride and gratitude."

Robert Rosenthal (NCSB-10) is a graduate student at University of Washington School of Dentistry in Seattle, WA.

*"I cannot say thank you enough for the generous scholarship. It will be a tremendous help during my last year of dental school as I explore externships, residencies, and work opportunities. My wife, **Erin** (RAC-08), our son, **Will**, and I are thrilled to embark on our next adventure of finding a town with a school for **Will**, a forest service district for **Erin**, and*

a dental clinic for myself. The values instilled while smokejumping have helped me so much in dental school, namely: owning mistakes, staying calm in challenging situations, and optimizing the talents of each member of a team. I look forward to applying these and more skills learned while working for the Forest Service to my career moving forward.

"My time at NCSB from 2010-2017 will always be a fountain of great memories. I intend to stay connected with that part of my life through the NSA. Thank you so much for helping me and other smokejumpers transition into other areas of the workforce. Your support helps give us momentum needed to make it to our next jump spot in life.

"Thank you again, and hoping you are all staying safe in these times."

Anika Leist (granddaughter of **Roger Savage** MSO-57) will be a junior at University of Victoria in British Columbia

"First, I would like to express my respect and gratitude for all members of the NSA. I am profoundly grateful for the dedication that you put into keeping communities and environments safe. This scholarship is also very appreciated because I know it is helping many people like myself. I am very blessed, honored, and grateful to have been chosen as a recipient of this scholarship. It provides a feeling of relief as the costs of education are steep. This money will be used to further my academic excellence and open my options to expand my educational well-roundedness. It will ease the financial pressure and will help me be able to focus on my schooling so I can get as much as I can during my undergrad degree."

Jackson Pepion (son of **Mike Pepion** MSO-82) will be a graduate student at University of York in York, England.

"I sincerely thank you for the opportunity you have given me to take further steps in my education by awarding me one of the 2020-2021 NSA scholarships. It has been a wish of mine to take up courses once again to further build on my skills as a musi-

cian since graduating from undergraduate studies in 2018. So far, finding funding has been a challenge both as a student seeking to study outside of the US, and as an arts student.

“Being awarded the scholarship has renewed my personal morale in light of whether or not to study abroad during the current pandemic. Having not known of this opportunity before, I also thank my father, Mike Pepion, a former smokejumper himself, for encouraging me to apply. By being able to further my studies, I can hope to repay you in full in becoming one day a servant of the public by being able to teach music in the near future.”

Elise Stoops (granddaughter of **Ron Stoops** MSO-57) will be a freshman at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, AZ.

“I acknowledge that I have received a scholarship from the National Smokejumper Association. I am so incredibly grateful for this scholarship and the huge help it will be to me as I continue my education in studying nursing at Grand Canyon University. Attending college is a large financial burden on my family, and with the help of this scholarship, it will be much more manageable. I feel so grateful to this association for the tremendous positive impact it has on my life and the lives of the other scholarship recipients.”

Kortnee Nelson (daughter of **Jeff Nelson** FBX-85) will be a grad student at University of Denver in Denver, CO.

“Let me begin by expressing my appreciation that you have not only taken the time to read my essay, but also selecting me for this year’s scholarship. I let you in on some insight into my life and I feel blessed that others can believe in my ambitions as well. This scholarship is allowing some financial ease as I step into this next chapter in my life. I understand it is an honor to be selected and I ensure you that I will uphold the values and work ethic this program embodies. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.”

Maddie Bowers (daughter of **Matthew Bowers** MYC-95) will be a sophomore at Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA.

“I am writing to thank you for the generous sup-

port I received from the 2020 NSA Scholarship. I was honored to learn that I was selected as a recipient this year, and I continue to be grateful and humbled by the opportunities this will grant me. In my time at Whitman, I have become a dedicated student focusing predominantly on Environmental Studies and Biology with a minor in Chemistry.

“I plan on pursuing a career in Environmental Leadership, which will hopefully expose me to the vast array of communities that can teach me about the world we live in and provide me with gratifying experiences. Thanks to your help, I am one step closer to achieving my goals. By awarding me the 2020 NSA Scholarship, you have lightened my financial burden which will allow me to focus on the most important aspect of school: learning. Once again, I want to thank you for your confidence in me as a student, professional, daughter, and future environmental steward. I am dedicated to helping others as you have helped me, and the continued generosity of the NSA Scholarship will help me on this journey considerably.”

Elizabeth Odell (granddaughter of **David Atwood** RDD-67) will be a freshman at Humboldt State University in Arcata, CA.

“Hello, my name is Elizabeth Odell. Thank you so much for selecting me to be one of this year’s scholarship recipients. I’m really honored to be receiving this scholarship. Ever since I was in middle school, my Grandpa, who is a former smokejumper, has been talking about me applying for it, so it really means a lot to both me and my family.

“I am a graduating high school Senior from Northern California. I am an avid mountain bike racer, and I spent this year as an exchange student in Spain. I had to come home early due to COVID, but I made the best of it this summer by spending lots of time with my family. We had many fun adventures both hiking and biking and spent a lot of time at my grandparent’s property swimming and helping with projects and chores.

“I will be attending Humboldt State University next year to study Environmental Resources Engineering with possibly a minor in Spanish. It won’t be exactly the college experience I was hoping for, but I’m still super stoked to be starting this chapter of my life.” 🍄