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National Smokejumper Association

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Smokejumper Obituary

Daniels, Jerrold Barker "Jerry" (Missoula 1958)

Jerry, 40, died April 28, 1982 in Bangkok, Thailand. He was born June 11, 1941, in Santa Clara, California. The family moved to Montana when Jerry was 10-years old. Jerry graduated from Missoula County High School and rookied in 1958. He was 17 years old plus a week—the youngest smokejumper on record. Jerry jumped 1958-60.

The following timeline comes from Gayle Morrison's book "Hog's Exit."

In 1961 Jerry was hired as a "kicker" by Air America, a CIA proprietary airline contracted to drop supplies to Vang Pao's Hmong troops in Laos. After dropping cargo in Laos and Tibet, Jerry returned to the U.S. in 1962 to work for Intermountain Aviation, also a CIA proprietary, on Operation Coldfeet. Jerry continued to work alternately for Air America and Intermountain and, at the same time, completed eight quarters at the University of Montana.

In 1965 Jerry returned to Laos working air operations at Lima Site 36 until April 1968 when he took a leave of absence and returned to the University of Montana. In 1970 he went to Virginia for CIA Junior Officer Training and returned to Laos in March of that year. Jerry worked at Long Cheng 1970-73 as the CIA's chief of operations and advisor to General Vang Pao and his Hmong troops.

In June of 1974 all U.S. military and Air America aircraft left Laos. Jerry remained at Long Cheng implementing postwar development projects. In May of 1975 Jerry organized the evacuation of General Vang Pao and 2,500 Hmong officers and family members from Long Cheng. He then worked in Thailand with Hmong refugees who fled Laos. In 1976, Jerry left Thailand and returned to the U.S. where he received a Letter of Commendation from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for his work with the refugees. Jerry then returned to Thailand to work for the State Department Refugee Program as chief ethnic affairs officer for highland Lao refugees.

In 1980 Jerry received the Superior Honor Award from the Department of State for his work in the refugee program. In May of 1982 the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok reported the death of Jerry. He was mourned in the traditional three-day Hmong funeral ceremony in Missoula before being buried in the Missoula Cemetery May 10, 1982.

In addition to Gayle Morrison's book *Hog's Exit*, go the NSA website, click on "Magazine" and read the article by Fred Donner in the July 2003 issue of *Smokejumper*, page 24, for more about Jerry. The October 2008 issue of *Smokejumper* has an excellent article by Kim Briggeman of the *Missoulian* on page 3.

(end of excerpt)