THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2004

SMOKEJUMPER

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Smokejumper, Issue No. 42, January 2004
ISSN 1532-6160

Smokejumper is published quarterly by:
The National Smokejumper Association
c/o 10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95928

The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA.

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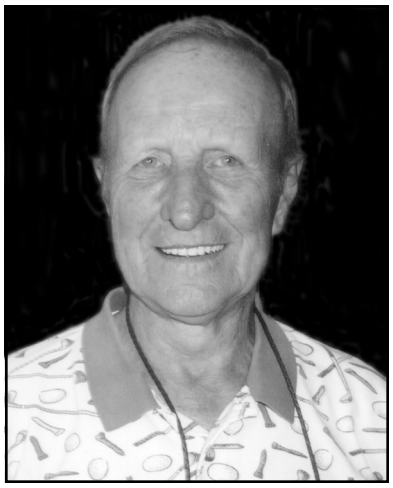
Cover photo: *Pioneer Smokejumper Jim Alexander (Courtesy Jim Alexander)*

Message from the President



by Ron Stoleson
(Missoula '56)
President

I've been having a great time sending letters of "thanks" to new life members. In my letter to them, I mention that there have been only about 5,000 smokejumpers since the program began in 1939 and that those who become life members (as of 10/6/03 numbering 118 with three others on a payment plan) are ensuring that our non-profit association will continue to preserve the history of the smokejumper program. Because of our interest in preserving our history, by the time you read this, we will have presented plaques, recognizing those killed in the line of duty as smokejumpers, to 13 different entities, including all the current smokejumper bases and several museums. Some of the other on-going activities we have include an MOU with the University of Montana to archive documents and oral histories concerning smokejumping. Another MOU is with the Evergreen Aviation Museum in McMinnville, Oregon, where a display is being designed featuring smokejumping. This museum attracts thousands of visitors each month. We also have a great display at the Museum of Mountain Flying in Missoula where Jack Demmons (I have to call him "Sir") has done a yeoman's job of creating displays of smokejumpers and smokejumping. Visit these places when you have a chance. They are worth your time.

On a recent visit to Missoula, I stopped by the Visitor Center at the Aerial Fire Depot and talked with the volunteers who greet visitors and sell memorabilia. The hot item they had for sale this year was the NSA's yearbook that listed some of our history and also the bios of many of our members. One visiting lady who bought the book was very moved by the fact that her deceased husband's bio was included in the book. For those of you who didn't order this book, you missed something special.

In my last column, I said, "more later on the great members we have in NSA." I can't name all of those I would include under "great members" because there are too many. YOU ARE ALL SPECIAL. One I would like to mention in particular is Tom Kovalicky who just completed a long tour as a director for the Association. He began the life member program (he is life member #1) and has made many other contributions to our organization that have served us well. Thanks Tom for all you have done. Hope you stay involved.

Am looking forward to our get-together in Missoula in June. These doin's seem to mean more the older you get.

Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?
Here's a chance to get it replaced. Order item # 132 on the merchandise order form. Each pin is $10.00.

Redding Smokejumpers Active! Ron Omont Reaches Milestone

213 fire jumps on 29 fires August 31-Sept. 7

23 jumpers on 3 fires, Tahoe National Forest.

48 jumpers on 6 fires, Mendocino National Forest.

95 jumpers on 15 fires, Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

18 jumpers on 2 fires, Klamath National Forest.

10 jumpers on 1 fire, Redwoods National Park.

10 jumpers on 1 fire, CDF Lake-Napa Ranger Unit.

9 jumpers on 1 fire, CDF Shasta Ranger Unit.

74 total booster jumpers, 47 Forest Service and 27 Bureau of Land Management, from four Regions (1, 2, 4 and 6) and seven smokejumper bases.

120 total jumpers operating from the Region 5 Smokejumper Base in Redding.

BLM jumpers operating from Carson City, Nev., dropped 24 jumpers on 6 fires, 2 fires Six Rivers NF, 3 fires Shasta-Trinity NF, 1 fire Mendocino NF from Sept. 3–6.

Region 5 Smokejumper Ron Omont jumped his 500th jump on the Hat fire, Shasta-Trinity NF on September 7, 2003. It was also his 229th fire jump. Ron has been a smokejumper for 26 fire seasons, all in Region 5. His first fire jump was on the Coal fire, Shasta-Trinity NF on June 4, 1978. Ron is the first Region 5 jumper to reach 500 jumps.

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***Smokejumper* base abbreviations:**

Anchorage ..... ANC	Grangeville ..... GAC	Missoula ..... MSO	
Boise ..... NIFC	Idaho City ..... IDC	Redding ..... RDD	
Cave Junction ..... CJ	La Grande ..... LGD	Redmond ..... RAC	
Fairbanks ..... FBX	McCall ..... MYC	West Yellowstone WYS	
		Winthrop ..... NCSB	

Elections for NSA Board of Directors

Chuck Sheley, Election Committee Chair

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the NSA and meets two times a year to conduct NSA business. The meetings are held at various places in the Pacific Northwest. The terms of four members of the BOD will expire July 1, 2004.

Even though you would be obligated to two meetings a year, it is important to remember that you can be a valuable working BOD member regardless of where you live. In the day of e-mail, a functioning board can work with its members spread across the U.S. If you have ideas and are willing to roll up your sleeves, please consider joining the NSA work force.

Election timeline and procedures:

1. Jan.–Feb. 21, 2004, fill out personal information sheet. Must be in my hands by Feb. 21.

2. Personal information on each candidate inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.

3. Ballot sheet inserted into the April issue of *Smokejumper*.

4. Ballots must be received by May 21.

5. New board members to take office July l—election results published in the Oct. issue of *Smokejumper.*

Please call, write or e-mail for your filing papers. My contact information is on this page. The time to act is now!

Interview with a Pioneer Smokejumper

Historic photo: First smokejumper squad at Missoula 1940. *Back Row L-R: Glenn Smith, Earl Cooley, Merle Lundrigan (project leader/did not jump until 1941), Jim Alexander, Chet Derry. Kneeling L-R: Rufus Robinson, Jim Waite, Frank Derry, George Case (Moose Creek district ranger/non-jumper), Dick Lynch, Bill Bolen. (Courtesy Jim Alexander)*

A member of the first smokejumper force in 1940, Jim "Smokey" Alexander is a true pioneer. Alexander recently sat down and shared his recollections with ***James Budenholzer*** *(Missoula '73) of smokejumper's first season—and what it was like to make history.*

by James Budenholzer (Missoula '73)

The way the smokejumpers were started was in the late 1930s. The Forest Service decided they needed another method of fighting fire so they didn't have [a] repeat of the horrible 1910 fires. I worked on the St. Regis district of the old Cabinet National Forest. I'd been up to see the 1910 fire. It was something to see—miles and miles of blackened snags.

A man named David Godwin out of Washington, D.C., was the national forest-fire officer for the U.S. In the fall of 1939, there was an experimental jump group in Winthrop, Wash., where they had a pioneer squad, … trained people, riggers and parachutists, and they did experimental work and some jumps. They became our riggers at Seeley Lake [Mo.].

To choose who would be the first smokejumpers for the first smokejumper fire season in 1940, … Godwin had 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. I was working the old Cabinet National Forest, … and they asked for people who'd be interested. I volunteered. The supervisor chose me in the spring of '40 to represent the Cabinet National Forest. [This was] just after everyone came back … from four to five days of rigorous … training. … The selected ones of us went out to Fort Missoula, which was still an active army post, with the infantry stationed there. They had a hospital facility, and we had to take a medical exam. One guy named Hamilton didn't make it. He didn't pass the physical. The rest of us went up to Seeley Lake … and put up a bunch of tents behind the … ranger station.

Godwin was there and several other people from Washington representing the Forest Service, and a whole bunch of Army guys and Air Force people, because they were thinking about starting what would become the Airborne 82nd and the 101st, and they took about 2,000 pictures of all our techniques and interviewed us all. They were going around the country looking for any working parachute operation. Turned out ours was the only one. They were thinking about creating airborne divisions.

The man I became acquainted with was Major William H. Lee. The next time I heard of him, he was a major general and in charge of training the 82nd Airborne and the 101st. … There is a big memorial to him down here in Fort Bragg at the 82nd headquarters. He wanted me and a buddy to come with him and join the Army. He offered me a 2nd lieutenant, but I didn't go.

The First Camp at Seely Lake

We were at a place called Blanchard Flats, just north of Seeley Lake. … This was about 35 miles northeast of Missoula. 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. Instructions were given to the men on rolls, letdowns and other basics. We had two minor injuries during the training. One was a sprained ankle. The other was, we were pulling our own rip cords, and [one guy's] rip cord

got caught in the shroud lines, and he pulled his shoulder pulling the rip cord. We jumped at 6,000 feet. … [Another] guy didn't pull his rip cord until 2,000 feet, and Frank Derry sent the guy on his way. The guy didn't want to continue jumping anyway.

The First Fire Jump

I didn't make the first fire jump; I made the second fire jump.

I have a picture of Earl Cooley and Rufus ("Rufe") Robinson. My personal recollection is that there was a fire on Martin Creek, and they decided to make the first jump. They went "eeny-meeny-mieny-mo" and then decided [on] Rufe and Earl—Rufe, a little because he was an older man, about 35, and Earl had to be about 23. I was 20.

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. Earl was sort of a "yup-no" man, didn't have a lot to say. He was one of the nicest guys. These days, we talk every year. He says to me, "Smokey, about this annual subscription for the National Smokejumper Association magazine: Do ya think we're gonna make it through another year?" He stayed on with the Forest Service. On our practice jumps, Earl and I went together, and he almost always got sick when he made a jump. It was very hard … He was at the cookie bag all the time.

When Rufe and Cooley got back, we were all elated they had made a safe landing. We figured the project was underway, and that it was going to be a success and there was going to be a good way to fight small fires, and we wouldn't be having to walk in a hundred men.

Periodically, big shots would fly in from Missoula—like Major Evan Kelly. He was the regional forester. There were letters on file that he was *not* in favor of the smokejumper squads, and that it was a waste of "honest suppression money" that could have been spent on good men. We all knew that he was against us. He was overruled by Washington. David Godwin had overruled him. Godwin was the chief fire officer for the U.S. Forest Service … and he was with us at Blanchard Flats when we did our training jumps. From time to time, he'd show up. He had the entire U.S., but this was his baby. He wanted this thing to go.

There was a lot of barracks gossip. As if we were under a microscope, the whole Forest Service was looking at this project, seeing where it was going to go. But we felt the Forest Service guys were with us. We all had experience with the pickup crews out of the bars. They weren't worth anything. After a day, their feet hurt from walking in their shoes, and they wanted to get back to the bar and get a jug of wine.

As untested smokejumpers, we were afraid that if they decided they were spending too much money, they'd cancel the whole project. So we worked as hard as we could to make sure it did work. … We were planning for 1941. For 1941, we were thinking there would be three squads, one at Moose Creek, one at Big Prairie and one at Nine Mile, which would be the main one, because there was a CC barrack there at Nine Mile, and the Forest Service had hundreds of mules there.

We were … very good friends, and everybody helped do everything. The first year, we didn't have the static line; it was free-fall. We felt that if a guy didn't feel like jumping, … [he] didn't have to. The Forest Service never chastised them. It was their decision. When we got the static line, [however,] it was a horse of a different color; they had to jump. I don't think I ever elected to not jump, but Earl a couple of times decided not to, and that was not a problem.

Frank Derry had been experimenting with the static line, so we decided to try and work that out for the 1941 group. We worked that out in 1940. So they were making pioneer static parachute packs on the feasibility of the static line at the loft in Moose Creek.

In 1940, we were pulling our own rip cords. We stepped out on the step of the Travelair, and we'd go and count to five or 10 or whatever to clear the plane. Some guys would pull just when they were clean, and others would wait until they were at 1,000 feet. Bill Bolen pulled his at 2,000 feet, and we were all on the ground watching him come. Frank Derry kept raising his leg and praying, "my God, my God." We thought he was going into the ground. [Afterwards,] Frank told him he was through, but Bill first said "I don't want to jump any more."

The rest of 1940, Frank Derry worked on this static line and the cover on the backpack. They made any number of

To expand on a few of Alexander's points: In 1940, Frank and Chet Derry went to Region 1 as instructor-riggers. There were seven rookies in addition to the two Derry brothers at Seeley Lake. They were Rufus Robinson, Earl Cooley, Jim Waite, Dick Lynch, Jim Alexander, Leonard Hamilton (failed physical exam) and Bill Bolen. Virgil Derry and Glenn Smith stayed with the Region 6 operation. George Honey was a rookie, and Francis Lufkin returned with Virgil Derry and Glenn Smith, making a total of four jumpers at Winthrop. Dick Tuttle from the 1939 group was the fifth jumper, but he was seriously injured in training and was not on the 1940 crew.

Godwin's original group also consisted of experienced professional jumpers Frank Derry, Chester Derry, Virgil Derry and Glenn Smith. Dick Tuttle and Alan Honey were local residents contracted for the project with no prior jump experience. Forest Service employees making jumps included Francis Lufkin, Harry Tuttle, Walt Anderson, Roy Mitchell and Albert Davis. The jumpers ranged in age from 23–55 and seven men made their first jumps during the experimental project in 1939.

different models, using the sewing machines at Moose Creek, and Chet Derry made the first jump with a static line. It had never been done anywhere, as far as I know.

It worked perfectly. … [In] the winter of 1940, they went to California and perfected it. … In 1941, we used it in the spring out at the old Nine Mile remount west of Missoula during training.

During a practice jump, a guy stepped out on the step, and before he jumped, he pulled a rip cord while still on the steps of the plane. Frank had to push the chute out the door, and it caught briefly on the tail of the plane. Luckily, the guy landed safely.

At any rate, Earl Cooley and Rufe Robinson went on the first fire at Martin Creek. [They] dropped firepacks on it. Dick Johnson was the pilot. They worked it all night and had it out before ten the next morning, [when] a four-man walk-in crew took over. … The theory was, knock it in the head, control, and if you couldn't control it, watch it until help came.

Second Jump

I did the second fire jump along with Dick Lynch from the Flathead Forest. That was on July 20, 1940. They decided to make an experiment. Two lookouts saw this lighting bolt go down way at the head of Moose Creek Range in Idaho, but they never saw any fire or smoke, but both had an azimuth reading.

George Case was the district ranger at Moose Creek. George Case had authority to dispatch jumpers to anywhere in the region. It was his responsibility. The crick drainage was huge drainage, and this strike was at the head of it. Even though they didn't see any smoke or fire, they decided to jump in two jumpers.

George Case ordered us in. … Dick and I landed on a meadow about a half-mile from where the fire would be. Because it was a long, flat, ridgeline, very open, we could see both lookouts through the trees, and with our compasses, we followed [the] azimuths until they met. Then we smelled smoke. It had just started. We put it out.

It was in the early afternoon so we left all our gear up there, piled up for packers to go in and pick it up. We took our jump jackets and Pulaskis and dropped down seven or eight miles into Moose Creek Basin, which was 6,000 feet down. We were told there would be food at the Forest Guard station, but there wasn't, only a can of Sego milk (condensed) and coffee. That's all the grub we had.

We headed out at 4 A.M. when it was just getting light. We hiked along at a good clip of 3 or 4 miles an hour over a very good trail, all downhill gentle grade, one of the main the trails, paralleling Moose Creek all the way. There were so many elk in that canyon we were slapping them on the butt to get them out of the way, literally thousands of elk. At noon we opened that can of milk: Dick had half, I had half. Forty miles later at about 10 or 11 P.M. we walked into the main Moose Creek Ranger Station. We were so tired we could hardly take our boots off. We were pretty sore from that long hike. It was a success, because with our compasses, we were able to get to the fire. I never heard of them doing that again.

Two days later at Moose Creek, we were building an irrigation ditch. Dick and I were sent to do the job with dynamite. Dick said he had plenty of experience. We dug the holes and buried the dynamite. He set the caps, and when we hit the plunger, it didn't go off. He hit it a second time, and we had to then go in and dig out the dynamite. I was afraid we'd get our hands blown off. We dug it out okay.

Historic photo: First parachute loft. *Built at Moose Creek R.S. by the crew. Roof is shake from felled trees. Dick Lynch pictured with rake. (Courtesy Jim Alexander)*

The First Loft

Frank Derry … his brother Chet and Glenn Smith … had set up a temporary loft, just a bunch of tables they had made. We decided to build a loft. The Forest Service flew in a cement mixer in a Ford Tri-motor. We poured the base. The first loft wasn't even enclosed; it was all open. We couldn't extend the parachutes vertical; they had to be dried [horizontally]. We put on a roof made of cedar shakes made from trees we sawed down. … That served as [a] parachute loft for 1940–1941 at Moose [Creek], and I don't know what ever happened to that. It was very serviceable, over a hundred feet long. Frank Derry was the project manager. We had shelves to store the parachutes and a couple of heavy sewing machines to make repairs.

In 1941, Dick Lynch went on to be the squad leader at [the] Big Prairie ranger station, with about 15 men. I went there in 1941. It was a long flight from Missoula in a Ford Tri-motor.

Early Days

Let me go back further. I graduated from Great Falls High School in 1936, and I was active in the Boy Scouts and became an Eagle Scout. After a campout, we scouts came into Great Falls, and they were rounding crews to go to the Bear Paw Mountains, east of Havre, where there were two bad fires on the Indian reservation and the Forest Service lands. I volunteered to go up there. They sent us in an open truck, driving all night. We didn't have any covering, just open air and sleeping bags.

I was 18, one of the youngest guys. [We] rode all night, got there at breakfast. … They were bringing down a guy on a

horse who was in the last stages of dying. He'd been burned, made quite an impression on me.

We were there a couple of weeks, fighting that fire. Then we came back to Great Falls and fought another big fire that had started on Straight Crick … back up against the Rockies, where Charles Russell used to paint a lot of his paintings. We lost two guys on the Straight Crick fire. Then we went back to Great Falls.

We were fighting fires for 27 cents an hour. The grub was wonderful. We were growing up in the Depression. Those were hard times. So for us, the food was great. … Some of us jumped the rails and rode boxcars to Missoula to keep on fighting fires. I signed up for more, and we went up to north of the Flathead, where there was a huge fire of about 17,000 acres. I stayed there. I was almost the last guy off. I was on the mop-up crew.

I went back to Missoula, and we rode the boxcars to Spokane, and we fought a bunch of fires there. Some of my buddies wanted to go north and fight fires near Seattle, but I went back to Missoula in a boxcar and fought a fire south of Missoula. By then, it was getting on to about September, getting pretty cold. When that fire ended, I went back to Great Falls.

There was another call for a fire around Lewiston. By that time, I had enough experience; they made me a sector boss. I set up my first fire camp. It was really getting cold. And in the end, it snowed.

A Pretty Girl

It is an interesting side story that in 1941, my wife, Dorothy, rode on the flights with Dick Johnson from Missoula to Big Prairie. … Dorothy came from an old pioneer family in Montana. … [Her people were] in the legislature and the senate and everything. On one flight, [Dick] had a cement mixer that broke loose in the plane, and because she was the only passenger, she had to secure it. He liked to take newspapers and have Dorothy throw them … out to the lookouts. There were about 15 of them between Missoula and Big Prairie. Boy, were the lookouts happy to get those. They'd be waving! It was a pretty girl throwing out newspapers they enjoyed getting.

Description of the First Actual Fire Jump in the United States

by Rufus Robinson (Missoula '40)

On July 12, at 2:00 P.M., Merle Lundrigan asked me to go to a fire on the head of Martin Creek, Section 35, Township 31 North, Range 11 East. I started collecting my jumping suit, fire pack and equipment to take to the fire. Rest of crew helped haul all equipment out to the airport.

Historic photo: *July 12, 1940, Earl Cooley (left) and Rufus Robinson waiting for the plane before the 1st fire jump. Frank Derry is checking the equipment. (Courtesy of Jim Alexander)*

Dick Johnson arrived from Missoula at 3:05 P.M. with plane. One of the crew helped me dress and get into the harness of chute. At 3:21 we left the ground. Johnson headed the plane down river to gain elevation. Turned at Goat Mountain and headed back toward Bear Creek. Turned again and followed Ditch Creek, over top of Moose Ridge close to

Historic photo: *Robinson and Cooley taking off from Moose Creek airstrip on 1st fire jump. (Courtesy of Jim Alexander)*

Wyles Peak Lookout. Spotted fire on east slope of Martin Creek. Johnson circled fire at about 7,000 feet elevation. Fire looked to be about two and one-half acres in green timber fairly open. I asked Johnson to take plane up higher to around 7,600 feet. He circled over fire once more and spotted alder patch of about two acres, above fire, to jump into. Dropped burlap test chute at 3:55 P.M. Chute drifted down into Martin Creek, north and east of the fire.

I bailed out at 3:57 P.M. Wind had changed between time of dropping burlap test chute and when I jumped. I caught a down-draft and heavy ground wind, carrying me over alder patch half mile north. Landed in small greet tree, 25 feet tall. My feet were about two feet above ground. Unhooked harness and set up radio. Talked to ship at 4:03 P.M. Lundrigan reported Earl Cooley had landed northwest of me in tree. Lundrigan agreed to hold up dropping of fire packs until I reached Cooley. I misunderstood location of Cooley, and after waiting 15 minutes, Lundrigan dropped fire packs near Colley.

We started on fire line at 4:45 P.M. Cooley started working around north side of fire, throwing dirt on hot spots and building some fire line. I took the south side, cooling down hot spots and building some fire line. Worked until 7:00 P.M. when I sent Cooley back to find the other fire pack. He met four–man maintenance crew 300 yards from where his chute was hung up in the tree. They said they would be down to help us early next morning. Cooley did not find fire pack so came back to fire at 9:00 P.M. We worked on fire line until 10:00 P.M., ate lunch and watched rest of the night for snags falling across fire line. Had coffee at 3:30 A.M. Started building more fire line at 4:00 A.M. Fire controlled at 10:00 A.M. Four-man crew took over at 10.00 A.M. Had lunch at 12:30 P.M.

Cooley and I started after chutes with one mule, at 2:30 P.M. Arrived back to fire at 6:30 P.M. We spent one hour looking for saw and climbers. Thought Lundrigan had dropped them although neither Cooley nor I saw them dropped. Maintenance crew found second fire pack on their way to fire.

Packer Howard Engle, Earl Cooley and I left for Moose Creek at 7:50 A.M. July 14. I arrived Moose Creek 3:10 P.M. Cooley and Engle stayed at Toney Point Lookout overnight.

Description of the Second Actual Fire Jump in the United States

by Earl Cooley (Missoula '40)

On July 12, at 1:40 P.M. our project leader, Merle Lundrigan, was informed of a fire on the Nezperce Forest on which two of us jumpers were requested. Rufus Robinson and I were selected to go. The plan was ordered immediately after we received the fire call. While the plane was on its way from Missoula to Moose Creek Ranger Station the group had collectively gathered all necessary equipment including lunch from the cook house, fire packs, climbing spurs, saws, burlaps, suits, chutes, etc. We didn't put on our suits until the plane was on the field.

As soon as the ship arrived at the airport each man took an assigned job. One put the aerial on the plane, one put on the steps, others helped Rufus and me into our suits, while others were loading the material into the plane.

We were soon ready to take off for the location of the fire. Pilot Dick Johnson, Merle Lundrigan, Rufus Robinson and I left the airport at 3:211/2 P.M. We went up river to Ditch Creek, swing around south of Wiles Peak to the designated location of the fire, which was in the head of Martin Creek, Section 35, Township 31 North, Range 11 East, on the Nezperce Forest.

Rufus knew the country so he chose to go out first, consequently I was the second man out. Rufus threw the burlap out directly over a small elder patch about 300 yards from the fire on the uphill side. The burlap evidently hit two distinct currents of wind and was carried approximately one mile down the canyon from the spot. Dick circled the plane around the fire and Rufus made the correction for the burlap and informed Dick as to where he wished to make the jump. I believe Rufus was about 2200 feet above the timber when he took off. He made an excellent takeoff from the ship but ran into more drift than was expected and was carried beyond the spot a quarter mile or so. Rufus landed on the edge of a small clearing in a small tree.

As soon as I noticed Rufus standing on the ground by his chute, I decided to spot myself and bail out. At this point I should have thrown another burlap because I could not see exactly where Rufus was when he took off. To the contrary, I only roughly guessed allowing a little more for the drift. We hit two very bad air pockets before I was in position to jump, and I do not believe we were much over 1,800 feet above the timber, nevertheless I was anxious to leave ship and get into action. At 4:01 I bailed out and jerked my rip cord when I as clear of the plane.

I didn't make such a good takeoff because I was beginning to turn over in the air when the chute opened. I think I received the hardest opening shock of any previous jump I had made. My risers were twisted above my head and it seemed some time before they started to unwind; but eventually they did unwind and I located my position in

reference to landing.

I had drifted west of the spot, but was evidently coming down in line north and south. A stiff ground current caught me about 500 or 600 feet above the timber. I knew it was impossible to hit the spot under these conditions so I just turned my chute toward the fire and got well in my mind my directions and plans before I hit the timber. It seemed to me that I was traveling about 15 miles per hour when I went over the timber below me.

When I was about down, I could see that I was going to land in large timber by a small creek. I picked a large spruce tree about 120 feet high. The chute hung on the limbs about 10 feet from the top of the southeast side of the trees. I went through the branches on the side of the tree, breaking many of them. I noticed the chute on the side of the tree and didn't want to swing back because I thought there might be a possibility of the chute slipping off the limbs and going on down to the ground, so I grabbed the stub of a broken limb and climbed onto the trunk of the tree. I just climbed up the tree a few feet and unwrapped my risers from the harness.

Fortunately, the tree was easy to climb down and I did not need my rope to descend to the ground where I took off my suit and set up my radio. Due to some unknown condition I could not get a very good reception from the plane, but was able to contact Merle a time or two. Merle didn't get to tell me where he was going to drop our packs, but I kept watching every time the plane came within dropping distance from me. I caught a glimpse of the first fire pack through the timber but only knew the direction and approximate distance to the fire pack. The second pack was released from the plane almost directly over my head and came in about 100 feet from me. I took the latter pack, filled my water bag and canteen, put the burlap with my suit and equipment, and started for the fire which was about a quarter or a half mile east from where I landed.

I was about 200 yards from the fire when I met Rufus. We took the one fire pack and went down to the fire. The fire was burning very slowly and only had a few hot spots that could have been very dangerous. Rufus started around one side and I the other. We cooled down the hot spots, and trenched where they were the worst. We found a lot of dead line that we passed up.

About 8:30 I decided to go back to my chute and look for the other fire pack. I was following the small creek back when I heard a horse bell so obviously I went to see where they were. About 400 yards above my chute on the same creek I found a camp with four men. After a short conversation with them they informed me that they would be down on the fire early in the morning. Rufus and I worked the hot spots that night and until 10:00 o'clock the next day when these men arrived. Rufus and I had practically trenched the whole fire, which was about three acres, scattered over about five acres of ground.

We ate a lunch that these men brought down to us and were ready to turn the fire over to them about 10:00 o'clock. I remained on the fire while Rufus went up and set out a manta and streamer to locate the position for the plane which had been ordered to drop supplies and pumps. The plane did not come when we expected it so Rufus and I decided to retrieve our chutes from the trees and get them in camp ready to pack the next morning.

We took a mule and went after Rufus' chute first. We had to cut the tree down to get the chute because it was draped over the top of the tree. A small hole was torn in the apex of the chute. After returning to camp with Rufus' chute, we started to where my chute was hung in the trees. I followed, with the mule, the same trail back to the place where the maintenance crew was camped the night before. I knew exactly where the chute was from this point. I followed the small creek down to where I had blazed a couple of trees on the creek bank. The chute was only about 150 feet from this place.

The retrieving of the chute was apparently a big job since it was a good 85 or 90 feet up the tree to where the risers were attached. I took my 100-foot rope and climbed the tree. Rufus tied the Pulaski on the end of the rope. When I got up the tree to my chute, I pulled it up to me in this order. I tied one end to my risers and threw the other end down to Rufus. When Rufus got the rope he pulled on it and I chopped the limbs off in which my chute was tangled.

Rufus and I were both surprised at the ease with which we took the chute out of the tree. We spent a short time looking for the other tools which we were not sure had been dropped. I eventually came to the conclusion that the tools, which consisted of spurs and saw, had not been dropped. Due to the fact that the trail crew had found our other fire pack when they came down to the fire, we were relieved of our search for this pack.

We got back to camp with my chute about 6:30 or 7:00 P.M. By the time we ate supper it was nearly dark and we retired for the night. I dressed in my jumping suit and pulled a manta over me.

The next morning Rufus, the packer Howard Engle and I started out for Moose Creek. We went down Martin Creek and cut across country to Moose Ridge. Rufus took a different trail and went on into Moose Creek. Howard and I went to Tony Point that evening. The next afternoon I brought the chutes down with a mule and horse that had been brought up from the station. At 4:00 P.M. July 15, I arrived back at the Moose Creek ranger station.

Add this Photo to Your Collection

NSA Life Member **John Helmer** (RDD '59) donated copies of this **color** photo taken by **Jerry Schmidt** (CJ '62) to the NSA. The photo is printed on odd-size Fuji Pictro paper which will trim to make an outstanding display in a standard 8 x 10 frame. This picture is the cover shot of the NSA video *Firefighters from the Sky.*

$15.00 covers shipping/handling. Use merchandise order form when ordering the "Jumper in a Tree" shot.

The Hunt Went Up in Smoke

by Dirk Chandler (Redding '64)

It was a beautiful September day at the Redding base in 1964. I had rotated into a crew boss position and four of us were designated to jump a fire on the Mendocino N.F. in Northern California.

As we neared the fire, we could see a small column of smoke emitting from a large stand of timber that went from the valley floor to the top of the mountain range. Within the valley floor was a large grassy area that was to be our jump spot.

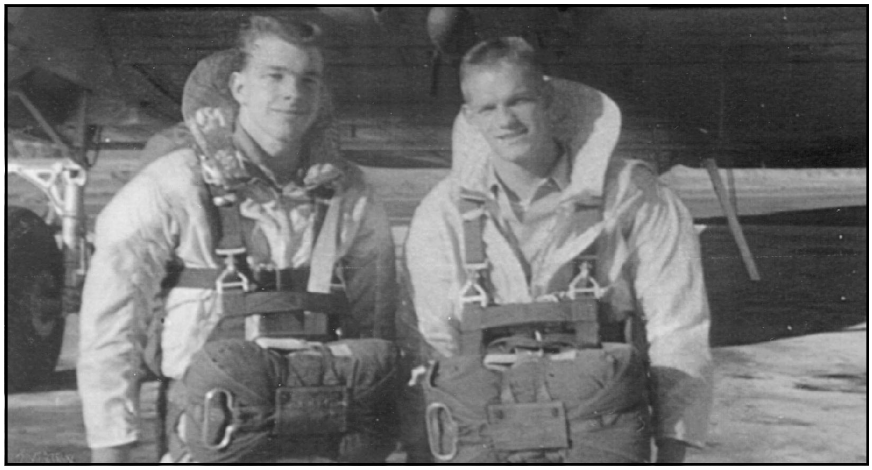
Good fortune was with me, as I was the only member of the crew that managed to hit the jump spot. One of the crew was tangled in a fence and another was in the timber. Unfortunately, I have forgotten their names but not **Rich Gradalski's** (RDD '64). Even I couldn't forget a name like that!

As I walked into the timber toward the smoke, I came upon what appeared to be a hunting cabin—perhaps the only structure within twenty miles. The situation, as I best recall, was that there was a man standing on the front porch and a man sleeping on a cot. There were a couple of horses tied to a hitching rail. A huge maple tree was overhanging the roof of the cabin.

On top of the roof, with his canopy partially enveloping the tree, was Rich.

Not knowing the situation, I should have kept my mouth shut. But I tried to be friendly and asked the man how the hunting was. Without too much enthusiasm he indicated that it was fair. Because Rich was not in a very good position, I went to his aid.

In a recent conversation with Rich, he told me that as he went through the tree, he saw the roof quickly coming up at him. As the chute was getting caught in the tree and slowing him down, he started reaching for anything he could to stop before he hit the roof. He finally came to a stop after grabbing a limb. Rich asked the man on the cot if his chute was secure. The man said he wasn't sure but that it



Rich Grandalski (left) and Ron Campbell (RDD '64). (Courtesy Rich Grandalski)

didn't look good. Rich couldn't hang on much longer and let go of the limb.

The roof was corrugated metal and very steep. Fortunately there was a ladder by the side of the house and I climbed on to the roof. I saw that Rich was holding his risers with both hands. He had one foot on top of the ridgeline and one line under his other leg that almost brought his knee up to his chin. After letting go of the limb, he had fallen to a position where his chute held.

Normally this would have been a funny situation but I still had the problem of getting up to Rich. The distance to the peak of the roof was further than I could reach and was about at a forty-five degree pitch. I was a little intimidated by the steep pitch but still managed to jump from the ladder and get a hold on the ridgeline. I pulled myself to help Rich get untangled. We then slid down the ladder and proceeded to the fire. Ground pounders were already on the fire and we spent about an hour helping the crew finish up the line.

The fire itself was of little consequence, but within the perimeter of the fire was a burning helicopter with the remains of an individual inside. One of the other men on the fire explained that a Marine pilot in a Marine helicopter was a friend of someone in the hunting party. The pilot was going to take a number of the hunters to the top of the ridge and they were going to hunt down toward the cabin. The chopper lost power upon taking off and crashed, causing injuries and at least one death.

Perhaps if I had known more early on, I would have approached the entire situation differently. The wife of the man on the porch had been seriously hurt and was on the way to the hospital with other members of the hunting party. The man on the cot, who I thought was sleeping, was the pilot and had broken his back in several places.

Getting Rich's chute out of the huge tree presented the next problem. With the four of us and about six others, we started to pull. I had wrapped the line around my hand for a better grip. I soon found myself hanging about four feet off the ground as the line tightened. We eventually got the chute out of the tree with minimal damage.

The pounders had pack mules and we loaded our gear on them and proceeded to the nearest road. We had an easy jump on a very small fire. However, it was a terrible situation for the others that ended in hardship and death. Their hunt had gone up in smoke!

"This Is Not a Jumper Type Fire!"???

by Chuck Sheley

I was spending a few days in Sunriver, Ore., near Bend in July and reading about the local fire that was causing concern. About that time I received this chronology that provides some interesting reading.

The following is how things went on the Link fire:

July 5, 2003 — Fire reported by lookout at 4:27 P.M. Plotted in steep terrain with extremely heavy dead and down fuels. Fire is near or next to an old road and near the burned area of a fire from 2002. **Twenty plus smokejumpers** (Redmond) are available and anxious to respond as the lookout reports that the small fire is intensifying. Additional engines are ordered. **The first engine finds the road very nearly impassable** but finally arrives at the fire which is heating up. Additional engines try to access the fire to assist **but are finding it very difficult to get there**. A smokejumper overhead calls Central Oregon Dispatch to find out if they can use jumpers. **Dispatch replies that "this is not a jumper type fire."** No idea what they mean by that. Multiple helicopters and retardant loads and crews are ordered. **First crew is several hours out. Jumpers can give them 20 in less than an hour but not ordered**. Through the rest of the afternoon the fire steadily grows.

The local *Bend Bulletin* newspaper read as follows over the next few days:

July 6, 2003	Front page	New Fire at Cache Mt. Burns Near Last Year's Blaze	200 acres
July 7, 2003	Front page	Crews Hold Link Fire Steady	600 acres
		Fatal Traffic Accident Tied To Link Fire–3 Dead	
July 8, 2003	Front page	Firefighters Hold the Line	636 acres
July 9, 2003	Section C	Link Fire Growing Steadily in Steep Terrain	900 acres
July 10, 2003	Section C	Firefighters Have Link Fire 70% Contained, Blaze Creeps Southwest	1,100 acres
July 11, 2003	Front page	Link Fire Doubles in Size	2,100 acres
July 13, 2003	Front page	Fire Crews Make Gains on Link Blaze	3,200 acres
July 13, 2003	Section B	Cooler Weather Helps Firefighters	
July 13, 2003	Web site	Link Fire 100% Contained Evening of the 13th	3,574 acres
July 15, 2003		Firefighters Continue to Patrol for Spot Fires from Link	3,545 acres
July 17, 2003	Web site	Rehab in Progress on Link Fire, Fire Not Out	
Sisters Nugget	Newspaper	Black Butte Ranch Estimates $45,000 in Lost Revenue Due to Link Fire	

As of Saturday, the 12th of July, the Link fire costs were at $7.1 million.

I have the same question as last season: Initial Attack System Broken?

More Thoughts on Changing the System

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks'69)

I have many thoughts on the system being broke as I see it as a far broader problem than initial attack. I see it as a cultural problem. I think it is possible that at the root of the national fire mess is a lack of field experience and an overabundance of management. The fire service is simply reflecting the general culture. As less Americans work with their hands and are ever more entrenched in a "managed society," so to have the wildland agencies become that way.

Management is now viewed as a one size fits all "skill" and the wildland agencies have applied the logic of society and are now managed by people without forestry or engineering or biological degrees and lack significant field experience. Mix that with the "one size fits all" national incident qualification system where people who have never fought fire as a crew can be in charge of lots of crews and you've got potential trouble. It appears that it is possible to rise within public land agencies without much field experience.

Solutions? Beats me. I think that's one reason so many cross over to the municipal agencies where the mission is clear; "Put the fire OUT." That's what most of us did, or choose another profession. Certainly there are many legitimate reasons not to put all wildland fires out and an understanding of ecology and the natural world is essential for good land management, but there are few good arguments against fast initial attack.

I have a crazy idea: an idea that would strengthen both public land management and fire suppression efforts. Since you can't beat field experience with a hand crew and it definitely grounds your thoughts to practical matters around fire, why not make five seasons experience on a hand crew (hotshot, type 1 or organized II), helishot, rappeler, smokejumper or dozer operator and swamper, the minimum requirement to advance in the national incident qualification system past single resource boss, except for structure protection and engine initial attack? And for federal wildland agencies the same requirement for entry level into any fire management position.

For public land management (that generally oversees fire programs), how about a return to a degree in forestry, engineering, surveying or biological science combined with three seasons field experience in your science as a prerequisite to advancing past an entry level position that administers public land?

The reason I am not including engine work in the experience component is that it is too hard to quantify. Some engines are extremely busy and experienced while others attend a few short-term fires. On the other hand, hand crews and dozers are hung out in the middle of it for the duration which translates to lots of experience.

These changes could be phased in over time so people aren't hurt by the process and so that young people taking a look at a career in public land management would be encouraged to acquire both natural sciences training and field work experience—a system that's never really been lost, just underutilized.

It's my guess that these two measures alone would bring about significant change in the way public lands are managed. I can't think of anyone I would trust more to make decisions on a fire than an experienced hotshot, smokejumper or dozer operator. Conversely, it is always productive to talk with an experienced forester, engineer or surveyor when exchanging information or solving a problem. I'm betting that if both fire and management shared a common background of fieldwork and professional training directly tied to working on the land, a whole lot more cooperation and solution would exist within public lands administration. This would go a long ways towards the elimination of problems such as less than clear initial attack policies and the cooperative sharing of nearest resources.

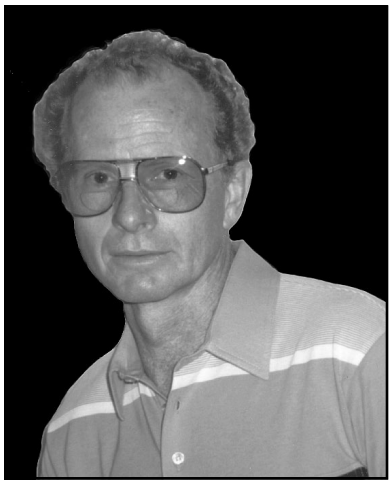
I know this is pipe dream thinking and it would be like reforming the IRS. But, to be honest, I think it would take reform this sweeping to produce the kind of changes NSA members seem interested in.

The wildland agencies many NSA members remember is of the hard working foresters, biologists and road foreman sitting at a picnic table during lunch, encouraging a young seasonal to go back to school. The memory of a district ranger who was a real walker and would stop to talk shop with your crew, showing off a rare leaf or mineral picked-up out of natural curiosity and the love of the outdoors; something the ranger really did want to share with you. The memory of shared vision and purpose; an inheritance from John Muir, Robert Marshall, Willis Jepson, the Progressive Era, Civilian Conservation Corps, Indian elders, wise ranchers and countless World War II veterans; is a vision we still carry, one I believe many of us still see when we look at the woods, fields and prairies.

To NSA members, I believe it is hard to give up this vision, hard to separate the dirt on our hands from our love of the land. It's hard to understand not grabbing a shovel and putting the fire out. I think this vision is worth keeping and while my suggestion is theoretical I hope it may add to a more practical members approach and assist in resolving some real world problems.

These thoughts are not just for myself and my fellow NSA members. We have already benefited from the conservation agencies that employed us and from the people who worked for them. These were people who took the time to pass their knowledge, vision and work ethic to us. I hope change comes for the young people, the ones who one day will need to be inspired by a job. And I wish this for the land; that we must always manage wisely and pass on to future generations.

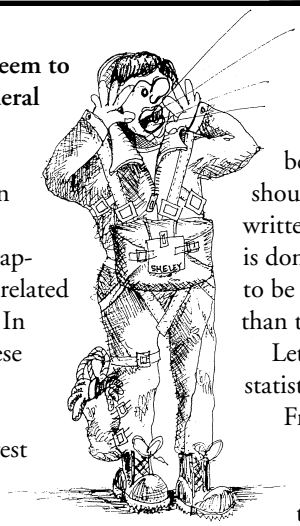
Sounding Off from the Editor



by Chuck Sheley
(Cave Junction '59)
MANAGING EDITOR

WHY DO SOME FIREFIGHTER deaths inspire investigations and new regulations, while others seem to be virtually ignored by federal agencies?

There are lessons to be learned from all tragedies in the field—not only from fatalities related to fire entrapment but also from deaths related to transportation disasters. In fact, I would argue that these days, transportation is the major safety problem in fighting wildfire. If the Forest Service really wants to cut fire fatalities, it should stop making new (and often dangerously restrictive) rules of engagement and start improving transportation safety.

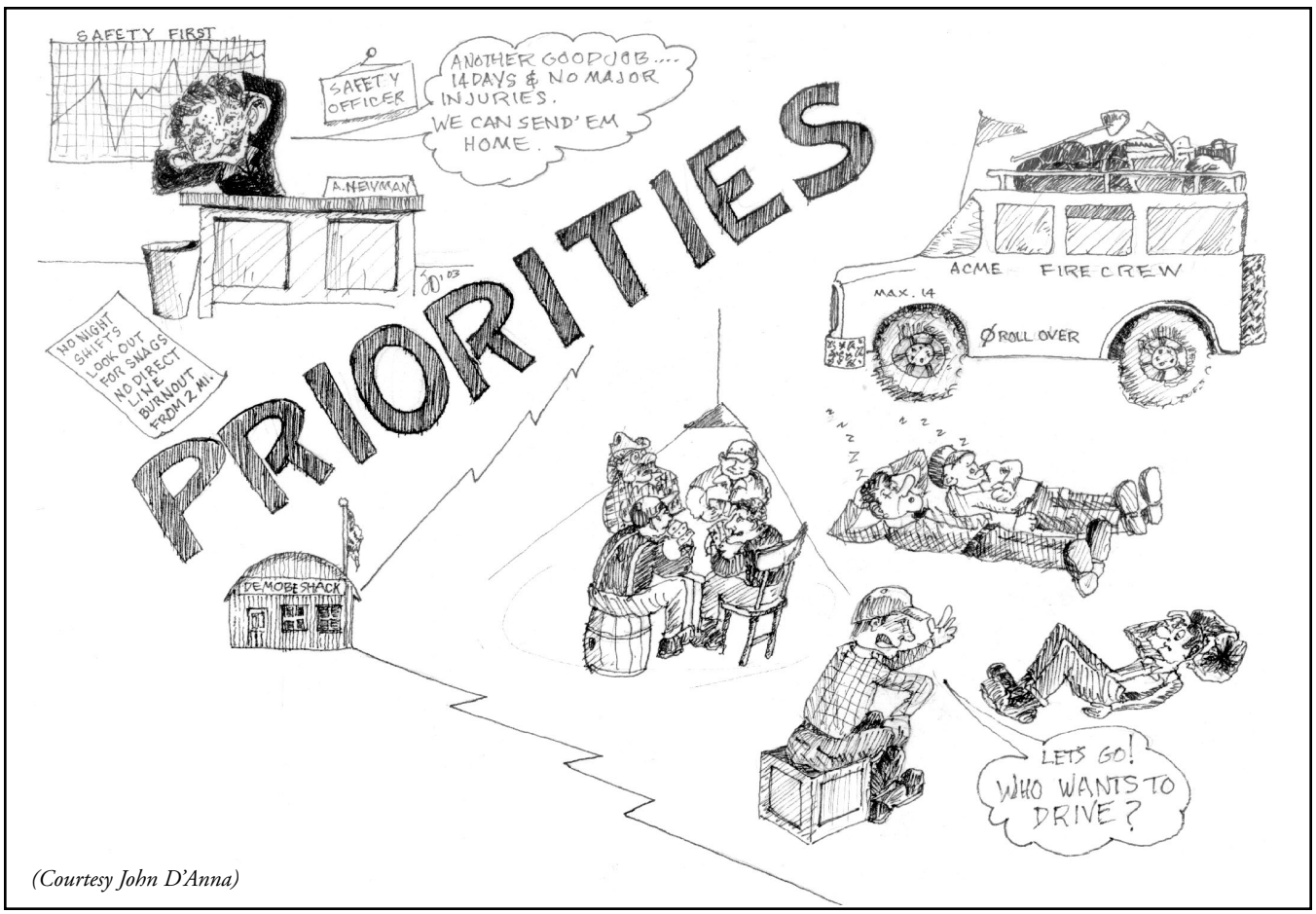


Unfortunately, the Forest Service typically doesn't seem to investigate transportation-related accidents and, as a result, little change in this area has been implemented. That should change. As I have written before, unless something is done, more lives will continue to be lost to vehicle accidents than to the fires themselves.

Let's look back at a few tragic statistics.

From 1998–2001, wildland firefighters were involved in 15 serious vehicle accidents that resulted in 16 fatalities and injuries. In the first nine months of 2002, there were seven serious vehicle accidents that resulted in nine fatalities and 26 injuries.

In July 2003, three people were killed by a piece of equipment



(Courtesy John D'Anna)

traveling to the Link fire near Redmond, Ore. The next month, six more were injured in eastern Oregon when their van skidded off a gravel road and down a 200-foot embankment.

One accident really rips at my gut. It involved a van of contract firefighters returning from a dispatch in Idaho in August 2003. Their van was involved in a head-on collision in eastern Oregon, and all eight occupants were incinerated. Factor in the five lost in a van rollover in the 2002 season and you have the sad fact that the state of Oregon alone has lost 13 firefighters in two seasons.

The steps toward change are simple. Get rid of those 12-to-14-passenger vans, which are rollovers waiting to happen. Require that contractors put people into buses (not multi-vehicle caravans) and require that these buses be driven by professionals. No more firefighters behind the wheel. This would help eliminate accidents stemming from fatigue, poor proficiency, inexperience with vehicle type and unsafe operator practices.

In my last 15 years with the Forest Service, I annually recruited and trained about 300 seasonal firefighters, the bulk being college students. (Fire money has put many a student through the university system.) I applied the same philosophy that I did as a teacher and coach: Leave the driving to the professionals! My crews traveled in buses with licensed school-bus drivers at the wheel. The crews could sleep going and coming, each assured that they had a top-notch driver up front. Timekeepers at the larger fires would sometimes get peeved over the fact that my drivers were paid eight hours a day "just sitting in the bus," while their crews were on the line. But to me, that was money well spent, as I wanted my drivers to get more sleep than anyone in the fire camp. When it came time to move those crews another 300 or more miles, the drivers would be rested and ready.

I know this won't happen. We will continue to kill a dozen firefighters a year in vehicle accidents, and at the same time we will unfortunately lose three or four in fire entrapment situations. The outcome of the investigations into the entrapment situations will result in restricted and poorly conceived rules for engagement, and these will ultimately help result in larger fires.

And the result of larger fires? More firefighters killed in traffic accidents.

I have written several editorials criticizing the Initial Attack system and the failure to use available smokejumpers. I've argued that under current long-range drought conditions, fire should be hit quickly and by the most readily available resources.

I'm still wondering if the Link fire near Redmond, Ore, in July 2003 should have cost taxpayers over $7 million. There were more than 20 jumpers available less than an hour away when the fire was reported late in the afternoon. The responding engine had trouble reaching the fire due to residual winter downfall. The jumpers could have been on the line and working well before dark, but the central Oregon dispatcher claimed the blaze was "not a jumper-type fire." This is unacceptable. There is no such thing as a non-jumper fire, and the best number of available jumpers is zero.

Which brings me full circle: If the 20-plus Redmond jumpers had been given a chance to battle the Link fire, maybe the three people killed in a traffic accident by equipment en route two days later would still be alive.

A Word of Thanks

I am appreciative and a bit overwhelmed with the cards and words of encouragement from the NSA members who have written concerning my comments in this column in the October issue. I can't stop thinking of what the NSA is and how it really binds us together. Most of the guys writing are people that I've never met face to face or jumped with but are "bros" in the true sense of the word. We do have an amazing family that extends from the '40s generation right through to the present. —C.S.

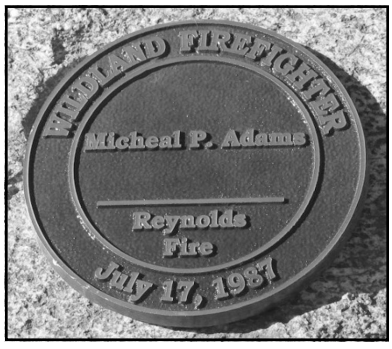
Micheal P. Adams (NCSB 1974–76) Commemorative Plaque

Mike Adams (NCSB 1974–76) [see photo on next page] was honored by family, friends and co-workers on September 20, 2004, at the site of his fatal accident 17 miles west of the North Cascades smokejumper base. On July 17, 1987, Mike was working as a faller on the Reynolds Creek fire, Okanogan National Forest, when a 20-foot section of a snag broke off and struck him, killing him instantly. Mike was 38 years old.

Mike was remembered as a "stud jumper with a big smile and a great sense of humor." He was a member of the NCSB detailer crew to Region 8 during the 1976 spring fire season.

Mike's wife Theresa, daughter Shelly, son Mike and other family members placed a commemorative plaque on a rock near where Mike died. "We now have closure," stated a family member.

Sponsored by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, the Forest Service is placing a commemorative plaque and an American flag at each of the 17 sites where 28 firefighters have died since 1919. On Sept. 25th a plaque was placed at the site of the 1958 NCSB jump plane crash.



Mike Adam's plaque (Courtesy Bill Moody)

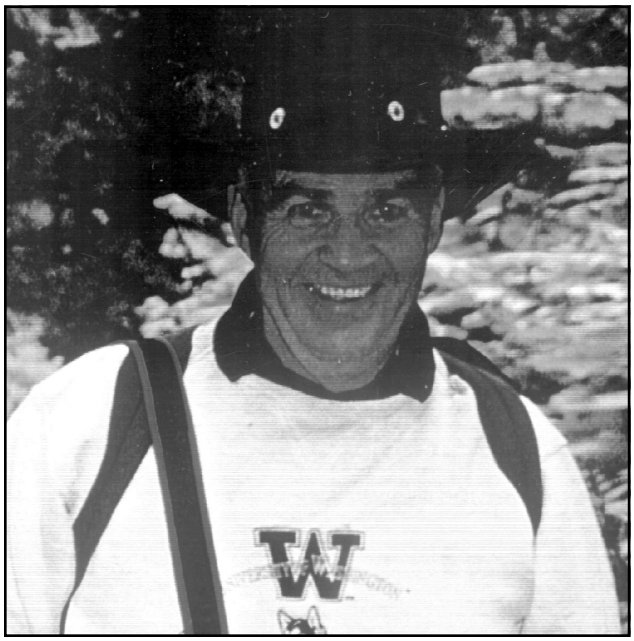
Lost in the Bitteroots

by Pat Harbine (Missoula '51)

The foreman gave the instructions to the crew as they stood by the trail. They had just been relieved by the ground pounders and were heading back to the base. "Just follow the mule tracks up the ridge," he said. The jumpers were very fit and the walk would only take a few hours. One of their numbers, in spite of working nonstop for the past two days, decided to run ahead to catch a quick nap at the trailhead. The foreman would follow after orienting the new crew.

The lead jumper hesitated only slightly as the trail forked. The others were far behind and the trail of road apples left by the mules indicated he was going the right direction at the fork and he followed their tracks. The trail descended into a dark grove of trees as the light began to fade and he struggled to read the trail sign in the darkness. He had obviously taken the wrong trail way, way back there. Reluctant to repeat all the wasted steps he decided to take a shortcut back to where the right trail must be somewhere along the ridge. He followed through with his second, but not the last, dumb mistake of the evening. Abandoning the darkness of the thickets where roving bears might lurk, he worked his way over deadfalls and through bushes toward a shale slope where moonlight gave some illumination and headed for the trail he had left earlier. The slope was steep and the footing poor as he clambered up the slope under the steep cliffs where a cougar might crouch. He struggled toward the top only to encounter waist high mountain laurel bushes, which would slow his progress. Hours later, he reached the summit but there was no trail. He only found

Doug Houston (RAC-73) (left) and Mike Adams (NCSB '74) in spring of 1976 at Tri-Cities, Tenn. (Courtesy Doug Houston)



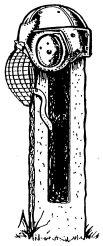
Pat Harbine (NSA file)

an abandoned phone line that snaked through the woods in the direction he needed to go. The bushes were thick and offered considerable resistance but he could see a few buildings alongside a small lake. Circling its swampy shore, he saw a telephone booth in the picnic shelter and attempted to make a call. When you fail to get the name of your destination, you can only hope you dial the right one. Each lookout and camp had a specified number of rings they answered to and random ringing was ignored.

There was a road and it looked promising as an avenue to civilization. Dawn had broken and he walked along the track until it met the main gravel road along the ridge. He could see how the ridge he had attempted to find that night curved away to elude him. He was now sure of where he was and he could see the lookout where his workmates were enjoying their breakfast. He hurried on, sometimes at a jog, eager to rejoin the group before they left. Suddenly, there they were, standing along the racks of the Forest Service truck, grinning and chuckling at the poor bedraggled soul that flagged them down.

The foreman could barely conceal his anger towards this fool who had cost him a night of worried sleep. He glared as the sheepish fellow climbed aboard and the truck sped on toward Powell Guard Camp. The driver mercifully stopped to grab some food for the poor guy who was famished and mortified at his adventure.

The foreman did not write a report on the jumper's mistake but the disgust he felt was apparent. I couldn't blame him because if I'd been him I'd be upset at me too!



Off The List

We want to know! If you learn of the serious illness or death of a member of the smokejumper community, whether or not he or she is a member, your Association wants to know about it. Please phone, write or e-mail the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). We'll take it from there.

Ira T. Burton (Missoula '68)

Ira passed away October 12, 2003. He grew up in Lake Creek, Idaho, and went to Freeman High School where he was student body president and quarterbacked the football team to three district championships. Ira jumped while attending Gonzaga University and the University of Idaho College of Law. After having his education interrupted by service in Vietnam, he returned to Moscow and received his law degree.

After a couple years Ira opened his own law firm and won election as Washington County prosecutor. He was the longest re-elected prosecutor in Idaho.

Dale E. Fickle (McCall '45)

Dale, 92, of McMinnville, Ore., formerly of McCall, passed away Monday, Sept 1,2003, at home. He was born in Denver on Sept 4, 1910, and moved to Boise at a young age. After high school, Dale worked as a physical director for the YMCA and as a coach at Boise Junior College.

Dale often was affiliated with youth organizations, such as the Boy Scouts. While training to be a smokejumper in Missoula, Dale met the love of his life. He and Gladys Gager Streeter were married in Lewiston on Feb 5, 1947.

Dale was a McCall smokejumper for five years from 1945–1949. He was a squad leader each year. Later he worked as a dispatcher until retirement from the Payette National Forest. In1978 Dale and Gladys relocated to McMinnville. He enjoyed playing bridge, hunting, fishing, and traveling.

Hugh H. Fowler (Missoula '47)

Hugh, 74, a Missoula jumper ('47, '48, '52-61) and foreman, died from lymphoma August 4, 2003, at a hospital near his home in Mesa, Arizona.

Following his smokejumping career, he worked for the Forest Service's Division of Fire Management in Washington, D.C. He then was a disaster manager for the President's Office of Emergency Preparedness Region VIII in Bothell, Washington, and, following his retirement from the federal government, was director of Emergency Services for the state of Washington. He later worked in disaster services for the state of Arizona.

Douglas B. Maryott (Missoula '71)

Doug died in his home of a brain tumor on Oct. 31, 2003. Born in Coeur d'Alene, he was raised in Colville, Wash., where his father was a U.S. Forest Service ranger.

A 1976 University of Montana forestry graduate, Doug was a Missoula smokejumper from 1971 to 1975 and in 1985. He was a member of the National Smokejumper Association.

At the time of his death, he was the fire management officer for the Fernan District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests. He also owned a two-year-old company, Dig Doug Tree Transfir Service. Previous assignments included work in the timber management, minerals and fire management programs on the Spotted Bear and Hungry Horse Districts of the Flathead National Forest in Montana.

Doug served in the Army from 1967 to 1969, including a year in Vietnam with the 1st Infantry Division.

Harold R. "Dick" Richards (Missoula '42)

Dick passed away April 8, 2003. He graduated from Libby (Mont.) High and attended Antioch College, Ohio and the University of Montana. Dick jumped the 1942 season before entering the Army Air Corps where he was a B-25 co-pilot stationed in the Philippines and was eyewitness to the dropping of the A-bomb over Hiroshima.

He settled in Portland, Oregon, after the war and was employed by United Airlines.

Dick worked for the FAA for many years, retiring from that organization and living in Oceanside, California, until his death.

Samuel W. Robinson (PNOR '45)

Samuel W. Robinson passed away October 1, 2003. He was one of the eight surviving of the original 23 officers and enlisted men of the Triple Nickle Test Platoon that trained in Pendleton, Oregon, in 1945.

Dennis D. Swift (Missoula '50)

Denny, 73, passed away Monday, April 14, 2003, at Brendan House in Kalispell. He graduated from the University of Montana in Missoula, where he earned his degree in Forestry and jumped at Missoula from '50-52. He worked most of his life as a forester; his last job was with Stoltz Land and Lumber Company in Columbia Falls. Denny served in the U.S. Army. He was a member of the American Foresters and a past member of the Lions Club. Denny was one of the three founders of the Back Country Horsemen of America in 1973.

Member Profile

RICHARD GRANDALSKI (REDDING '64)

Rich worked for the Forest Service for 33 years before retiring in 1995 as the assistant director, Law Enforcement and Investigations. His career with the Forest Service was diverse spending a number of years in fire positions including the Redding smokejumpers in 1964 and the retread program from 1969–72 before switching to law enforcement.

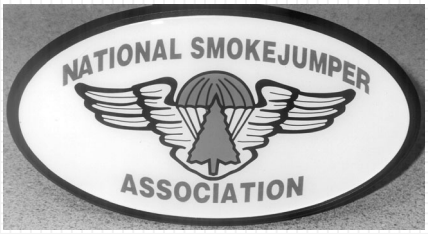
While in fire, he was superintendent of the Los Prietos Hotshots and district fire management officer. Rich followed with positions as special agent on the Angeles N.F., assistant regional special agent Pacific Northwest Region, branch chief Timber Theft Investigations Task Force and assistant director Law Enforcement in Washington, D.C.

While with the Forest Service, Rich had international law enforcement experience that included travel to Brazil and Greece to conduct wildland fire investigation training. After retirement he has had assignments with the World Bank that have included missions to Albania, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. Rich recently worked for the United Nations Development Program implementing a forest crime monitoring and reporting project in Cambodia. He has traveled to many remote jungle areas still riddled with mines from the Vietnam and Pol Pot conflicts and occupied by renegade factions, bandits and illegal loggers all armed.

Rich Grandalski, Law Enforcement Advisor United Nations Development Program, searching for illegal loggers in Northern Cambodia in 2001 with military security. (Courtesy Rich Grandalski)

Trailer Hitch Receiver Cover with NSA Logo

$20.00



Multi-color National Smokejumper Association logo receiver cover for your SUV or pickup. The cover is constructed of high impact plastic and requires a pin to secure it to the trailer receiver. It is made of high test plastic and the emblem is covered with a polyurathane dome. The NSA emblem is a 6" oval.

For those who want a piece of smokejumper history, Siskiyou Smokejumper Base receiver covers are also available.

The covers are priced at $20.00 each plus $5.00 for handling and postage. Send a check or money order to: Tommy Albert, P.O. Box 205, Vida, OR 97488. If you have any questions, contact Tommy at: twalbert@aol.com or 541-896-9058.

Giant Killers—Bigger Than *Hoosiers*

NSA Life Members Involved in Biggest Upset in Collegiate Sports History

by Chuck Sheley

Teams from the states of Iowa and Oklahoma have dominated collegiate wrestling as no other NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Assoc.) sport has over the years. Oklahoma State and the University of Oklahoma have won 38 national wrestling championships and Iowa based teams have won 29 titles. All this was chronicled in an article in the March 31, 2003, issue of *Sports Illustrated.*

Actually the article had teams from Iowa accounting for 28 national championships. However, the *Sports Illustrated* count for the state of Iowa was one short. Missed was one of the biggest accomplishments in U.S. sports history.

Gene Hackman starred in the movie *Hoosiers* about a 1950s basketball team from a small town in Indiana that went all the way to the state tournament and won the whole works. It was a classic story about the tiny school winning over the giants under almost unbelievable circumstances.

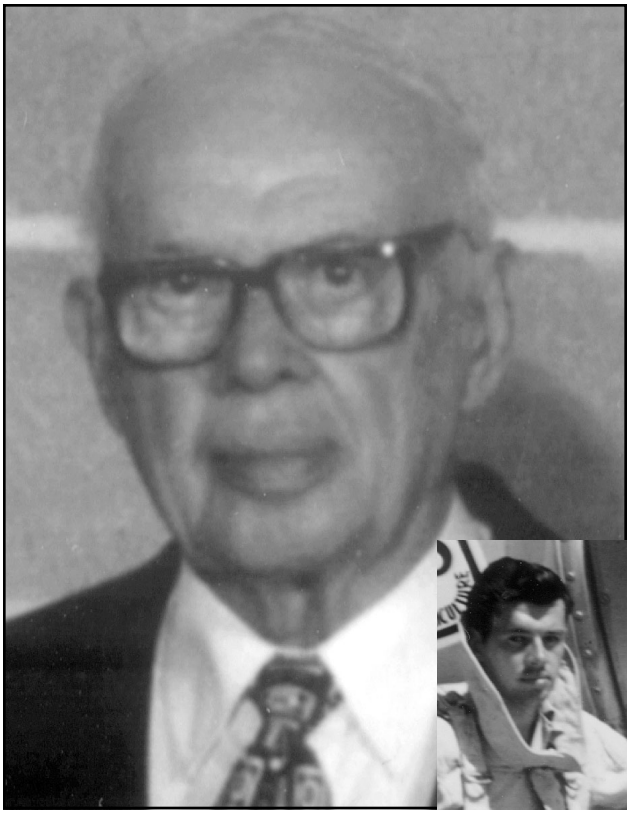
Well, the National Smokejumper Association has its own connection with a *Hoosier* type experience. Maybe more of a David vs. Goliath contest. The one national championship missed by *Sports Illustrated* in their Iowa total came in 1947 when a tiny Methodist school with fewer than 700 students won both the NCAA and AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) wrestling championships. The school was Cornell College located in Mount Vernon, Iowa. What's the connection with smokejumpers you ask?

As Paul Harvey says, "Here's the rest of the story."

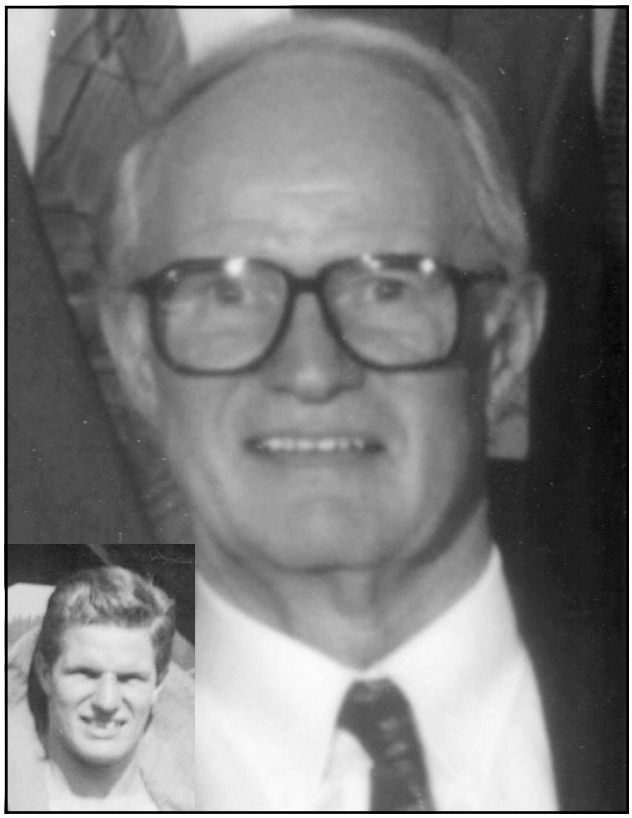
NSA Life Members **Wallace "Pic" Littell** (MSO '44) and **Ben Conner** (NCSB '48) were a part of this little-known story.

Oklahoma State had taken six straight national wrestling championships starting in 1937 and right up to the war years. No collegiate championships were conducted in 1943, 1944 or 1945 because of WWII. When the tournament resumed in 1946, the Aggies took it all again when they beat Iowa State Teachers by a single point for the national championship.

Then came 1947 and one of the most astonishing exploits in amateur sports history when little Cornell College won the NCAA by a 32–19 margin over second-place Iowa State Teachers. Although they didn't play a direct role in the NCAA victory, on that team were Midwest Conference champions



Ben Conner, 1945 and present. (Courtesy Pic Littell)



Wallace "Pic" Littell 1944 and present. (Courtesy Pic Littell)

Pic Littell (155 pounds) and Ben Conner (175 pounds). Led by wrestling legend Dale Thomas, Cornell then went on to take the AAU title for a clean sweep of the wrestling titles in the United States. Even though the school had produced some quality individuals over the early years, the team dropped off the wrestling scene after third-place finishes in the nationals in 1949 and 1950.

Collegiate sports are now big business and dominated by money and scholarship schools. Cornell College's success in 1947 was truly a *Cinderella* story and will never be repeated. The smaller schools have been put into Division III and only the "big boys" really get a shot at the national championship.

Pic Littell lettered in football, wrestling and track while at Cornell College and was conference champion at 155 pounds in 1942 and 1947. He jumped at Missoula during the '44-45 seasons and transferred to NCSB for the '47 and '48 seasons. After getting his M.A. from Columbia University in 1949, Pic started a 35-year career with the U.S. Foreign Service where he received two Meritorious Service Awards for service in the former Soviet Union. Pic was responsible for recruiting Ben Conner into the NCSB jumper program in 1948 where he jumped through 1950.

Ben, who had been in the Air Corps, had just graduated from Cornell College where he was the Midwest Conference wrestling champion at 175 pounds. Their friendship dated back to the summer of 1942 when they both were on a fire suppression crew in Oregon. Ben went on to law school and spent the majority of his career as an executive in the business world. Despite his success as a corporate executive, Ben says, "The best job I ever had was smokejumping."

Besides being smokejumpers and successful in their lifetime careers, Pic and Ben were involved in one of the greatest achievements in U.S. sports history—-the 1947 national championships won by little Cornell College from Mount Vernon, Iowa. They were the "Giant Killers," so little known that even *Sport Illustrated* overlooked that historic feat. That's the rest of the story!

Document Forever: Our History for the Future

by Fred Cooper (NCSB '62)

We have an opportunity for the next nine months that very few people have.

For three weeks in the summer of 2005, the NSA is partnering with the U.S. Forest Service in their celebration of a Century of Service at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the Mall in Washington, D.C. As part of that celebration, which is sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, the NSA is invited to document the history of smokejumping. This is where you enter the picture since WE are the biggest part of the history of smokejumping.

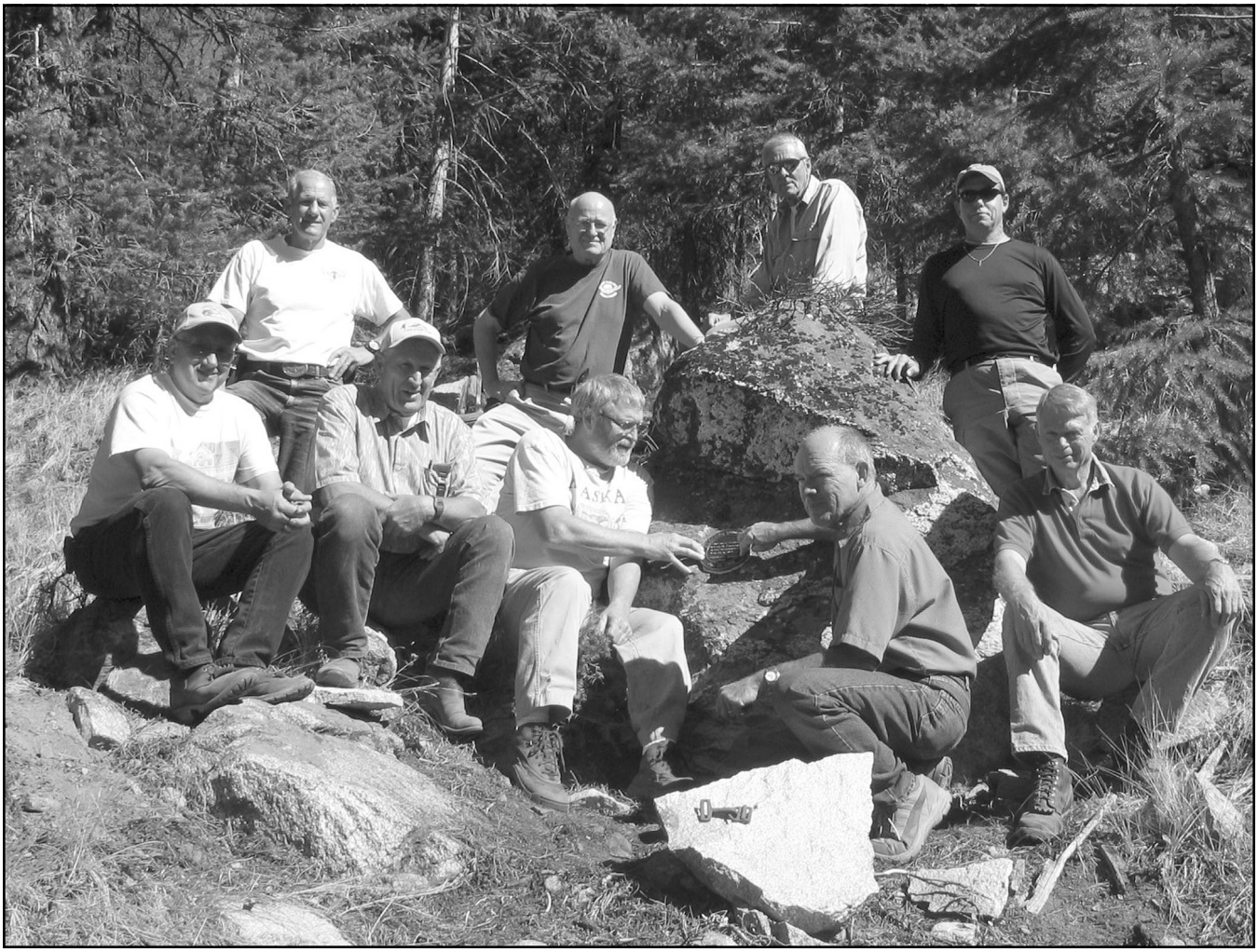
The Smithsonian Institution has an open invitation for any of us to tell our portion—the personal story of smokejumping. All historical stories received by them will be preserved at the Smithsonian forever. Usually, a written story is asked for. This is different—the Smithsonian is asking that you prepare a video taped story of your jumping history. Based on your story, it is planned that a few of us will be selected to tell our story in person at the Folklife Festival on the Mall in 2005.

The information desired in the video taped story is how and why you decided to become a smokejumper, where and when did you train and the bases you jumped from, what were your thoughts as you went through training and on your first fire jump, how many fires did you jump to, and the story of a few memorable fire jumps? How did your jumping experience influence your life to the present time? These are just some ideas. You tell your story as you desire for the use of future generations. A hundred or more years from now, your descendants and others will be able to access the Smithsonian files and view your (and our) smokejumping history for the future. The Smithsonian will take care of keeping the videos available to the public in whatever technological formats that may be used in the future.

So, set up yours or a borrowed video recorder (any format is acceptable) and tell your story or have a friend or family member interview you for your story. Don't be afraid. After all, you weren't afraid to jump from a perfectly good plane. If you can't locate a video recorder, audio tapes and written stories will also be accepted by the Smithsonian. The important thing is to get the history of smokejumping recorded. And what better place to have it stored than the Smithsonian?

The NSA, U.S. Forest Service, and the Smithsonian are accepting all interviews and they especially want participants from the Triple Nickels, conscientious objectors, Women in Jumping, those who jumped in the 1940s and 1950s, and others who had memorable moments in smokejumping history. A few of us may be contacted by someone from the Forest Service to be interviewed in person, but don't wait for them, go ahead and make your own video.

Video tapes, audio, and/or written documentation are to be sent to **Bob Beckley** (RAC '83) at the Missoula Technology and Development Center, 5785 Highway 10 West, Missoula, MT 59808 by October 2004. If you have questions, you may contact Bob at: 406-329-3996 or 406-251-3703 or via e-mail at: rbeckley@fs.fed.us.



Honoring the crash victims were: Back row L-R: Bill Moody ('57), Steve Rhodes ('58), Don Colbert ('53), Steve Dickenson (LGD-78). Front L-R: Vern Gray ('62), Daryle Starkovich ('58), Tom Monroe ('58), Dick Harnden ('58), Kay Johnson ('54). (Courtesy Bill Moody)

1958 Jump Plane Crash Victims Honored at NCSB

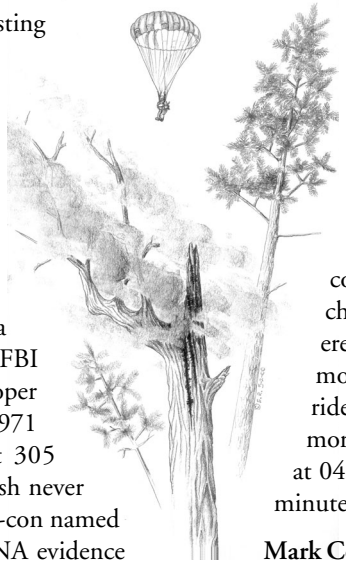
On September 25, 2003, a group of ex-NCSB jumpers and base manager **Steve Dickenson** (LDG '78) visited the site where, 45 years ago, a Forest Service Twin Beech crashed while dropping cargo to jumpers on the Eight Mile Ridge fire. Killed in the crash were squad leader **Alonzo K. "Gus" Hendrickson** (NCSB '47), squad leader trainee **Gerald Helmer** (NCSB '53), smokejumper-forester **Robert Carlman** (NCSB '57) and Forest Service pilot Robert Cavanaugh. The purpose of the site visit was to place a bronze commemorative plaque and American Flag where N164Z slammed into Eight Mile Ridge at 1845 on June 23, 1958. Four jumpers and twenty rookie trainees were on the fire at the time of the crash.

A formal memorial honoring those jumpers who lost their lives in the line of duty followed at NCSB on July 26th. **Bill Moody** (NCSB '57) retired NCSB base manager, presented the NSA "killed-in-action" plaque to current NCSB base manager Steve Dickenson. The three NCSB jumpers in the "58 crash" are memorialized on the NSA plaque honoring the 30 jumpers killed in the line of duty.

Another plaque, honoring pilots killed on the Okanogan N.F. during fire operations, was presented to NCSB. The pilots included NCSB pilot Robert Cavanaugh, retardant plane pilots George Carey and J. C. Brehm (Beaver Lake fire, 1960) and helicopter pilot Joseph Coke, killed August 9, 1985, on the Hubbard Creek fire. Jumpers were assigned to the Beaver Lake fire and Hubbard Creek fire at the time of the crashes.

For those wishing to visit the Eight Mile Ridge site contact Bill Moody (509-997-5971) or NCSB (509-997-2031) for directions. The site is 150 yards from a Forest Service road.

Odds and Ends



Jack Dunne (MSO '46) passed along an interesting article in the *Daily Inter Lake* featuring a rebuilt 1928 Travel Air 6000 now located at the Glacier Park International Airport. Jack says the Travel Air was a favorite of the jumpers in the '40s. The Johnson Flying Service began using the plane in 1944 as a cargo hauling aircraft and it also carried smokejumpers for many seasons.

Tom Kovalicky (MSO '61) pointed out that in a *U.S. News & World Report* in May 2003, the FBI may be close to solving the famous D. B. Cooper skyjacking case. If you recall, in November of 1971 a passenger on Northwest Airlines Flight 305 jumped from the plane with $200,000 in cash never to be seen again. The FBI now suspects an ex-con named Duane Weber, and the hope is to match DNA evidence from items obtained from Weber's widow in Florida. We all know they were wasting their time looking through the smokejumper rosters in the first place. That money for the tremendous end of the season parties came from another unidentified source!

From smokejumpers.com Web site submitted by: Jay Carlblom, jaycarl@idcomm.com. I sure liked your site and didn't know it existed till the other day! I was the Siskiyou NF Forest Radio Technician from 1973 to 1980 and serviced all the radio & electronic equipment at the Cave Junction SSB. Knew a lot of the jumpers, Mouse, Mick Swift, Terry Mewhenny, and more...! Those were great days and I will always remember those guys and gals and making all the chutes & rigging!! I miss those times...they were the best...! Regards, Jay

Buster Moore (RDD '57) forwarded me a good article from the *Denver Post* about the Boise smokejumpers stationed at the Grand Junction, Colorado, base. At that time in early July, there was very little action and "busy" work was the word of the day. By the time this comes out, we will know if the action picked up or not.

I'm currently following NSA Board Member **Tara Rothwell** (RAC '92) as she competes in the Tevis Cup Ride over a 100-mile course in the rugged Sierra Nevada range. The Western States Trail Ride, popularly called the Tevis Cup Ride, is the oldest modern day endurance ride, having been held annually since 1955. The ride was first organized by Wendell Robie, an Auburn (Calif.) businessman and devoted rider of the Sierra high country. Many people in the '50s doubted that any modern-day horse could cover the rugged trail from Lake Tahoe to Auburn in a single day. Each rider who completes the 100-mile course within the 24 hour limit and whose mount is judged "fit to continue" is awarded the coveted silver Completion Award Buckle.

The miracle of a website allows me to sit at home in Chico and follow the race via my computer. Tara, riding TQ Hot, left the start at Robie Park at 0500 this morning and had reached the 4th checkpoint 36.0 miles into the course at 10:22. Updates to follow: Tara left the 8th checkpoint at 20:41 (8:41 P.M.) tonight having covered 69.0 miles. Going into the dark she has three more check points and the finish to go. While she rides, I'm going to bed and will read about it in the morning. Woke up to find Tara crossed the finish line at 0423 this morning beating the 24-hour goal by 37 minutes. Congratulations Tara!

Mark Corbet (LaGrande '79) forwarded some interesting information: "Prior to and after presenting the KIA plaque to the Redmond base, I started searching for more info about **Malvin L. Brown** (PNOR '45), the first smokejumper to die in the line of duty. The 555th Web site and our plaque place the accident on the Siskiyou. The Cave Jct. 1945 end of season report and a *Bend Bulletin* article placed the accident on the Umpqua N.F.

"I put a request in to the National Archives for any information related to that year or him. One of the documents I received was called "Fire Control Narrative Report, Region 6, 1945." It reports his death as occurring on the Lemon Butte fire located on the North Umpqua District of the Umpqua about 38 miles northeast of Roseburg, Oregon."

In the July 2003 issue of *Smokejumper* I mentioned that there were at least six jumpers that had gone to Chico High School. **Robin Twogood** (MSO '56) pointed out that was small potatoes compared to Darby (Mont.) High School which was attended by at least 19 jumpers, 18 of whom rookied at Missoula: **Steve Henault** ('46), **Bill McAtee** ('47), **Doug Wilkerson** ('47), **Marvin (Dick) Sherman** ('49), **Marion Brechbill** ('49), **Bill Cumley** ('50), **Harold Roberts** ('53), **Dave Halder** ('53), **Ovid Williams** ('55), **Robin Twogood** ('56), **Lowell ("Ray") Honey** ('58), **Dwight Smith** ('56), **Gary Hannon** ('60), **Nick Nicholson** ('60), **John Holtet** ('61), **Larry Ferguson** ('62), **Shane Ralston** ('03) and **Jesse Meyers** ('03). **Mike Blinn** ('01) rookied at Redding.

From the *Bend Bulletin* July 2003: **House to halt Indonesia aid over ambush investingation—**Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo., sponsored a measure to deny military aid to Indonesia until that country fully investigates an ambush last

year that killed two Americans. Hefley said the Indonesian government has been dragging its feet on investigating the ambush which may have been carried out by Indonesian soldiers. Rick Spier of Littleton, Colo., and **Ted Burgon** (ICD '52) of Sunriver, Ore., were killed in the attack.

Things are getting hot and heavy on the fire scene with fires going in Glacier National Park and other places in the Western U.S. Checking the news sources and got this today:

Information Officer Deanna Raskovich (Washington state) said, "temperatures reached 105 in her tent on Tuesday and **114 degrees inside the portable toilets in the fire camp.**" Another example of your taxpayer dollars hard at work. Next there will be hazard pay for taking a crap.

Jerry Dixon (MYC '71) just reached the Pacific (Aug. 12th) after completing a 1,362-mile, three-month ultra marathon across the Rocky Mountains following the Lewis and Clark route. Jerry did 397 miles paddling, 104 miles hiking and the rest mountain biking. "It was three months to the day of when I started paddling up the Missouri at Gates of the Rocky Mts. It has been a grand page of mountain script and river lore that I have been privileged to live."

Tom Boatner (FBX '80) has moved to Boise where he is the Fire Operations group manager for the BLM's Office of Fire and Aviation; a very challenging job with the fire seasons of late. Congratulations to Tom on the move.

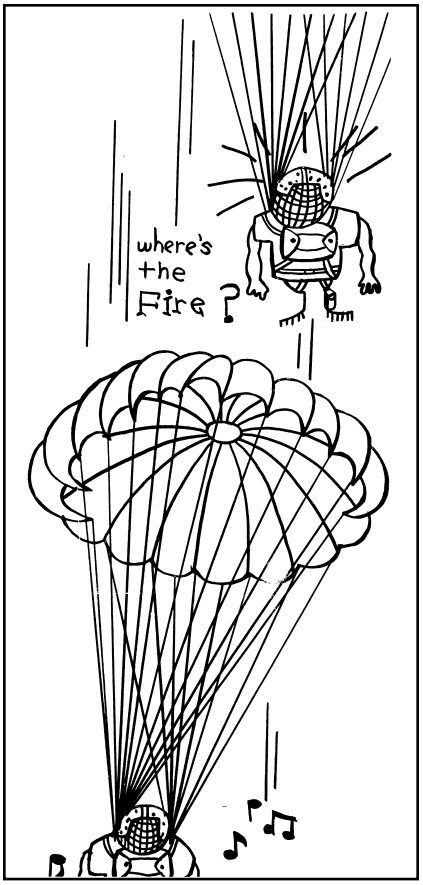
Appreciated a short note from one of our oldest jumpers **John Scott** (Missoula '44) with his membership renewal: "Just turned 88 in August. I'm so old, if someone don't shift me into drive, I take off backwards." Thanks for being a NSA member John.

Smokejumper columnist **Chris Sorensen** ran across some Pulaski's in a downtown Billings, Montana, pawnshop. They were marked with a F.S. stamp and priced to sell at $30.00. More tax dollars at work!

Congratulations to **Vern Sylvester** (MSO '47) and his wife Kay for being honored as the 2003 Citizens of the Year in Stevensville, Montana. Vern is retired from the Forest Service and both have been active in the community since building their home in Stevensville twenty years ago.

The Gobi (Cave Jct) is a special place to the few (398) who ever cracked their chute in the land of the tall trees. Even though the base has been closed since 1982, we continue to return. When **Mick Swift** died in 1993, his memorial was held along side the runway near the volleyball court. The 2002 reunion was attended by at least half of those still alive. On Sept. 21, 2003, over 39 years since he rookied there, **Tommy Albert** was married to Kathy Layne in the same spot. The trees have grown, the mess hall is now an airport café but the spirit still lives!

Heard from **Bob Dusenbury** (MSO '46) who is retired in Anacortes,Washington. Bob did the early work establishing the Indian Firefighter program in Montana. "What I started in 1961 has become an enormous program that



even includes disaster response. They have over 100 crews available for everything from camp personnel to mop up. The Blackfoot Tribe has a hotshot crew called Chief Mountain Hot Shots. I used to go to the tribes of Montana in the '60s putting on firefighter training and leadership programs. Once they started using the crews nationwide, I stayed available and was dispatched as overhead. The neat thing was running into ex-jumpers because we all knew each other's capability and didn't question the other person's experience. I've been out of the loop since 1981 when I retired and went to building Lutheran Churches, but I have just started writing my memoirs and all this has flooded back to me."

Had a good phone conversation with **Howard Wessbecher** (MSO '48). Howard ran into an Oregon state trooper who turned out to be the daughter of **Jack Allen** (MSO '44) and is helping me update our database records concerning the date of Jack's passing. It turns out that Howard was a roommate of **Danny On** (CJ '46) who is a legend from days after the war at Cave Junction. Both were students at the University of Montana and were among the many WWII vets returning to school from the war. Howard recalls that Danny was really disturbed one day at getting a "B" in a class as he had never gotten anything but "A's." Fits right in with all of the Danny On stories.

Lt. Col. **Robert Dunton** (WYS '88) will be getting his *Smokejumper* magazine overseas for the next eighteen months. He is headed to Baghdad with the U.S. Army.

Hugh Rosenberg (CJ '59) sent an interesting picture of a smoke column on the B&B Complex fires (Oregon) this last summer in which the smoke had formed an interesting image with extended middle finger. With digitally modified photographs making the rounds, I tend to believe this was not the work of the winds and clouds but if it were, it should have been over the Biscuit Fire of 2002 where the taxpay-

ers were screwed to the tune of $170, 000,000.

Ron Barrett (RAC '88) currently living in Redmond, Oregon, did not get too far from the base as he is Smokejumper Aircraft Program Manager in Region 6. Ron is a captain in the Sherpa and a lead plane pilot trainee.

Ran across a 1952 picture of young guy with a javelin at the Military Olympic Games Trial in Comption, California. It was **Hal Werner** (NCSB '48) who was throwing for the USAF. Hal later competed at BYU where he threw over 232 feet. He is still at it currently coaching the field events at Lane College in Eugene, Oregon.

After 30 years with the USFS, **Gordon Brazzi** (RDD '66) is retired and working part-time for P.J. Helicopters out of Red Bluff, Calif. Besides hunting and fishing, he's also spending a lot of time with his grandson Quinten. I was fortunate enough to work with Gordon in the Mendocino N.F. Organized Crew Program and learned a lot from a good fireman.

Chronology of a Helicopter Rescue

by Tom Uphill (Missoula '56)

On September 17, 1966, I was requested to provide first-aid and help pick up a wounded hunter, Joe Cyhart, on the Big Prairie District of the Flathead N.F. We took off at 1700 in a G3-B1 copter from Johnson's Flying Service with Fred Gerlach as pilot.

We arrived at the given location (Woodfire Creek Meadow) at 1810 but found no signals or people in the area. After setting down on a sandbar, we contacted a hunter camp in the area. They told us there was another hunter camp in the general area that we had flown over.

We then took off but still could not find any evidence of another camp so we made radio contact with Big Prairie Ranger Station. They told us we should travel to the Lloyd West camp at Salmon Forks. Lloyd West was the outfitter for the injured hunter.

After making contact with the Salmon Forks camp we were informed that the location for the pick up was correct but there was a chance that the injured man had not been transported to that spot. Leaving Salmon Forks we returned to Woodfire Creek Meadow and saw a hunter at the east end of the meadow. It was approximately 1915. He informed us that the injured man was being carried to this spot.

The hunter and I started walking up the trail to make contact with the injured man. We walked about a mile and did not make any contact. The hunter said they might be coming down another trail so we returned to the meadow and I searched unsuccessfully for another trail. Since I couldn't find another trail, I again walked up the first trail until I made contact with the rescue team.

Three men were carrying the injured man with a pole and canvas stretcher. I checked the leg wounds. A bullet had entered his right calf below the knee and had come out above the ankle. Bandages had been placed and pain pills administered. We carried the hunter to the copter spot and completed loading at 2025.

Two hunters held cigarette lighters so that we would have a ground reference for takeoff in the dark. We headed to Big Prairie where visibility was extremely poor due to the darkness. The landing lights were of no value unless we were 100 yards from the ground. The pilot and I decided we would try flying out over Pyramid Pass via Gordon Creek but requested that Big Prairie light up the copter spot in case we had to return. We flew up the canyon until our river reference disappeared and decided to return to Big Prairie and landed at 2040.

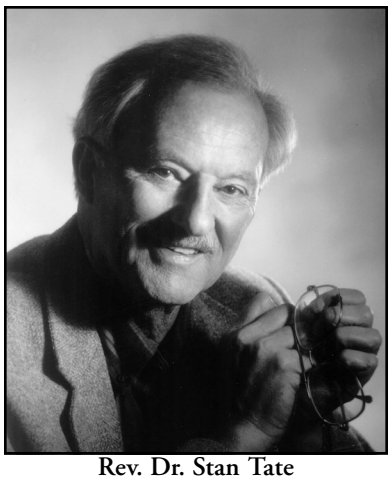
Ranger Dollan and FCO Ozzie Black met us at the landing site and we carried the hunter to the bunkhouse where I rechecked the bandages. I decided not to change them since the bleeding was controlled and I had heard that the bleeding was hard to stop initially.

The patient complained of extreme pain and I administered 100 mg of Demoral at 2135 and made telephone contact with a doctor in Kalispell. During the night I also gave him Darvon capsules that provided pain relief.

We left Big Prairie at 0535 the next morning and delivered the patient to St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula at 0640.

For future rescue missions I recommend the addition of two flashlights to the Demoral kit and also the replacement of the mummy sleeping bags with the new Dacron bags. Victims with leg and back injuries cannot be placed in the mummy bag.

Checking the Canopy



Rev. Dr. Stan Tate
(McCall '53)

Let There Be Peace on Earth

THE WHOLE WORLD IS experiencing violence. Watch movies, television programs, electronic games, etc. and you cannot miss violence. Today we are in a war to stop terrorism. How can this war also be a war for peace? Every individual can make a difference in creating a more peaceful world community.

I remember being on a fire above the main Salmon River when all of us were singing "He's got the whole world in His hands." I also remember John Lennon singing "Imagine all the people living in peace." Imagine a world where the resources and technologies expended for war were spent making peace.

I am impressed with the fact that two diverse groups of sincere men who worked for peace came together in the history of smokejumping. Both were committed to their efforts for peace—conscientious objectors and valiant veterans of World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, and the Gulf Wars. All of them made sacrifices in their own individual lives in the name of peace. Perhaps they learned to respect one another in their common experience in fighting wild fires.

Where do we begin in making peace? Master Kung, the ancient Chinese philosopher said world peace can only begin when we find spiritual peace as individuals. A person begins cultivating inner serenity. Smokejumpers have experience this peacefulness when we got away from the maddening crowds and out into the solitude of God's wilderness. We felt gratitude toward our natural environment of lapping lakes and rippling rivers. Many times I would hike up to the ridge at night and marvel at the starry night. Sometimes I would recite the Psalm: "O Lord our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth! When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established: what are human beings that you are mindful of them?"

Another rather unique resource for jumpers is the durable bond of friendship we cultivated in our work and play. "There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, and no scales can measure his excellence." Ecclesiastics 6:15. Older jumpers were in a sense blessed with the times we packed off fires on horseback and had time to enjoy one another coming off a fire. The altogether "too busy" world was hushed. And our friendships endure even beyond death. When I think of men like Wayne Webb or Dale Fickle, I gain new strength and courage.

Henry Thoreau once said, "Whoever hears the rippling of rivers, will not despair of anything." Smokejumpers have heard them for over fifty years and learned not to despair. In fact listening to nature we have found inner peace. No one knows better than we do, that being out in the forests we hear the popular song in our hearts, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me." I thank God for His creation and the wonderful jumpers who helped me enjoy it.

2003 Silver City Crew

by Wayne Williams (Missoula '77)

Unlike the winter of 2002, the southwest (Region 3) experienced average to above average precipitation. The Gila National Forest was no exception with snow still in the high country when the 20 detailers arrived on May 8th.

As in past years the crew was made up of jumpers from Regions 1, 4, and 6, with Missoula being the host for operations. The crew had an above average season with 164 fire jumps, 28 jump fires, 12 walk-in fires, and 10 overhead assignments. The total crew hours spent on fires and fire use was 11,181. The smokejumper aircraft performed two para-cargo resupply drops as well as 10 smokejumper demob missions. Project work was varied from sewing projects to prescribed fire for a total of over 1,178 hours.

Silver City had no booster crews this season, but did increase numbers with 10 additional detailers. The monsoons somewhat arrived on July 27th sending the remaining 18 jumpers north to the emerging fire season.

Initial Attack at Blue Bunch Mountain

by Harold Flake (Idaho City '61)

I was a little late getting down to Idaho City from McCall. I had sprained my knee on my first training jump trying to avoid some gear on the ground. I lost about a week or ten days and finished up my training jumps with veteran jumpers taking their refresher jumps. Some of the Neds had already jumped fires out of Idaho City. Because I was late, I was at the bottom of the jump list. Besides myself, Idaho City Neds in 1961 included **Horace Cordova, Eugene Hobbs, Benny Ortiz** and **Michael Steep**.

The routine at Idaho City was to play volleyball for an hour and not do calisthenics. We started our volleyball at 1600 sharp every afternoon. As a Ned, I thought this was a great way to get exercise on Uncle's time. This would not last all summer. The deputy forest supervisor showed up about a week later and gave us the worst ass-chewing I've ever heard. At the time I thought maybe we'd been fired! A week or so later, we were notified that volleyball would no longer be part of our conditioning program and would have to be on our own time.

By mid-July, I'd moved up the jump list to number seven. I'd never jumped the second man out on a two-man stick in a Twin Beech, but by being seventh, I would be in the door if we continued to jump two-man sticks. I have never talked to anyone who wanted to be the second man out.

On July 19 at 1230, the lookout on Big Soldier spotted a fire on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River above Dagger Falls in the old Bear Valley Ranger District. It had started due to a cooking fire left unattended by a boating party floating the river. A Twin Beech from Idaho City was dispatched with pilot **Dale Major,** foreman/spotter **Smokey Stover** (MYC '46) and four jumpers: Benny Ortiz, **Dick Graham** (IDC '58), **Gorden Livingston** (IDC '57) and **Earl Pederson** (IDC '58).

They jumped at 1320 to an elevation of 6,000 feet. This meant that I would be on the next load out. The fire report that I obtained from the Boise National Forest dated October 19, 1961, stated the fire was ten acres in size on initial attack, but I suspect it was much larger. The report characterizes the fire as violent on arrival, with a burning index of 40 on an 80 percent sloop.

Smokey must have called for assistance, and a Doug-load of smokejumpers—**Arthur Aiken** (MYC '61), **Maxwell Allen** (MSO '48), **James Crockett** (MYC '48), **Patrick Daly** (MYC '51), **Dean Davis** (MYC '51), **Edward Guy** (MYC '60), **Larry Looney** (IDC '54), **Larry Moore** (IDC '59), **Dave Rosgen** (MYC '61), **Wesley Schroeder** (MYC '61), **John Spence** (MYC '58), **James Tracy** (MYC '61), **William Weaver** (MYC '58), **William Westergrad** (MYC '51) and **Jeremy Wicks** (MYC '61)—was dispatched from McCall, with loft foreman **Wayne Webb** (MYC '46) in charge. This may have been the first full-stick of smokejumpers to jump the Doug out of McCall. Project leader **Del Catlin** (MYC '47) was the spotter and **Swede Nelson** the pilot. The McCall smokejumpers jumped higher up the slope at 1545 to an elevation of 6,500 feet, and the fire was estimated to cover 80 acres.

When the Twin Beech returned to Idaho City, we went to the airport to pick up Smokey and Dale. We got there just after the Twin Beech landed. Gorden was standing by the Beech still in his jumpsuit. Why was he back? The turbulence had been pretty bad over the jump spot, and it was rumored he'd had some trouble holding his lunch. Gorden assured Smokey he was okay and ready to go. The jump order had changed. Rather than sitting in the door, I would be the second on the two-man stick.

The call came in that the fire had spotted across the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. We suited up and headed to the airport to board the Beech. The jump order would be Gorden, **Harvey Harden** (IDC '59), **Fred Rensmeyer** (MYC '58) and yours truly. Fred had been at Silver City earlier in the year and would be my jump partner. He told me he might talk to me on the way down should I need any coaching. The fire was about 50 miles northeast of Idaho City. Long before we got to Blue Bunch Mountain, I could see a huge, billowing column of smoke as I looked from behind Dale and Smokey in the Beech cockpit. When we got over the area, we could see the spot fire had really taken off burning along the dry south- and west-facing slopes on the east side of the canyon.

In short order, Smokey had a jump spot picked out at the lower end of the fire. I got a quick look at the jump spot but couldn't see much out of the Beech sitting on the floor over the wing. We made a couple passes over the area, and in no time, Smokey had Gorden in the door and Harvey behind him. Dale throttled back and out they went. Smokey motioned for Fred and me to get ready. On the next pass, Fred sat in the doorway with me crouched behind him. A slap on the shoulder and out went Fred. I sat down in the doorway and pushed off as quickly as I could. Smokey provided a little assistance in helping get my ass out the door. The FS-2 chute cracked, and I looked up and saw a good canopy. I then looked down between my legs and saw the Middle Fork for the first time! The river looked big from my 1,000-foot vantage point, and the "pucker factor" ratcheted up another notch. Fred hollered at me to turn. If Fred hadn't hollered, I may have ended up as chum for the fall chinook salmon run. I turned around, found the jump spot and started working toward it. I made the jump spot, a small grassy area up from the river.

We assembled at the jump spot and stowed our jump gear in a safe place next to the river. Hand tools were

collected, and we headed for the flank of the fire. A quick recon of the blaze indicated we had a "Big Fire" on our hands. We worked the upper flank of the fire all night and made some progress, but it was moving faster than we could dig fire line. From the fire line, we could look up the river several miles. Around midnight, headlamps from three or four crews of ground pounders could be seen hiking down the trail from Marsh Creek Campground. At daylight, we headed back to the jump spot and our gear. When we got to the jump spot, several crews of ground pounders had assembled in the area.

A Bell G-3 came in with the fire boss. We were told to collect our gear and plan to fly out to the Bruce Meadows airstrip later that morning. Most of the initial attack fire personnel had been committed to fires, and we were needed back at Idaho City. We would have a food drop to feed the ground pounders before they headed for the fire line. We manned the chow line and fed the ground-pounders their green eggs and purple ham. About mid-morning, we flew out to Bruce Meadows and were picked up by Dale and **Ken Smith** (IDC '55) in the Beech for the flight back to Smokey's Rock Pile.

That was not the last I would see of Blue Bunch Mountain. On August 17, Michael Steep and I would jump a two-man stick on Lower Blue Bunch Mountain after a lightning bust. Neds do jump two-man sticks, as we jumped our last three fires together that summer.

The Biscuit fire has focused attention on initial attack and the smokejumpers' role. On the Blue Bunch Mountain fire, four smokejumpers were over fire 50 minutes after it was discovered. Sixteen additional smokejumpers were dispatched from McCall. Later, across the river, four smokejumpers jumped the spot fire. A total of 23 smokejumpers were on the fire. This was a third of the smokejumpers at both bases.

The fire report from 1961 pegged the fire at 600 acres. This was later revised when aerial photography taken in 1969 showed 1,500 acres had burned. The report states that 312 line workers were committed to the fire. The fire started July 19, was controlled July 21 at 1630 and mopped up August 5. Mop-up accounted for about 85 percent of the total effort. The McCall jumpers left the fire July 21 at 2030 and packed out to Bruce Meadows. They were picked up there by a DC-3 on July 22 and returned to McCall at 0930. The aggressive initial attack by smokejumpers prevented this fire from becoming a much larger fire. Also, the Boise National Forest was very aggressive in getting ground personnel to the fire.

The fire was in the old Bear Valley Ranger District of Boise National Forest, in a corridor called the Middle Fork Salmon Wild and Scenic River Area. Today it is part of Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness in the Middle Fork Ranger District of Salmon-Challis National Forest. What if a fire starts in mid-July in this wilderness area? What would be the response? Would there be aggressive initial attack?

The adjacent Sawtooth National Recreational Area is being decimated by a mountain pine beetle outbreak, with thousands of dead and dying lodgepole pine trees. It is estimated that a million-plus trees were infested last year alone on 60,000-plus acres. Could indecision and inaction lead to a catastrophic fire there this year? More than 150 smokejumpers based at McCall and Boise will be within 70 miles of the area. Will we have the "Redfish Lake Fire Complex" this year as the result of delayed initial attack?

Perhaps there are some lessons to be learned from initial attack at Blue Bunch Mountain in 1961.

Remembering Life Member
MILFORD PRESTON (REDDING '74)

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

NSA Life Member and fun-loving smokejumper Milford Preston (RDD '74) has passed on. It happened July 20th in Las Vegas, Nevada, due to a heart attack from possible complications of diabetes. He was 52. The word of his death brought on a large sadness for me. One which included several days of phone calls around the country with choked up voices on the other end of the line. As Davis Perkins (NCSB '72) put it, "We've lost a fine friend."

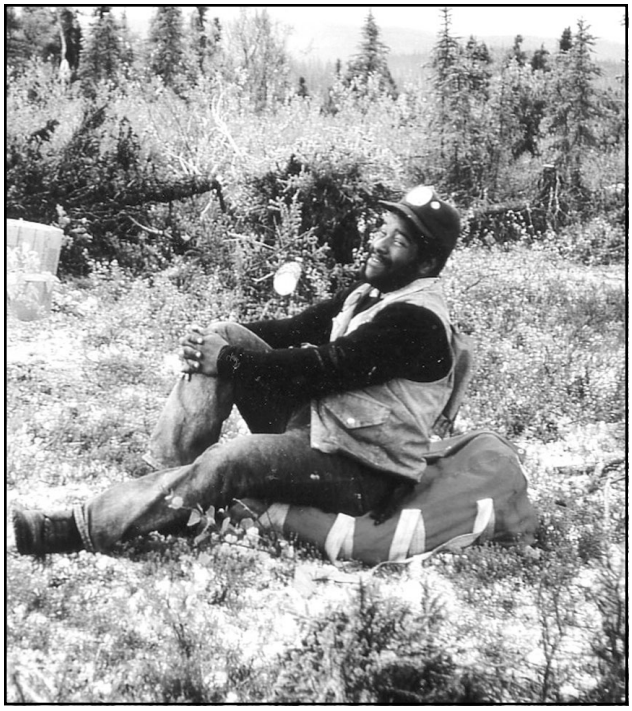
Rod Dow (MYC '68) stated it simply, "You know, I loved that guy." And so we are left to mourn the passing of a dear friend. In Milf's case I think the pain is especially deep since Milf was a bro during the freewheeling and fun-filled T-Hanger days of Alaska (1973–1977). For me, they were the "Glory Days"; the best many of us have sworn we ever had.

The previous two seasons, before he rookied, Milf spent on the Northern California hotshot crew under **Charlie Caldwell** (RDD '65).

Milf was a "Pickle." That's what the Redding jumpers called the hotshots since, at that time, they had to wear the green pants and the jumpers did not. The three seasons before Milf became a Pickle he served on the Junction City engine crew under **Rich Farmer** (RDD '64).

Prior to fire fighting he attended Berkeley High where he repeatedly lettered in football, baseball, and track. Because of his outstanding performance as an athlete, Milf was recommended by the school for the affirmative action program. That's how he landed the tanker job in Junction City.

According to some of his trainers, Milf struggled during rookie training with its physical demands in general and with tree climbing in particular. Milf was a city kid. And he was quick to point this out while making humorously disparaging remarks of his screw-ups. Milf would smile in his self-deprecating but endearing way, and then, in a



Milford Preston (Courtesy of Dave Noble)

manner that conveyed final judgment on the entire event, sings out the words "city kid." City kid aside, the Berkeley wonder immediately took to the mountains, the guys and the work. Whatever Milf lacked in initial talent he made up for in desire and determination.

On his rookie timber jump he hung up way high—the only one to follow the rules and do so. While the rest of his rookie bros kicked back in the shade Milf spent two hours 80 feet up in a big old Doug fir huffing and puffing around like a bear, sawing off limbs, and untangling lines. When he got to the ground he was drenched in sweat, covered with spider webs, arms and face scratched, his shirt torn. The crew felt that this could be the last straw and that he might just up and quit. Instead, he merely wiped his brow, smiled broadly and announced, "Another city kid move."

By the end of his first season Milf was on a roll. Despite a number of city kid moves he had, in his own words, become "a pretty hot toggle jockey." He led the crew in fire jumps and had detailed back East to jump fires with the Cave Junction crew. Near the end of the season, five Alaskans detailed to Redding. Milf and his buddy, **Buck McCoy** (RDD '74), immediately took to the fun-loving Alaskans and both transferred north in '75.

It was in Alaska that Milf found his true smokejumping heart—during what we now call the T-Hanger days. **Al Dutton** (FBX '67) was the boss; the pipeline was cranking up, the town was going nuts. The Alaska smokejumpers were somewhere between a damn good crew and the Keystone Cops. Dirty dozen types filled the ranks. Guys like **John "The Legendary F____ Rake" Rakowski** (MSO '66), **Jim "Fat Indian" Clairmont** (MSO '65), **Bob "Stewing Chicken" Quillin** (FBX '71), **John Culbertson** (FBX '69), **Matt "Blue Leader" Kelly** (FBX '71), **Don "The Real Don Bell" Bell** (IDC '69), and **Eric "The Blak" Schoenfeld** (CJ '64).

Some of you may remember back then how the Operations desk looked like a hot dog stand, and **Bill Neumeister** (MSO '68) had a string and two tin cans that acted as a phone between Ops and his EMT cupalo on top of the hanger. Visiting jumpers marveled at the fact that it actually worked. It was in this zany atmosphere that Milf flourished. The vast country, the long patrol flights through sunset skies, rainbows at midnight, he loved it all. But especially did Milford M. Preston (soon to become Mad Milf) fit into the outwardly silly, yet wise and wonderfully playful nature of the Alaska crew

Sitting around a campfire in the Innoko Flats one night, Milf set aside his copy of *Clan of the Cave Bear,* grunted and said, "Thragnar hungry! Grrrr … Thragnar eat!" Then he grabbed a box of rats and tore into it. Later near bedtime he grunted again. "Thragnar tired. Thragnar sleep." Just as he was Thragnar during his reading of the Clan book, so was he a Samurai warrior during his pages of *Shogun.* Milf could be seen in the barracks standing in front of a full-length

"… He led the crew in fire jumps and had detailed back East to jump fires with the Cave Junction crew. …"

mirror, bowing low to himself, eyes squinted nearly shut, and saying in his best Japanese accent "Ah sah … Honorable Milford San, Honorable Samurai warrior. Preezz to meet you." A couple days later while standing in the lunch line, he turned to me, bowed low, and said "Honorable jump partner, low-life Chickenhawk San … I, honorable Milford San, being of superior nature in every way will immediately destroy you with bare hands right after we finished honorable lunch."

Milf's memorial service was a beautiful affair attended by over 200 family and friends. Seven jumpers were there: Davis Perkins, John Culbertson, **Rick Russell** (FBX '77), **Rick Elefant** (RDD '74), **Dave Noble** (RDD '74), **James Hirano** (FBX '80), and me. A couple other hotshot bros were there, too. There was a large board with photos of Milf's life, one of him with his Jct. City engine crew, his rookie class, and a parachute coming down in a pure blue sky; others of his family, wedding, grandchildren, and one of him as a bright-eyed four-year old wearing a cowboy hat and stroking and playing a ukulele. Near the alter was a life-size photo of Milf in a tux, taken at his wedding, smiling his famous Milf smile. A dozen people stood and spoke so many kindnesses about Milf. From kids he had grown up with to his son, work associates, and lifetime friends. One thing was sure. He was a man easy to know and impossible not to love. For us who only knew Milf as a jumper it was comforting to see that his other life was also rich and full of life's goodness.

Right after Milf's passing I spoke with Buck McCoy, Milf's good pal who now lives in Galena. Buck asked if I might ask his wife for a small portion of ashes so that he might put them in the Yukon River. Pat cordially agreed. And so it will come to pass that a part of Milf will return to Alaska for one last time, to be spread across that great land he loved so much.

by Troop Emonds (Cave Junction '64)

BACK IN THE EARLY '70s, when we were jumping back East in the Appalachians, we got a call to return there for a late season. The CJ crew, who had gone back there in the spring, had just put in a long, hard, summer and did not want to make that trip. **Delos (Dutton)** called down to Redding and came up with a load of the Redding rooks who were hanging close to the base. He decided to take a big chance and send them with **Walt Congelton** and me back to Virginia. Walt did all the spotting and I jumped with the rooks. We only had one load of jumpers, but we jumped our butts off for a couple of three weeks back there.

Delos and **Mick (Swift)** had a rule that only the best and most experienced jumpers would be sent back there because of the conditions of hazardous jumping and dangerous, fast moving fires. Well, none of the rooks got hurt, and they were as steady and valuable as any of the old hands. Milf was one of the five rookies on that crew from Redding.

The Cave Junction jumpers had been going back there for several years and had really become a proud addition in the local town. The outlaw jumpers from Oregon endeared themselves to the locals by taking the really curious and interested up for plane rides. Most Wise, Va., residents had never been in a plane before.

When we showed up with Milf, who just happened to be black, as one of our crew, the locals who knew most of the CJ guys just included Milf. What was amazing to Milf was that when he went into one of the stores, they called him by name.

"… Milf jumped with us, laughed with us, and truly did contribute to a growing up of and bettering of a place called America. …"

When the rains came and we were checking out, a group of our better-known towns people came up to me and said, "Troop, Milf is the first black person ever to stay at the Wise Inn. We could tell he was one of your Oregon boys, and if he was refused a room, we would of lost all you guys forever. We just wanted to let you know, we enjoyed having him and this whole town learned a lot. See ya in the spring."

Anyway, they can say a lot about Jackie Robinson paving the way, but those who read this must find some sort of joy in knowing that a really nice guy named Milf jumped with us, laughed with us, and truly did contribute to a growing up of and bettering of a place called America.

Interesting Reading

by Chuck Sheley

If you haven't bookmarked the "Smokejumper Status Report" at *http://www.nifc.gov/smokejumper/smjrpt.php* you are missing out on some interesting reading. Activity at all the bases is updated on almost a daily basis. A reader can see the ebb and flow of the troops as the fire activity moves from state to state. In checking this morning (Sept. 7, 2003) I see a couple of encouraging events: 1) there are 95 jumpers out at Redding and 36 out at Redmond and both bases are low on reserves. 2) The BLM jumpers who seem to have been nailed to their stations during most of the season have been moved to Redding and into the action.

Another part of the report also caught my attention: Even with this high demand and use in R-5 & R-6, there are still 71 jumpers held at various bases. There was high lightning activity in Oregon and the RAC base was down to five jumpers (36 out on fires). Redding is down to 10 on the list. The catcher is that nationally 41 jumpers are out on "overhead" or other assignments taking them off the jump list.

If that percentage of an in-demand and limited resource can be allocated to other jobs, aren't priorities screwed up somewhere along the line? If jumpers want and need to go on overhead assignments for whatever reason, maybe we should reincarnate the R-5 "Retread" program so that there will be people ready to jump when the need is there.

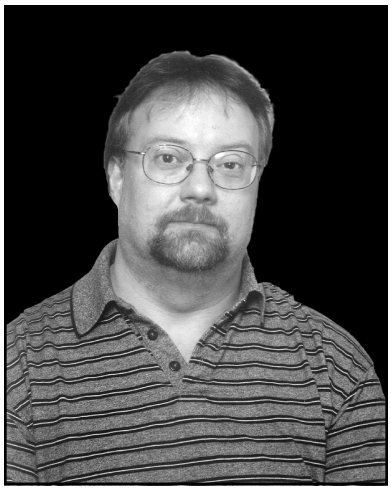
I e-mailed this point to a few NSA members who are currently "on the job" and got these responses:

"I think what has happened is that the fire organization is so hurting for experienced people, that the smokejumper leadership is now called upon to fill key rolls as fire management officers … etc. That in turn hurts our ability to deploy jumpers."

"Good point—yet it's a catch-22 on this end at times. For example, we have to go to Australia and New Zealand for 'experience' because we are short on overhead. We usually get Div/Group Sup's/Strike Team Leaders qualified, or helicopter/aviation managers from them. At one time this summer the three positions I mentioned were very scarce with NICC unable to fill. I think that's how the smj's got into the overhead positions—mostly ops."

"No one is in charge, Chuck. Smokejumper use is catch as catch can."

The View from Outside the Fence



by Chris Sorensen
(Associate)

Thoughts on Several Issues

Several issues have arisen that I'd like to bring to the smokejumper community's attention. If you feel strongly about them, you might write a letter to your Congressional representatives in Washington telling them how you feel and requesting their support.

Forest Thinning

Several environmental groups advocate thinning forests in the Red Zone. While their intentions may be admirable, I am skeptical of any effective results. Federal courts in Missoula and elsewhere are currently jammed with environmental lawsuits and I cannot envision that any urban interface-thinning projects will sail through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process without legal challenges from environmental groups. This will further backlog the courts and cloud the issue.

Please Tell Us When You Change Address

The postal service does **NOT** forward your copy of *Smokejumper* when you move or leave home for an extended time period. It is returned to us and the NSA is charged an additional first class postage fee. With 30–40 returns per mailing it gets expensive and takes a lot of time. Please let Chuck Sheley know if you have any change in your mailing address. Contact information is on page three.

Fires as Natural Disasters

A "tip-of-the-hardhat" goes to Congressman Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.) for advocating that forest fires should be considered as natural disasters and contingency fire budgets be established. This would treat fires in the same manner as hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. The yearly cycle of robbing money from the Fire Science Laboratory budget to pay for fire restoration projects on the national forests must stop.

Backcountry Landing Strips

Congressman Rehberg has also joined Rep. Butch Otter (R-Idaho) in introducing the Backcountry Landing Strip Access Act (H.R. 2776). The legislation would prohibit the federal government from permanently closing or disabling aircraft landing strips located on federal land. "Montana relies on rural airstrips to provide access to the backcountry for firefighting, emergency relief, research, and recreation," Rehberg said. The legislation would prevent the Departments of Agriculture and Interior from permanently closing or rendering unserviceable backcountry airstrips without first consulting the appropriate state aviation departments. H.R. 2776 also directs the two Departments to adopt a nationwide policy governing general aviation on federal lands and to consult with state aviation officials to ensure appropriate maintenance of the airstrips.

NYFD and FS Incident Management Teams

During the 2003 fire season, several New York City Fire Department (FDNY) commanding officers visited Montana to observe the Incident Command System in action. One group was assigned to the Rough Draw Complex fire, south of Livingston. Two other groups were assigned to fires in the Missoula area. Battalion Chief Kevin O'Keefe of Battalion 12 in Harlem commented, "The command system is flexible and fast, everybody seems to know the position they have to fulfill. The incident management system also has little to do with the strict hierarchies and inefficiencies attached to the 12,000 member FDNY." The working conditions encountered in the West awed the New York officers. The FDNY's own Type 1 Incident management team is under development and is not yet certified by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. Once certified, the FDNY Incident Management Teams can be nationally deployed in emergencies

Air Tanker Museum

A small group has formed to create an air tanker museum that will also serve as a memorial to fallen aerial firefighters. The museum will be located in the Lancaster, California, area. This group is soliciting aircraft, photographs and memorabilia to be put on static display to educate the public about the air tanker industry and, the sacrifices

made in fighting fire. Contact: Thunder Air Museum, 8838 West Avenue D-4, Lancaster, CA 93536; telephone: (661) 728 9654; e-mail: thunderairmuseum@yahoo.com

Kalispell Air Tanker Base To Close

The Kalispell (Montana) Air Tanker Base, located at the Glacier Park International Airport, is on the chopping block. The proposed closure is based on an outdated 1997 NTSB report that assumed the availability of an increasing number of faster, larger capacity C-130 aircraft. These aircraft, it was believed, would provide adequate coverage for northwest Montana from other bases, including Missoula. After the permanent grounding of older C-130 and PBY aircraft last year, the priority of the air tanker program has been initial attack and protecting communities in the wildland urban interface. The Kalispell base pumped 470,000 gallons of retardant for three large fires and four fire complexes in the Flathead area alone during the 2003 fire season. In 2001, there was one major fire in the Flathead area and the base delivered twice that amount of retardant. Closing bases contradicts the current policy of fast initial attack and protecting communities. Over the past 28 years the Kalispell base has been consistently the second or third busiest in the region. Only Missoula and West Yellowstone exceed Kalispell's record.

Congratulations

A "tip-of-the-hard-hat" goes to **Dale Longanecker** (RAC '74) who received his 700 Jump pin in September at the North Cascades base. Congratulations Dale!

These We Remember: Smokejumpers Who Died in Laos

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

The Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA by Ted Gup (2000) is about many of the now 80 named and unnamed stars on the memorial wall just inside the main lobby entrance of the Central Intelligence Agency. As noted in the July 2002 article "Smokejumpers and the CIA: A Bibliography" by this author, the book mentions jumpers from Intermountain Aviation in Marana, Arizona, relative to one event. Mr. Gup caused controversy by allegedly naming nearly all of the previously unnamed stars.

Whatever the arguments re *The Book of Honor,* many more Americans now know the sacrifices of a band of people whose dedication to duty and devotion to nation equals that of our military. But what is unknown even to many in the intelligence community is that there is another memorial to CIA deaths with 241 names and dates on it and no mysteries about how they got there. Eight smokejumpers are among them.

As Mr. Gup relates, when the CIA created their memorial they had to make a policy decision whether to include air operations deaths. This was a major question in the aftermath of the Indochina War with the well-known roles of Civil Air Transport, Air America, Air Asia, and Southern Air Transport, all CIA-affiliated, in the war. In the end, they were not included.

Later former employees formed the Civil Air Transport Association and the Air America Association. These groups selected the History of Aviation Collection of the Eugene McDermott Library at the University of Texas at Dallas to house their archives and historical records. In 1987 the pictured memorial was dedicated at this location. A smaller replica of this marker without the names can be found on an inside corridor wall at the CIA just a short distance beyond the well-known main lobby memorial wall.

David W. Bevan (Missoula '51), **John S. Lewis** (McCall '53), and **Darrell A. Eubanks** (McCall '54), all "kickers" or "PDOs" (parachute delivery officers) died with two other crewmembers in the crash of a C-46 in Laos on August 13, 1961. They were dropping cargo in support of General Vang Pao's Hmong army when they apparently had a mechanical problem. A fine tribute to John Lewis was published in the January 2003 issue of *Smokejumper.*

Charles T. "Tom" Dieffenbach (Missoula '56) was the pilot of a Helio Courier shot down over Laos on July 22, 1962. He survived the crash but died walking out despite the efforts of his Laotian observer passenger to save him. Tom was a former U.S. Marine Corps pilot who flew in the same helicopter squadron in Vietnam with a Missoula '56 rookie classmate, Bob Whaley.

Gideon A. "Gid" Newton (Cave Junction '55), a kicker, died with five other crew members when their C-46 crashed on a cargo drop over Laos due to apparent weather problems on July 17, 1963. According to information in the October 1994 issue of *The Static Line,* Gid was found with a D ring clutched in his hand, obviously trying.

Eugene H. DeBruin, a Missoula '59 rookie classmate of

Civil Air Transport/Air America memorial plaque, University Texas at Dallas. The plaque dedicated in 1987 honors "the memory of those who died in the defense of freedom." (NSA file)

the author, parachuted from a burning C-46 along with three Thai kickers and a Chinese radio operator on September 5, 1963. Two American pilots went down with the plane. Eugene has been mentioned several times in this magazine. In 1966, Gene and six others made the largest POW breakout escape of the Indochina War. Unfortunately Gene did not reach safety and remains MIA.

Billy K. Hester (Missoula '58), a kicker and friend of the author from several months together in the fall of 1959 on a jumper-tanker crew on the Cleveland National Forest, died with five other crewmembers in the apparent weather-related crash of a C-130 in Laos on April 10, 1970.

Edward J. Weisenback (Cave Junction '64) and three other crewmembers disappeared in a C-123 that was presumably shot down over the "China Road" in northwest Laos on December 27, 1971. He is officially MIA. A kicker, it was his first week on the job. "Animal Ed" had served on long-range recon patrols with the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He was mentioned in the April 2002 issue of this magazine.

I believe it would be appropriate that all of our fallen colleagues who died in the service of our U.S. government—military and civilian—be remembered at our reunion memorial services as we now remember those who died in forest fire, airplane, and parachute accidents. Perhaps another author can tackle the problem of listing military smokejumpers who died in war. A baseline for initial research would be the July and October 1994 issues of the old green NSA newsletter, *The Static Line,* that contained considerable obituary information.

(This article has been reviewed by CIA. That review neither constitutes CIA authentication of information nor implies CIA endorsement of the author's views.)

Fred Donner's life member biography appeared in the April 2003 issue and his Jerry Daniels memorial in the July 2003 issue. He is a retired Defense Intelligence Agency officer with nearly 40 years of experience and education related to Southeast Asia and China. He can be reached at: fredandbev@ earthlink.net or 703-698-5480. Address: 7320 Pinecastle Road, Falls Church, VA 22043-3017.

Items from the Fire Pack

Don't Chug the Soda

Murray Braden (MSO '44) and I were on standby at the loft in Missoula and about 4:00 P.M. went across the street to treat ourselves to a bottle of pop. Seeing a flurry of activity at the loft, we chug-a-lugged our pop and ran over and jumped on the truck heading for the airport, suiting up on the way. The main fire for which we were called was on private Potlatch timber so we dropped several men on the fire on Forest Service land. In all the circling, Murray became ill and lost his orange soda, which started the same thought to prey on my mind. Fortunately I found a small air leak behind the pilot's cabin and did some deep breathing to hold my stomach in check.

Dick Flaharty (Missoula '44)

Smokejumper Training Handy in the War

During the trial jumping period, my younger brother Al helped out but he didn't stay with it as he went into the service. His training come in pretty handy there as he was shot down twice.

George Honey
(North Cascades '40)

Reserve Used Just in Time

On Bicycle Creek my partner and I were on the ground when **Melvin Northcott** (NCSB '55) and **Mike Bowman** (NCSB '55) jumped on the next pass. The second jumper out came out too quick and went through the other guy's lines causing one chute to collapse. They were tangled together on the one chute and we were yelling at them to pull a reserve. After they went out of sight either Mike or Melvin pulled their reserve just in time to catch a tree and they ended up hanging just off the ground.

Ray Honey (North Cascades '55)

Second Smokejumper Fatality

They were sawing a big pine tree down when the top broke out and hit one of the jumpers in the back of the head. This happened late in the evening. The next morning one of the jumpers made his way off the fire and hitchhiked into town and called the base. Once we were notified I think it was 28 minutes and we were jumping that fire. We administered blood plasma, put him on a stretcher and carried him about three miles cross-country to a trail. That was in 1946 and that was **Lester Lycklama** (MYC '46) and he was from the Meridian Idaho area. He died the following morning, the 5th of July.

Wayne Webb (McCall '46)

Late Rescue Jump

Most years we have about three or four rescue jumps. A couple years ago we jumped about 9:30 in the evening when a fellow broke his ankle. It was quite late and we could see his light. We took care of him that night and took him out by chopper the next morning.

Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

Eagle Furnished the Chutes

The Eagle Parachute Company furnished the chutes and apparently had a contract with the government to make these 60 jumps to see whether or not it would work. The whole object of our business was to invent the equipment to use. They made up four or five different suits to wear and we tried them out and modified them to our needs.

Virgil Derry
(North Cascades '40)

The Eight Mile Crash

They had a lot of cargo that they were going to drop on another fire where we had jumpers and our rookies who had ground-pounded the fire. So they went out very heavy on fuel and very heavy on equipment. They had three jumpers aboard and made the first pass and made one drop. They came around on the second pass and we figure they hit a down draft. With the extra weight, pilot error and turning into a ridge, the plane went into a high-speed stall and crashed.

Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

The 1939 Season

I don't believe we made the 60 experimental jumps in 1939. It was in the late fall and the weather got pretty bad and two people got hurt. Dick Tuttle was practicing letting himself down with a rope and it broke and he fell about 60 feet down the side of a cliff. I don't know why it didn't kill him—missed an awful good chance. There was **George Honey** (NCSB '40), **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB '40) and **Glenn Smith** (NCSB '40) and my older brother Frank (**Derry**) doing the jumps.

Virgil Derry
(North Cascades '40)

The Gang in Felt Caps

The ex-military guys at the time (1946–48) pretty much set the working mode in those days. The younger ones just fell in line. Most of the jumpers wore either a red or black felt hat. You will notice that in the photos. We identified with those hats. Many still wore military garb. **Phil McVey** (MSO '48) was a prime example. Ex-Navy, he always wore swabby jeans and swabby shirt with the shirt rolled and tied around his waist.

Chuck Pickard (Missoula '48)

Short Walk to Camp

In 1944 we gave an exhibition jump for some visiting F.S. personnel from D.C. **Harry Burks** (MSO '43) jumped first and landed close to the spot. The wind then came up and when I opened I was sailing cross-country at a rapid rate and saw that I couldn't hit the spot. Since it was blowing toward camp, I turned 180 degrees and went over the hill and out of sight. I landed on the top of the next hill and was almost in camp. That was one jump that could have put the smokejumping program in jeopardy. The brass from D.C. might have started thinking that it would be quicker to walk someone to a fire.

Wilmer Carlsen (Missoula '43)

Yellow Gasoline?

In 1944 we were headed for a fire in northeast Washington almost to the Canadian border and landed in Spokane to refuel. The pilot noticed that the gas was yellow as if it had something in it. Even a filter didn't change that color. We finally decided to go with it. **Lee Hebel** (MSO '44) and I were dropped on the fire and the Tri-motor flew back to Missoula. Apparently the Ford will even fly with yellow gasoline.

John Ainsworth (Missoula '43)

Quick Trip Down

While jumping a fire in Glacier Park, I had to use my reserve when my main didn't open properly. The reserve opened over my head and lines were around my neck. I couldn't even look down. When I saw a treetop I knew it was time to get ready to land.

Clarence Dirks (Missoula '45)

Bob Schlaefli Remembered

by John Culbertson (Fairbanks '68)

Driving around the ramp in their two-door Ford beater—Bob in a bomber jacket and aviator glasses, Claudette sporting high heels and sequin-adorned jeans—the Schlaeflis were fixtures at the Fairbanks jump base when I showed up in 1969. To me, they seemed as fresh and unique as the promise of the young state of Alaska. Given that Bob's experience came from World War II, Alaska bush-flying and pioneering air-tanker work, you might have thought him crusty, yet he connected on a human level. Unlike some folks, who rated you by how long you'd been in Alaska, Bob greeted you with a friendly smile and words of encouragement to join in on the work. Bob had that pioneering "can do" attitude that was representative of both the growing state and the air-tanker industry.

Starting in 1959 with Red Dodge, Bob operated B-25s, T-28s and a P-51 Mustang, which they tanked and flew as emergency fire fighting aircraft for Alaska BLM. When the 25s were phased out in the early '70s, Bob pioneered water-scooping with a Super PBY.

"He went over to Canada in '61, where they were scooping with standards," Claudette recently recalled. "And he got the idea to tank a Super [Catalina], but it was years until he could get the feds to let him use it on a fire. Politics! There were no contracts 'til '65, so Bob flew on-call fire fighting. Later, he got the first written contract in Alaska. Bob was proud of that."

Bob had a strong work ethic that rubbed off on many young people who associated with him. Jumpers were always welcome around his ships, and they often lounged around him on the tarmac as he worked at getting an engine up for another run. Tools and engine parts would be scattered about below the wings, his school bus workshop backed up to the ship, Claudette sitting on the fender of their beater sorting through bills and tending the paperwork.

"That was the best car we ever had," Claudette said. "It would sit there on the ramp with all the jumpers' cars all winter. We'd dust the snow off in the spring and have at it."

"Bob set the standard at Fairbanks for beater cars," said **Murry Taylor** (RDD '65). "Bob was an excellent fireman. He knew how to fight fires, and he liked helping the guys on the ground," he added.

Bob in flight school, World War II (Courtesy C. Schlaefli)

Don Bell (IDC '69) remembered Bob on a fire at Stony River. "I was fire boss," Bell said. "That fire got in the grass. It took off and was blowing through camp. Next thing, the fires started to burn my tent, so I got on the radio and called to Schlaf, who was inbound with a load. I had a spruce bough in one hand, trying to beat the flames off my tent, and a radio in the other. Schlaf comes roaring right in over the fire down low, taking a look. I'd seen his dark glasses, and he said, 'Looks like [the] fire's right in the camp. Where do you want it?' 'Put it on me,' I said. So he did. He dropped a little high, so he wouldn't hurt us, and that let us save our gear. Then he went back to scooping, and he stopped that whole fire."

It was **Dave Hade**'s (MYC '77) first year in Alaska, and he saw it happen. "[Dave and I] always talked about it," Bell reflected. "I liked him."

On fires, Bob was a most trusted pilot in the days when few lead planes were available, often dispensing invaluable advice to jumpers as he kept the retardant or water flowing from his scooping Super Catalina. Following a fire, jumpers would head down the ramp to thank Bob, only to be told they had done a great job themselves. Bob talked straight to the young jumpers, in-

Bob at Fairbanks with 05 Charlie (Courtesy C. Schlaefli)

stilling confidence and a belief in the shared mission.

Said Taylor, "He took the same pride in his job as the jumpers. Whatever kind of man it takes to buckle up in a tanker, flip those switches and start dropping retardant, to listen to those big engines turn over and to do it again and again—Bob was that man. That was courage."

"He was just the best kind of guy," recalled air-attack boss **Ron Berkey** (MYC '65). "In fact, he once took me up and let me drop on a fire. Gosh, I learned a lot from him. It just really improved my ability in air attack."

Generosity was one of Bob's trademarks. And not just on fires. If Bob was flying and you were headed in that general direction, you had a ride. Jumpers caught rides back and forth to the lower 48 and all over Alaska on Bob's ships. And if you needed a ride to town or a ride home after a night on the town, Bob took care of you.

One of my clearest memories of Bob goes back to when I was sitting in the Silver Dollar late one night, way past any ability to stand up or reason out a way home. We were listening to Johnny and Joanne Mosby sing in person ("You take a left and then a right, go down three blocks, look for a light ..."), and I happened to look over at Bob, who was all thoughtful after a night of dancing and storytelling. I realized he was looking at us, the young people at the table. The band started playing, "Turn out the lights; the party's over," the last slow dance of the night. People were scrambling for partners, and you could see the bartender putting up glasses. Bob continued to sit at the table. He put his cigarette down, leaned over my way and said, "You're going to do okay in life, but right now, don't go anywhere. I'm taking you guys home."

Even if he wasn't headed your way, Bob liked to help. **Bob Betts** (RDD '64) chronicled one of those adventures in an article that appeared in *Alaska* magazine called "Kayaks over the Kandik." Betts wrote about the time Bob dropped him [Betts], **Dave Pierce** (RAC '65) and **Jon Klingle** (CJ '65) by parachute into the Kandik, west of Eagle, with their kayaks. Pierce acted as spotter, then jumped himself. And as usual, Bob donated his ship (B-23) and time.

Bob Quillin (FBX '71) called one night to let me know of Bob's passing. We told jokes about Bob for a while, and Quillin talked about Bob and Claudette's beaters. "They had the junkiest cars," he remembered. "They looked awful. That's how I got to know them!" Quillin spoke for many when he said Bob would "do anything to help you out on a fire. When you'd see him back at Fairbanks, he'd shrug it off with, 'It sure beats working for a living.'"

We fell silent. I knew we were both thinking about what an influence Bob had had on us. I thought about all the drinks

Bob using his Ford beater as a workbench, Antique 5 in background. (Courtesy C. Schlaefli)

Bob had bought me and the fact that I don't think I'd ever bought him one. "To labor in faith is its own reward," Quillin said, not so much to me as to the night.

That wild bunch of jumpers lounging around on the tarmac while Bob fussed with an engine was actually absorbing what he was doing, taking in his lessons of work and perseverance. We were pretty good at working when something was burning, but otherwise we were a bunch of big lazy dogs (or, in my case, a little skinny lazy dog).

When we started waking up about 20 years later and realized the party was over, it was a good thing we had been lounging around the PBY. Right off the bat, we knew it was possible to work without somebody paying us overtime, and bathing us in delusions of grandeur to do so. We could work without profit or praise. And though it took us another decade or so to figure it out, the reason for our output was anchored in watching people we admired work without complaint.

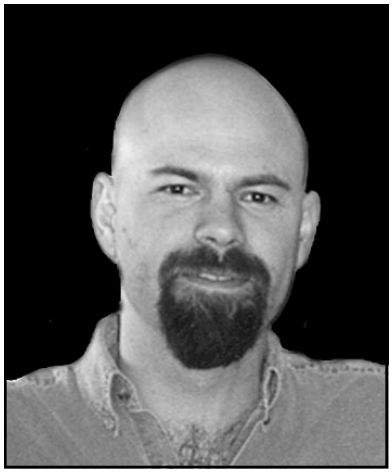
Claudette recently sent me a copy of a little saying Bob kept taped in his toolbox through the years. I remember looking at it as I sat on the tarmac handing him tools, but my young mind didn't retain the following message:

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

In my mind's eye, I can still see Bob working. I can smell the warm tarmac and see the glint of sub-arctic light on the engine cowling. I can hear a jumper calling us to dinner and Bob saying, "You go on. You need to eat." I did; I was hungry. But just before I got around back of the cook shack, I paused and looked. I saw an image that has stayed with me. Role models really do affect people. Bob was there. And we were watching.

John Culbertson lives in Carpinteria, Calif., with his wife Kathy and four children. He can be contacted at: 4516 La Tierra, Carpinteria, CA 93013 or jkc@sbceo.org

Smokejumpers.com: NSA on the Web



by Jon Robinson
WEBMASTER

The State of the NSA Online Is Good!

We have now completed six months of operations for the *new Smokejumpers.com* and things continue to go strong!

Highlights

Visits increased again from 270 a day over the first three months to a steady *300* in August and September, topping out at *over 500 visits* on August 10th! Now that's not much if you're Microsoft, but for an organization the size of the NSA, that's pretty darn good!

Note that visits and "hits" (we had 17,027 of those on the 10th) are quite different animals. I won't bore you with the technical end of these two but suffice it to say that 300 times a day, someone is dropping in and poking around at Smokejumpers.com.

Mike McMillan's (FBX '96) images alone have entertained an average of 16 visits a day all by themselves, with the rest of the Image Gallery not too far behind. All this bringing interested visitors who then hopefully end up in the store, where purchases have gone from a purchase a day to over ***two a day*** in September! Wow!

Don't forget to stop into Mike's own site at *http://www.spotfireimages.com* to see all of Mike's fine images and to say thanks for gifting a wonderful addition that brings in hundreds of people each month!

Reunion 2004

We're really looking forward to playing an important part in supporting the upcoming Reunion 2004! And with that goal in mind, we launched the "Reunion 2004" section. Find it at *http://www.smokejumpers.com/reunion2004/* or on the left bar throughout the site!

Our first line of support will of course be in the delivery of event news itself. But we are planning to offer a variety of information through the Reunion 2004 section. As the event moves ever closer, we will begin putting up schedules, lodging information, registration options, and other resources.

And the Forum will hopefully offer some communication options for people making plans, asking questions, supplying information, generally communicating with fellows and eventually making connections away from home.

The Store

The best news for us is that the store *http://www.smokejumpers.com/store/* has turned in record breaking $ almost every month, cementing the pattern of more or less doubling sales from the old store!

That is especially important because the Web project has always been intended as not only a self-financing operation, but a revenue producer as well. And we've been able to hold up that goal, *even* while substantially improving on the Web presence itself.

Web projects can not only pay for themselves, but also improve revenue for the whole organization, and we're proof!

Next time you are enjoying an aspect of the site, be it the News area, a post in the Forum, or a great smokejumper product from the Store, consider that the site is not only paying for itself, but is actually *making money*!

We have also had great success by running store specials on items on the front page. Check out the home page of the Web site *http://www.smokejumpers.com* often to see what great deals we have for you there!

We have some stock that needs moving and that means deals for the brotherhood! Some items have been so successful there that we've run them for an entire month, but others stay only a few days! So be sure to check back often!

The Forum

Finally, the forum *http://www.smokejumpers.com/forums/* remains active, and seems to be moving more on target! We had a fellow that really was pissed off about some things that were over the top to say the least, but it appears he's finally on down the trail. Therefore we've been able to return to letting people post without having to register first, which I believe is easier on those who struggle a bit with these @#($ machines ;-)

We're beginning to see more *new* people dropping in to engage their fellows, and that is a very good sign. I highly encourage you to visit and add your views to a topic, strike up a conversation, hang out, or make contact with some old friends! This could become a very valuable area for this organization. So add your voice!

Yes, the state of the NSA online is good indeed, and only getting better!

Jon Robinson is a freelance Web developer: http://www.chakra5.com. If you have a Web project that needs professional attention, contact Jon at: jon@chakra5.com or 206-781-0140.

LETTERS

*NSA Life Member **Jerry Dixon** (MYC '71) sent the following update on his contact with the family of **Ted Burgon** (IDC '52). Ted, a NSA director, was killed in an ambush in August 2002 while on a teaching assignment in Papua, New Guinea. Jerry wrote an excellent tribute to Ted in the Oct. 2003 issue and has been in contact with the family as the investigation continues. Mark (Burgon) is Ted's son.*

Dear Chuck,

Enclosed is a letter from Mark Burgon about Ted's bio and my reply. I commend you and NSA for your unwavering support of the Burgon family during this inquiry. It speaks so highly of the Jumpers that we were there when this started and we will stay with it until we have the answers. It is an extension of what we lived on the fire line, "No jumper left behind." You were there for your buddies and you knew they would be there. I have always, like most jumpers, had strong ties to firefighters I jumped with. Through NSA, that link of friendship has now spanned generations. Best wishes, Jerry

Hi Jerry,

I wanted to thank you for a great article. An ex-jumper at work brought it in last Friday. By the time I saw it a number of co-workers had read it and had very positive feedback and many questions. It is people like you and the NSA that have helped to keep pressure on the government to pursue the investigation. There are too many people working overseas that need to know their government will not turn it's back on them without pursuing the truth in times like these.

Sorry, I have not been staying on top of my correspondence. I had a miserable year last year with too many negative things happening.

My brother just returned from Washington DC and has of yet to fill me in on all that went on. He was there for work, but managed to get a number of meetings in with congressional people and the FBI. He has said he felt it was productive and there is more legislation being proposed in the very near future.

He did get the indication that they have information linking very high military sources with the attack that can never be used.

Thanks again, Mark (Burgon)

Dear Mark,

You are welcome. Through the many e-mail conversations Ted and I had I became very interested in his life and background. As I mentioned, we had much in common. I had so looked forward to meeting him, probably more than any other jumper I knew of but had not met face to face to share jump stories. When I found out what had happened it was as though someone had kicked me in the stomach. I will continue to work with NSA until we have a full accounting.

Best, Jerry

Dear Editor:

Having just spent a week on the west side of the Biscuit Fire burn area clearing trail (NSA trail maintenance) with **Chuck Mansfield** (CJ '59) and his son, I came away with the assessment that the clock is ticking on the Biscuit Fire restoration.

With over 400,000 acres burned, there are some one billion board feet of burned, dead and dying timber worth an approximate $100 million that could be salvaged. These values will drop rapidly as insects and decay degrade the timber.

If this timber is not salvaged soon, it will become fuel for future fires as Manzanita, Madrone and Tanoak add to the future fire potential of the area. The Kalmiopsis area (wilderness) could be salvage logged with helicopter and other light-on-the-land methods.

The USFS only plans on planting 1000 acres this year with a future total of 31,000 acres planned out of the 400,000 burned. A huge opportunity is being missed to compare active forest management to the *no action policy* being advocated by some.

Don M. (Mike) Cramer (Cave Junction '59)

Feedback from the Field

Good job on the July issue Chuck! What a great picture on the cover! The reader responses were interesting. You are doing a great job of running the magazine and I wouldn't try to hold you back in any way. Free speech is so limited in today's fire world, political correctness is everything. It is refreshing to hear someone speak their mind.

My response about editorial oversight comes from a very different place than many of the folks. My idea of editorial oversight would include not printing the one pager with "name withheld on request." That page, although well written and containing some good points was completely negated by the author doing the politically correct thing and giving the appearance of furthering his or her career on a management team by keeping "silent" to the witness of problems. This is the "big brother" approach, telling the children to calm down. There is a place for an unsigned piece when true persecution is possible, but this is not that type of case. What fascinates me is that the author's position is so middle of the road and yet he or she has some fear of reprisal. This position reinforces the perceived state of fire management in our country where only true believers singing the company song can succeed.

John Culbertson (Fairbanks '69)

Blast from the Past

Illinois Valley News, May 1967

Smitty is dead. Tall, lanky, always smiling Smitty, who had been jumping out of the Siskiyou Aerial Project for five years, drowned while making a river crossing after building helispots in the remote Illinois River Canyon area. Smith, Rey Zander and Ronald McMinimy had parachuted into the nearly inaccessible region Thursday to build helispots.

After completing their mission, they were trying to cross the Illinois River to reach the River Trail. Smith, a powerful swimmer, entered calm water with 150 feet of line tied to himself which was to be used later to bring a rubber raft with their gear across. He purposely drifted downstream to the chosen land place, still in calm water but just above the point where the river current gained strength.

As he started to climb out on the rocks, the line was caught by the current and pulled him back in. Zander and McMinimy, on the opposite bank, took the slack out of the line in an attempt to keep him from drifting downstream. As Smith swung back toward the other shore he submerged twice. Feeling the only chance Smith had was to be free they released the line. Smith started through the rapids then the line caught on an underwater boulder holding him just below the surface.

The turbulent river thwarted attempts at recovery of the body Friday. Sheriff Snider said the first place to be searched Saturday would be a deep, slack water hold approximately 200 feet long and 300 feet deep in places.

Meadow Named For Ochoco Employee

USFS Greensheet, October 1989

Snow Mt. Ranger District Employee **Mike Lehman** (Cave Jct. '58) had a few special places to look for early spring wildflowers. One of those places, a meadow at the headwaters of Burnt Cabin Creek, now bears his name. Mike, who died while on duty three years ago, had been the Snow Mt. FMO for 10 years. He had worked 33 years for the USFS.

In October of 1987, Mike was honored at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Md., along with 114 others who gave their lives in the line of duty that year. Mike's name is inscribed on a plaque in the Memorial Plaza.

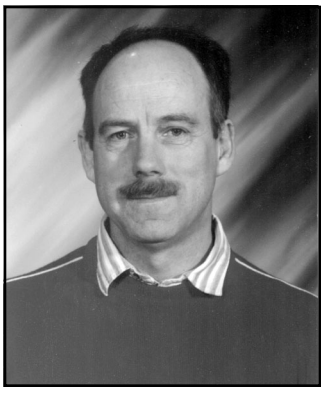
Redline Across the Beaverhead Mountains

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

June 27, 2003. Looking east from the unnamed 10,048 ft. peak on which I stand I can see to the far horizon and know the names of ranges and rivers I have traversed since I began paddling up the Missouri five weeks before.

Looking west the inspiring mountains march westward and I will traverse them on my way to the Pacific. I have been on the trail of Lewis and Clark for over a month. Now, I am traversing a section of the Beaverhead Mountains which is the Continental Divide between Idaho and Montana and a place the Corps of Discovery circumnavigated but definitely would have avoided traversing because of the vertical terrain.

I started in the Big Hole Valley of Montana and climbed this 10,048 ft. peak. What is staggering is that a voyageur from 200 years ago would recognize the vista. Except for the small clearing which is Wisdom, Mont., to the north I have an unbroken 360-degree vista of mountains, rivers and sky. It is a vision of our nation's youth. During the past several days I have experienced rain, snow, sleet, hail, grapple, high winds and temperatures that were as cold as it got this past winter at my Alaska home.



Jerry Dixon

Now I hope to climb to the Continental Divide and traverse two more 10,000 ft. peaks to (just named) Sacajewea Peak. However, I am looking at a 2.5-mile long cornice of ice and snow, up to 50 feet high, that guards the summit ridge. If it gives way while I am on it I could be buried under tons of ice. Forty years a mountaineer, almost 50 years a skier, I know the risks. Prior to attempting the traverse I sent my intended route to **Neal Davis** (MYC '69) and **Rick Hudson** (BIFC '73) both of the McCall smokejumper base, and **Doug Abromeit** (MYC '71), the head of avalanche forecasting, (all good friends) at Ketchum. Having been a smokejumper/

EMT and made rescue jumps I know what information rescuers would want. Even though I have full mountain rescue insurance as a life member of the American Alpine Club, it is something I have never had to, and hope never will, use.

With my 45 lb. pack I climb to the cornice and look for a path. A mountain sheep has scrambled up a section to my left but I chose not to go there as it is directly above a cliff and a fall could not be protected against with a self-arrest. The conditions are perfect as I began the day shortly after 05:30 and now the sun has warmed the snow so that I can kick steps with my light shoes and not chop them with my poles. From the time I start on the cornice until I top out I don't look up. My world becomes the placement of my feet and hands.

From on top the view is sublime and I remember when I first saw the Beaverhead Range rising from the Salmon River plains in 1971 as a young smokejumper. What a magnificent spot. I stopped on top of Center Mountain to remember the men from my McCall unit that were lost July 6, 1994, in Colorado and the seven pilots I have flown with who died in the line of duty. I was staggered to find out that just a few weeks later on July 22 two young firefighters would die not far from where I stood.

I wondered when I first saw the Beaverhead Mountains (coming off a jumper fire with **Bill Yensen**) what it would be like to traverse along the spine of these magnificent mountains. Now I know.

Jerry currently teaches gifted students in Seward, Alaska. He can be reached at: js2dixon@hotmail.com or PO Box 1058, Seward AK 99664

Remembering Dee Dutton and the Gobi

by Jay Scott (Cave Junction '67)

Two years pounding the ground on a tanker crew in Calavaras, Calif., qualified me to try to become a smokejumper. There were not too many recruited from the California Dept. of Forestry. It was a large class of rookies on the Gobi that year as Vietnam was really rolling. Dee Dutton wasn't happy about having so many rookies to deal with and we knew it. Many of the previous years' trainees had gone to 'Nam—some by choice and some not. Nevertheless, here I was with the chance of a lifetime.

I was 5' 6" and 136 pounds and had wrestled four years in high school and thought I knew "tough." Others in the rookie class were really good athletes but none of us were ready for **Trooper Tom, Larry Lufkin** and a blonde guy named **Terry (MeWhinney).**

We started with ten miles around the base before breakfast followed by a couple hours of pushup volleyball and then it was off to project work. My favorite was cutting the lower limbs off some tall trees at the 100-foot level with a handsaw. I sure learned how to climb big trees in a hurry. The ten-mile jog down the dry creek bed after lunch was everybody's favorite when it was 95 degrees plus.

Dee was a soft-spoken man but intense. The entire base reflected his personality. We were expected to be physically prepared as well as be good at what we were doing, especially when working off the base.

Ode to a Pulaski

by Ed Guy (McCall '60)

Oh pulaski, oh pulaski, your bright shinning blade,
Glints in the sun as he sleeps in the shade.
Oh pulaski, oh pulaski, the smokejumpers friend.
Stuck in a log while he sits on his end.
Oh pulaski, oh pulaski, the multiple use tool.
No one could love you but an idiot fool!

I have many lasting impressions of my rookie year and how it prepared me for the Special Forces of which I would be a member a year later. Before our first jump, the rookies were trucked out to a meadow to watch the squad leaders jump. This was going to give us our first real look at jumping for some of us. The first jumper had a major malfunction. We couldn't believe it! Things got real quiet the further he fell before he popped his reserve. It is still etched in my mind big time. Four years later in McGrath I had almost the same thing happen.

Before our first jump somebody thought it would be funny to have all the rookies get Mohawk haircuts. The idea was to shock the cadre and get our pictures in the local *Illinois Valley News* and get a good laugh. The only thing missing was Dee's sense of humor. They gave us until noon to get the rest of the hair off.

One evening after drinking a few beers, someone decided it would be a great idea to do some free-climbing races. We'd done some of this during training. Shinny up and then grab the branches and free climb to about 80 feet and then down. The more I watched, the easier it looked and I was by far the lightest jumper. When someone yelled, "go," two guys would jump into the tree and the race was on. After getting to the mark on my turn and starting down, I pushed back and fell through the limbs to the ground. No one wanted to race after that.

It was a great summer. After three years in the Army and two summers in Alaska, I still love the Gobi. I learned a lot that summer about teamwork, toughness and being mentally prepared. I wrote this after hearing about Dee's passing. Lots of things and people have been forgotten but not him or his values.

Jay runs Scott Farms in Dinuba, Calif., and can be contacted at: 559-591-0328.

Member Profile

ALBERT L. GRAY JR. (CAVE JUNCTION '45)

by Pic Littell (Missoula '44)

Albert was teaching economics and statistics at Drexel University in Philadelphia when he was drafted into Civilian Public Service (CPS) in 1942. Active in Methodist youth programs, he was soon detached to the offices of the Methodist Commission on World Peace in Chicago to keep the financial records for Methodist men in CPS.

In 1945 Albert was assigned to CPS 103 at Missoula/Nine Mile for training as a smokejumper. After five training jumps he was transferred to the smokejumper unit at Cave Junction, Oregon. During the busy fire season of 1945, he made another eight fire jumps. On one of these jumps on Horse Mountain, he recalls that word came over the radio that an atom bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. As the only professor on the crew, he was asked to explain what an atom bomb was. He says that, "... As an economist I could tell them nothing, but we all knew that a terrible weapon that killed over 100,000 people had changed the course of history."

Albert gives the following account of another fire he was on that season:

"On July 11, 1945, three of us from Cave Junction jumped on a fire in the Klamath National Forest in Northern California. The area was so rough that we had to jump into a clearing four miles from the fire. By the time we arrived, the fire was much too big for the three of us, so we were reinforced the next day by nine native-American Indians and forty war prisoners. After a few more days the fire was under control and the three of us, with an Indian as our guide, started to walk out.

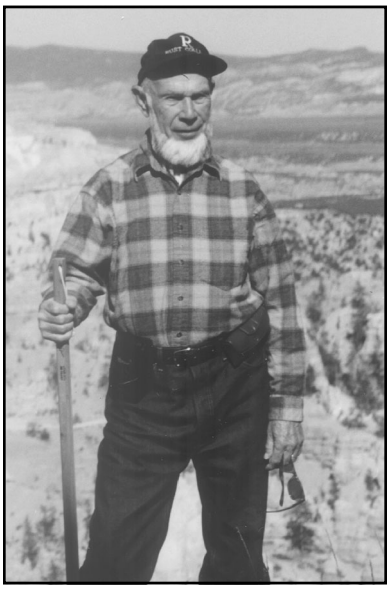
"There were no trails so the progress was slow. The brush was too thick for easy penetration and too high to climb over. The Indian became increasingly agitated. He told us to wait until he found a bear trail, which he assumed, would be near the ridge. We soon heard his call and joined him. All four of us crawled on hands and knees, each one close behind the other and making good progress. Suddenly, the Indian stopped without warning and each of us plowed ahead bumping into each other. There in the center of the trail was a coiled rattlesnake making angry warning sounds at being disturbed. Fortunately, we had an alert guide, for if I, a city boy, had been in the lead, I'm sure I would have put my hand right on top of that rattler. The snake slowly moved on as if to defy mere humans who had invaded his territory.

"A bit later we found a marked trail and hiked twenty miles to the nearest road where a forest service truck took us to the Happy Camp ranger station. We were told we could get a good night's sleep under the stars if we just threw our sleeping bags down on the ground. My aching body would have preferred a bed in the bunkhouse. The next morning we returned to Cave Junction and with much exaggeration told our story about the rattlesnake in the bear trail."

When the CPS smoke jumper camp closed in the fall of 1945, Albert was transferred to a Mennonite Camp in Mississippi, which was working on hookworm control. He met his wife, Louise, at a Methodist Settlement House in New Orleans during this assignment.

After discharge from CPS in May of 1946 he returned to teaching at Drexel University and completed his doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1951 he moved to Elizabethtown College and in 1960 on to Baldwin-Wallace College where he taught for the rest of his career.

With his wife and family of three children he also taught overseas in pursuit of his academic interest in economic development in third world countries, notably in Africa.



Albert Gray, age 80, June 1997 at Bryce Canyon. (Courtesy of Albert Gray)

He was in Egypt twice, first as a Fulbright scholar in 1965 and second, teaching at American University in Cairo in 1969. In 1975-76 he was appointed visiting professor of economics at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria. From 1982-84 he and his wife were volunteers with the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions at the National University in Mogadishu, Somalia. He taught economics and statistics, and his wife, Louise, taught English as a second language.

Over the years Albert has published many articles on such topics as economic development in Africa, economics of military spending and on church finances.

Since his formal retirement from Baldwin-Wallace College, he and his wife have volunteered to teach at two all black colleges in the South, Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1988, and Rust College in Mississippi in 1990.

As he says in his "Life Story" written in 1990, "Forty-five years after my last parachute jump and fifty years after my first college teaching, life is still exciting."

Willi

by Dr. Bob Moffitt (Cave Junction '48)

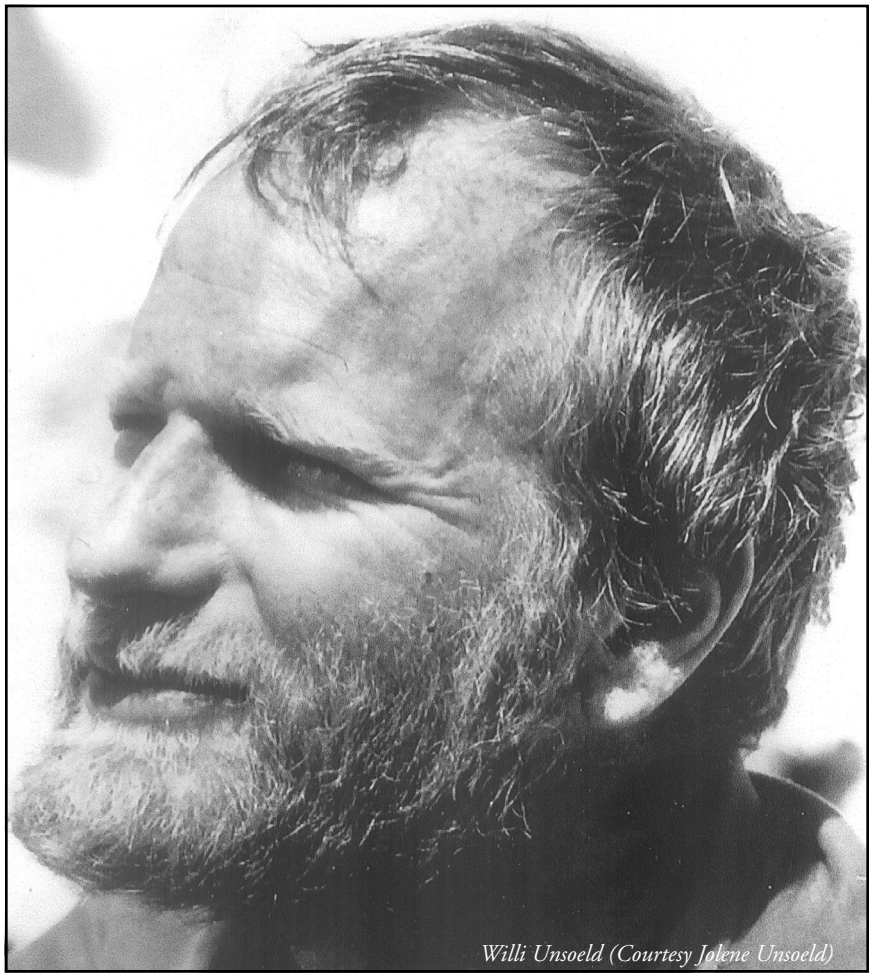
William F. Unsoeld or "Willi" is, in my opinion, the most recognized smokejumper in the world or at least the United States. He didn't attain his fame just for being a smokejumper but through his high profile accomplishments during the rest of his shortened life.

He was the first person, along with Thomas Hornbein, to climb Mt. Everest via the West Ridge Route and first to "summit" 25, 660-foot Macherbrum in Pakistan. A movie was produced about their Mt. Everest ascent and Robert Redford wanted to do a picture about his life.

Gudmond Kaarhus (CJ '48) and I first met Bill in middle school in Eugene, Oregon, in the early 1940's. We were in the same scout troop, attended scout camps and trips in the lower Cascade Range. The three of us attended and graduated from Oregon State College. Bill worked summers as a guide for Teton Exum Climbing Service and attended Oberlin Theological Seminary and received a doctorate in religion. He later earned his Ph.D. from the University of Washington where he was a graduate assistant.

Bill traveled widely and was an assistant director of the Peace Corps in Nepal, vice president of the early Outward Bound Program. He was on the staff at Evergreen College in Olympia, Washington, where he began the outdoor education program. Willi died in an avalanche on Mt. Rainier in 1979.

The April issue will feature further information on Willi along with remembrances from those who jumped the Gobi with him in 1950.



Willi Unsoeld (Courtesy Jolene Unsoeld)

Words from Willi Unsoeld

Why don't you stay in the wilderness?

Because that isn't where it is at; it's back in the city, back in downtown St. Louis, back in Los Angeles. The final test is whether your experience of the sacred in nature enables you to cope more effectively with the problems of people. If it does not enable you to cope more effectively with the problems—and sometimes it doesn't, it sometimes sucks you right out into the wilderness and you stay there the rest of your Life—then when that happens, by my scale of value; it's failed.

You go to nature for an experience of the sacred … to re-establish your contact with the core of things, where it's really at, in order to enable you to come back to the world of people and operate more effectively.

Seek ye first the kingdom of nature, that the kingdom of people might be realized. **Willie Unsoeld** (Cave Junction '50)

Willi and partner Thomas Hornbein were the first two to ever climb Mount Everest by the West Ridge Route (1963).

"The spiritual values of the wilderness." A keynote presentation at the 3rd AEE Conference in Estes Park, Colo., 1978.