

SMOKEJUMPER



Alex Coolidge National Wrestling Champ 4
Remembering “Pappy” Lufkin 6
Dave Nelson—A Good Run 42

CONTENTS

Alex Coolidge Wrestling Champ	4
Remembering Francis B. "Pappy" Lufkin.....	6
Forest Fires and National Defense Policy (2021) ..	10
"Ve get too soon old, und too late schmart."	15
Letter from Ron Pond.....	16
A View of the Largest Wildfire in the History of New Mexico	17
Odds and Ends	20
Wheels Off.....	21
Mitch's Last Jump	22
Seventy-Seven Years Ago in Smokejumper History.....	24
Recording Smokejumper History.....	26
1947 Rookies—The Post WWII Era.....	26
NSA History Preservation Project	26
The Four Texan Fire.....	27
Not Forgotten.....	29
Final Request.....	30
Farewell to "Animal Ed" Weissenback	31
Getting Old	32
Sounding Off from the Editor.....	33
Doug Houston Memorial	34
The Jump List, Men of 1955.....	36
Mess Hall Crisis—Fairbanks 1964	41
Dave Nelson 1935—2022—A Good Run	42
NSA, NFFE, and Grassroots Promotes Benefits for Smokejumpers.....	45
Notes from the Ranks	46
Off the List.....	48
Final Request.....	52



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Front cover: Alex Coolidge (center) (Courtesy Cornell College)



Message from the President



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

AS I WRITE this in mid-July, the overwhelming amount of fire activity is taking place in Alaska. According to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) Incident Management Report, there are currently 56 active large fires in Alaska; over 2.5 million acres have burned. And, according to the July 10 Smokejumper Status Report, there are over 130 smokejumpers deployed in Alaska. Fire activity in the lower 48 thus far appears relatively quiet.

Perhaps we will be lucky, and the lower 48 will get a break from the severe fire seasons we've been experiencing. We'll see. Unfortunately, there is no end in sight to the severe, long-term drought—fueled by climate change—afflicting the West!

By some accounts, the drought is at a level that has not occurred for over 1200 years. tinyurl.com/ypkaj3c2

For example, reports about

of Lake Mead are alarming to say the least. <https://tinyurl.com/3fkkf3mt>

And reports about the implications for the Great Salt Lake and nearby communities are profoundly concerning. <https://tinyurl.com/29t9emaa>

Clearly, continued climate change has implications for how humans will adapt. And, of course among compelling issues is how will humans be affected by and adapt to wildfire!

While climate change has been a controversial topic for some time, there appears to be no doubt about whether it is occurring. However, there remains skepticism about its origins. Simply stated, the question is this: Is climate change primarily due to human behavior (use of carbon) or is it a naturally occurring phenomenon?

Recently, I had incentive to look into this question. Here is what I found:

There seems little doubt among scientists who study the issue that human activity (use of carbon) is the primary causal factor. According to some studies up to 97% of scientists who study the issue believe it is primarily due to human activity. <https://tinyurl.com/mak87tf8>

Statements from eighteen US scientific organizations that have formally taken that position may be found at the following website: <https://tinyurl.com/2p84xzds> What follows is

Continued on page 4

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5. Remember, only purchases at smile.amazon.com or through **AmazonSmile** activated in the **Amazon Shopping app** will support your selected charity.
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Having Your Correct Email Addresses Is Very Important

In order to save the NSA time and money, Chuck Sheley is sending renewals and the merchandise flyer via email. Sending via email is a good cost-efficient move.

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

Please contact Chuck if we need to update your email. His contact information is on this page.

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	GrangevilleGAC	MissoulaMSO
BoiseNIFC	Idaho CityIDC	ReddingRDD
Cave JunctionCJ	La Grande.....LGD	Redmond.....RAC
FairbanksFBX	McCall.....MYC	West Yellowstone WYS
		Winthrop.....NCSB

Get *Smokejumper* One Month Earlier

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

Advantages include early delivery (a month ahead of USPS), ease of storage, and NSA postal expense savings.

NSA Director **Fred Cooper** (NCSB-62) says: “I will opt to have my magazines delivered electronically rather than via USPS to save us direct \$ in printing and mailing, not to mention your hand labor in processing.

To request email delivery, contact Editor **Chuck Sheley** (CJ-59) chucksheley@gmail.com. 📧

a sample of their stated positions:

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS): “Based on well-established evidence, about 97% of climate scientists have concluded that human-caused climate change is happening.” (2014)

American Geophysical Union (AGU): “Based on extensive scientific evidence, it is extremely likely that human activities, especially emissions

of greenhouse gases, are the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. There is no alternative explanation supported by convincing evidence.” (2019)

American Meteorological Society: “Research has found a human influence on the climate of the past several decades ... The IPCC (2013), USGCRP (2017), and USGCRP (2018) indicate that it is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed

warming since the mid-twentieth century.” (2019)

U.S. National Academy of Sciences: “Scientists have known for some time, from multiple lines of evidence, that humans are changing Earth’s climate, primarily through greenhouse gas emissions.”

Additionally, the following website provides a list of over 200 organizations from around the world that hold the same position. <https://tinyurl.com/bd9bh6n8>

Alex Coolidge NCAA D-3 Wrestling Champ

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

In the January 2004 issue of *Smokejumper*, I wrote an article—*Giant Killers—Bigger Than Hoosiers*—NSA Life Members Involved In Biggest Upset in Collegiate Sports History.

From that article: 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 1950’s 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 astonish-

ing exploits in amateur sports history when little Cornell College won the NCAA by a 32-19 margin over second place Iowa State. Although they didn't play a direct role in the NCAA victory, on that team were Midwest Conference champions 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 1944-45 seasons and transferred to NCSB for the 1947-48 seasons. After getting his MA 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 *Sports Illustrated* overlooked that

historic feat. That's the rest of the story!

Now, how about an addition to the Cornell College wrestling achievements. In the years since, collegiate athletics have morphed into three divisions. Cornell, not to be confused with the Ivy League school, is in Division 3. Some 67 years later, I found out that another smokejumper made Cornell wrestling history. In the 2013 National Championships, **Alex Coolidge** (NIFC-18) with a 29-4 season record and the number two seed, worked his way through the bracket to get second place in the final match.

Alex came into the 2014 Championships with a 29-4 record and was #1 seed at 197 pounds. The seeding was perfect as Alex faced the #2 seed,

The seeding was perfect as Alex faced the #2 seed, Shane Siefert.

Shane Siefert (41-5) from Wisconsin-Whitewater in the finals. Siefert scored first with a takedown in period one, but Alex countered with a reversal, Siefert with an escape and a 3-2 lead at the end of the period. Period two ended tied at three each. Siefert got two more points with a reversal and a 5-3 lead with just over a minute remaining.

With time down to 55 seconds, Coolidge got an escape to close the score to 5-4. Trailing with only 26 seconds remaining, Alex got a takedown and, with those two points, won the National 197-pound D-3 Wrestling Championship 6-5.

Strange how history makes an almost impossible connection between two smokejumpers from the '40s and a current smokejumper. The sport, a small school in Iowa, a National Championship team, a National Champion, and three smokejumpers. You couldn't create this actual history in a novel.

Alex was born and grew up in Gillette, WY, and graduated from Campbell County H.S. in 2010. He was the Wyoming State Champion at 189 pounds in 2010 and went on to wrestle at Cornell from 2010-14. His championship photo is on the cover of this magazine. Alex earned his bachelor's degree in History and Secondary Education in 2014. He spent three years with the Logan Hotshots before his rookie year at Boise in 2018 where is currently jumping.

Remembering Francis B. “Pappy” Lufkin

by Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

In preparation for a group of 1957-59 NCSB rookie crew jumpers getting together, Gino Jessup (NCSB-57) commissioned me to write a piece about Francis Lufkin. The following is that piece taken from my/our recollection of events and conversations, observations, published stories, official documents, letters addressed to Francis, school papers written by a family member, and speeches spoken at his memorials.

I had an added privilege of knowing Francis from 1957 until his death in 1998—as a jumper/supervisory jumper, as a “student” under his mentorship, and as a friend.

Francis was a man for the times. He was a true pioneer of the smokejumper program, instrumental in establishing smokejumping in the early 1940s. Francis was highly respected by his jumpers, by the national jumper community, and by the US Forest Service. This was reflected by the many awards he received, a testimony to who he was. I hope you enjoy and can relive the “Pappy experience” and the best days of our lives.

Who He Was and How He Shaped Our Lives

The seven of us have had the privilege of working for and being mentored by Francis Bourdette Lufkin, respectfully known to us as “Pappy.” And what a privilege to have served under his leadership and to have been a part of the legacy he built at NCSB. Few people have had such a positive impact on the young men and women under his leadership—350 jumpers until he retired, and another 200 plus, indirectly, after retirement through his enduring legacy.

In many cases Francis took a “calculated risk” when he hired us. Some of us were right out of high school or ex-paratroopers. Some were local farm boys. Some were wayward kids who needed direction and discipline. Francis gave us that opportunity to become men—if we were willing

to follow his guidance. The “Pappy experience” brought about a metamorphosis in many a boy on his road to manhood. Although it was not always apparent, the “Pappy experience” shaped our character by instilling life-long values—values which have guided us through life. But who was Pappy? How did he become the Pappy we knew?

Who Was Pappy?

Francis was born August 1, 1914, in Auburn, Washington. At age 15 his father, during a drunken rage, ordered Francis and his brother out of the house—they were old enough to fend for themselves.” In the summer of 1929 Francis moved to Winthrop to live with his uncle, Ed Brengman, who lived up the Chewack (now Chewuch) at the Eight Mile Ranger Station.

In 1933 Francis graduated from Winthrop High School. Francis loved baseball and would walk to Winthrop on weekends to play a baseball game.

In 1933, Lola, his wife to be, moved to the valley and was working at the Palace Hotel in Winthrop when they met. In March 1937 Francis and Lola were married—a marriage lasting 61 years until Francis’s death. From this marriage came twins Ron and Raymond, then Larry and daughter Joyce. Ron and Larry both followed in the old man’s footsteps becoming smokejumpers out of Cave Junction in the early 1960s. Daughter Joyce was a lookout for the Washington DNR.

A product of the Depression years of the 1920-30s and the 1940 war years, Francis worked at many jobs to support his family. He worked as a farmhand, a trail crewman, including being the crew cook, he built/maintained telephone line, cleared telephone right-of-way. He was a fire guard, a lookout (where he poached grouse), a logger in Oregon during the winter, a choker setter, a cougar bounty hunter, and a winter trapper in the Pasayten.

These exciting and demanding jobs equipped

him to relate to, supervise and manage the post-war ex-paratroopers, CPS Conscientious Objectors, wayward boys, college party boys, city boys with minimal fire experience, and local farm boys. Along with these experiences, he learned firefighting skills, the “macho-man culture,” a hard work ethic, supervisory/foreman skills, and acquired many of his favorite sayings and vocabulary we heard at break in the messhall, or when we were getting our ass chewed for a misdeed—like “you’re spittin in the wind,” or “down the road kicking horse turds.”

In 1939, Francis applied for and was selected to participate in the Parachute Experimental Project. He was selected primarily because he could climb trees. His role was to retrieve cargo and personnel parachutes, to set a smoke for the jumpers to see when making simulated fire jumps, to share his knowledge of the local area and his firefighting knowledge. On the last day of the project, one thing led to another, and Francis was dared to jump. The project leader said, “OK.” They suited him up and took the famous picture of him in front of the Stinson. After less than 30 minutes of “basic training,” Francis made one (first) jump. Lola was not in favor of him jumping—he confessed to her “after the fact.”

In 1940 Francis was a member of the 1940 five-man jumper crew stationed at Winthrop Ranger Station. Other crew members included Glenn Smith, George Honey, and Virgil Derry. The fifth member of the crew, Dick Tuttle, was seriously injured in a pre-season climbing accident at the ranger station and could not continue jumping. On August 12, 1940, Francis and Glenn made the first fire jumps to Little Bridge Creek, west of NCSB—the first in Region 6, the Pacific Northwest Region. The first USFS jumps in the United States were made in Idaho on July 10, 1940, by Rufus Robinson and Earl Cooley.

Due to WWII from 1941-44, smokejumper operations were centered in Montana. Francis, a training instructor and rigger, would annually take the train to Montana for refresher training then return to the Methow to head up cargo drop operations and oversee jumper spike operations when a spike crew was brought in from Montana.

In 1945 NCSB was formally reestablished as a permanent base with Lufkin serving as aerial

project officer managing a mix of ex-WWII paratroopers and CPS conscientious objectors. The base steadily grew with facilities constructed along the Methow River on the west side of the runway. As the facilities were being completed, along came the 1948 flood taking the facilities down the river. Not long before the Methow River took the new facilities down the river, Francis and **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) loaded the gear into a truck and moved it across the runway. From 1948 to the early 1950s, the facilities were rebuilt on the east side of the airport.

In 1957 the rookie part of the bunkhouse was an open-end dorm, sometimes not tolerant of fellow rookie behavior. When an unofficial “lights out” edict was issued and not complied with, lights might be shot out.

In 1957, after a busy 1956 fire season, the crew was increased by eight jumpers. Roberts, Schwab, Gene Jessup, McKay, and Moody were members of the 1957 rookie expansion crew. In 1958 Steve (Dusty) Rhodes joined the Lufkin elites and Gerry Jessup joined the immortal group in 1959.

After 33 years leading the Okanogan Aerial Project/North Cascades Smokejumper Base, Francis retired in May 1972. Over his career he made 57 jumps.

As a final “official act,” we presented Francis with a formal memo titled “End of Smokejumping Career—as your last official act, we the squad-leaders and pilot, would consider it a privilege and honor to have you spot us on a training jump on Cotner Hill at 0815, May 15, 1972.”

He agreed. Francis took us to 5,000 feet AGL (altitude above ground he made his first jump from) above Cotner Hill, and Pappy calmly and flawlessly spotted us as if he had been doing it continuously since 1940. A most special jump! Upon landing Francis signed the memo “Completed 0905 5-15-72 FL.”

During his career Francis earned several performance awards. Most noteworthy were the 1957 Department of Agriculture Award presented by the Secretary of Agriculture and in 1965 the Presidential Award presented by President Lyndon Johnson. The award was for economy—his ideas and inventions had saved the government several millions of dollars.

The awards highlighted his competence, excel-

lent judgment, meritorious performance as an aerial project officer, commendable record in administration and operations, constantly seeking new and improved methods and better equipment, especially in mechanical equipment. He constantly looked for ways to make the jump program and firefighting more efficient and productive. In the mid-50s we experimented with a Tote Goat two-wheeler to speed up our return to the base, the Merry Packer for hauling out our jumper packs, the Merry Digger for mechanical fireline construction, and the Flail Line Trencher also for digging line.

Pappy The Man And Truths We Learned

How did his life experiences shape him, and indirectly us?

To many Francis was a quick-witted “mystery man”, feared by some but respected by all. How did he always know what was going on in the loft when the doors were shut after hours, or when someone was sacked out in the bunkhouse or loft chute bin during work hours, or out seeing Shirley the night before, or the bull cook “dancing with a broom” by the bridge, or hungry jumpers illegally shooting grouse on Cotner Hill after the mess hall closed, or driving brodies while under the influence, around the Noorduyn? Pappy always knew, and we paid for it.

What Did We Learn About Pappy?

Pappy was a man of faith, tough but fair. He was a man of few words, but when he spoke, he said a lot! He remembered his “earlier days” and showed us mercy for our “stupid acts.” He had a great sense of humor, but not always apparent, and he deeply cared about his jumpers. When you demonstrated skill and responsibility, he rewarded you with more responsibility. After an ass chewing, the incident was over, and he didn’t keep reminding you of it—it was a done deal. He was a man of integrity, he was prophetic, had a quick wit and great “one-liners.”

We never had a doubt about his expectations. For the most part he hired (and fired) jumpers based on character and attitude and seldom was wrong. He had an uncanny ability to evaluate the situation when a jumper screwed up—“a bad bear” who could be rehabilitated. If not, he was shot or banned from camp.

He held you responsible for your actions, or lack of action. He always knew what was going on—both on and off the base. He spent hours searching US Government Excess Property for “good deals” that jumpers could convert into useful smokejumper related items, i.e., jump ropes, cargo chutes, cargo packing materials. He had a standing order with GSA for all kinds of surplus and GSA always gave him first crack at them. He loved lemon meringue pie

How Did The Pappy Experience Change Us?

- The Pappy experience affected each of us in different ways. I believe the following are just a few:
- He helped us develop better judgment in situations that could easily go bad.
- We developed a stronger work ethic.
- We learned general values of life to guide us through life.
- We developed a strong and lasting sense of esprit de corps.
- Digging rocks on the airport helped develop our character.
- Pappy instilled a “can-do attitude” under sometimes very adverse conditions.
- He helped us to be more innovative under difficult situations.

Insights—What A Few Others Said

The following are just a few testimonies from family members and jumpers. Daughter Joyce: “In all my years knowing this man, I have never known him to make a decision that had not been made carefully considered beforehand. His calmness in an emergency, his self-control in emotional situations is quite unbelievable.”

Son Larry: Regarding drinking alcohol—”Dad was a drinker at one time, but he quit. He didn’t preach about abstinence to others. He told a couple of young jumpers recovering from the previous night drunk ‘you want to be careful with that stuff.’ I never saw him turn anyone away who needed help. Several times he ‘bent the rules’ to hire a jumper who needed help in life.”

Francis knew there was a fine line between fear and respect. He had a keen sense of both, and he knew and used it to his advantage—when to give

it to someone and when to be subtle. Keith Hendrickson (Gus to us) was very close to Francis. His death in the 1958 plane crash devastated Francis, as it also devastated all of us

Jumper letter to Francis: A jumper looking for manhood after five seasons in the early 1960s, a letter he wrote to Francis after he had served as a medic in Vietnam.

“...how much I have been taught by your example towards being a man...the way you handle the fellows and the many different situations that occur has spoken much to me. I have always appreciated your patience in allowing me to continue working after making so many foolish and short-sighted blunders.”

Special Personal Pappy Moments And Insights

Each of us has a few special “Pappy moments.” Here are a couple of mine:

The 1959 grouse hunt (Moody, Bernhard, Satterfield, Zasada)—Caught red-handed by Francis, we were all fired on the spot and told to turn in our shotguns and jump pins. “Moody, report to the ad shack with these items.” I collected the contraband, as directed, and reported to the ad shack and waited for Francis to complete his “cooldown walk” around the airport. Upon return he chewed my ass royally, returned the contraband, issued a very stern warning, and confessed to me about him (when a lookout) poaching grouse. That saved our asses!

1983—Six days with Francis in Washington, D.C.—Smithsonian Smokejumper presentation—Francis told many stories about his many jobs. He could really get on a roll and start laughing. I brought up the 1959 grouse hunt incident, first time mentioned since 1959. We got a good laugh over it.

New Mexico Jumper Detail—In 1959 or 1960 I wanted to drop out of college spring quarter to go to Silver City on the spring jump detail. Francis told me bluntly that was a bad idea, would screw up my college graduation – think long term!

One-On One—After becoming a squadleader for a few years, I could go in and talk to Francis about base policy. He would listen intently and approve or reject my input.

Running in jump boots—Convinced him

running in jump boots can cause shin splints and we could be in our jump boots in seconds if there was a fire call. Policy changed.

Mentoring—I received much appreciated mentoring from Francis in the years leading up to my decision to go full-time under his mentorship in 1969 and after I became a full-time Training Foreman. He was very generous with his mentoring and the qualifying experiences I needed to qualify for the Aerial Project Officer position.

Time To Go

During Pappy’s last few weeks, we had several talks. He expressed that he would find it difficult to continue, considering the many changes with personnel management, hiring and firing, ability to “manage” personnel, changing social culture, long hair, pot, ... “it’s time to retire!”

In May 1972 Pappy retired and went to work for a retardant company returning to the valley each fall, followed by a winter vacation to the southern Oregon coast.

During the 1980s during fire busts, I hired Francis to manage the saw shack, cleaning, repairing, and sharpening chainsaws. He seemed to love it, telling stories to the jumpers and just being around the base. In 1981 the first female smokejumper in USFS/BLM history (Deanne Shulman from McCall Base) was detailed to NCSB during a fire bust. I got Francis and Deanne together to discuss their respective “pioneering history.” It went on all day long.

Off The List 1998, at the age of 83, Pappy passed away. His name was ceremoniously removed from the Jump List. A memorial in his honor was held at NCSB May 2, 1998.

Closing

As I wind this up, I can only reminisce about our early jumper days, rookie training, our bonding experiences, life in the bunkhouse, Shirley Parties, the good jumps and the bad ones, the Eight Mile crash, times at Verla’s Ponderosa Room, picking rocks, the “Bad Bear” incidents, and how through it all, Pappy put up with us. In the process we immersed a little bit closer to manhood and adult responsibility. Pappy greatly influenced our life, and he continues to do so today. His parting words: **“Keep the sunny side up.”** *Thanks Pappy!*

Forest Fires and National Defense Policy (2021)

by Robert Hirning—from the North Slope of the Siskiyou Mountains

Illinois River Basin, Oregon

Summary: In the context of global warming, wild-fire is no longer an environmental ally and should be considered a major security threat. Nationally, wild-fire defense should be considered a higher priority than foreign military campaigns. Having observed that the Forest Service is unwilling or unable to engage wildfires at their source with a robust initial attack, the responsibility should be shifted to a new military force under the Department of Homeland Security. This new era of frequent and hugely destructive wildfires presents an increasing threat to the stability and safety of our nation. Funds should be diverted from military operations abroad to war preparation to fight a domestic enemy relevant to us all—megafires.

Since the turn of the 21st century the western United States has witnessed ever increasing threats from devastating wildfires. Irrefutable climate changes have brought about longer and hotter summers culminating in prolonged droughts which set the stage for extreme fire conditions. Some cognizance has been taken of this increased vulnerability on the part of state and local fire control agencies. They have attempted to beef up their forces to a certain extent, but the big player in this theater is and must be the Federal Government. Almost all megafires over the past two decades have burned on federally controlled National Forest land. Yet, the Forest Service has consistently *cut* their forces and spending over this same period.

It is not enough to say that global warming has caused this condition, or to blame past forest practices for excessive overcutting, or that we have “put out too many fires” in the past. These explanations are overly simplistic. Since the turn of this century, one would be hard pressed to find any fires that could be termed “beneficial.” Indeed, conflagrations quickly gain the upper hand and roar through our lands, destroying everything

in their path. Big fires begin as small ones and the only way to protect our communities from being picked off one at a time is by quickly and decisively **increasing the initial attack on the nascent fire**. As a former forest service employee of 40 years, who shall remain unnamed, recently quipped, “In the old days when a fire was spotted, we’d jump in the truck and go there. Now they just hold a meeting.” A look at statistics over this period shows a decline in the Large Air Tanker fleet, contracted by the USFS from a high of 44 in 2002 to only 13 in 2020. Similarly, wildfire appropriations for the Forest Service show only a slight increase from 2003 to 2021 and a decrease in the most recent years (4 Billion appropriated in ’21, down from 5 billion in ’20. More on this below).

For comparison, Congress appropriated funds last fall for *an additional* 17 F-35 fighter aircraft (at \$100,000,000 each!), which the Defense Department didn’t even want. Also, in the fall of 2020, Talent, Phoenix, Blue Lake & Detroit, Oregon, as well as Happy Camp, California, *all* burned the day after Labor Day. Could seventeen more Large Air Tankers have made a difference? How about 100?

With an operating cost for the F-35 of \$36,000 *per hour* and a retardant tanker costing \$6,000 per hour, that is an operational ratio of 6:1. At a total cost of \$7.1 million for the entire fleet of tankers and \$100 million per copy for the F-35, we could increase the tanker fleet over ten-fold instead of building and training the unnecessary F-35s. Which investment gives the citizens of our western states more security as they helplessly wait for a dreaded evacuation notice to come?

We need to consider and refute the stock “answers” which both the environmental community and the government haul out when bewildered citizens ask about the future.

“You need to create a defensible space and heed instructions for the evacuation level warnings.”

Well, that is, of course, excellent advice, but it belies the ability of Fire Control to put the fire out in the first place. This reasoning puts the onus back on the citizens to defend themselves. The military has always gone to great lengths to assure us that they would defend any invasion by a foreign power and have never indicated that we'd be on our own. The emphasis on being ready to leave does just that. Instead of assuring citizens that fire resources will be focused on a strong initial attack, Information Officers stress levels of evacuation. Certainly, we should all have a plan to get away quickly with our families, pets, and most cherished possessions, but all too often, that is because the fire has not had robust initial response.

“It is all because of Global Warming”

That is hardly an answer. Of course, global warming is at fault here and our continuing dependence on fossil fuels has certainly brought it on. But admitting this and clucking guilt about how we've wrecked the planet doesn't put the fire out. Buying electric cars and working towards zero emissions is a great idea for everyone, but that won't change anything for decades. Extreme fires produce huge amounts of carbon and fires, like the “Dixie Fire” in California, are equal to a year's worth of vehicular emissions. For this reason alone, we must double down on our initial attack because the hotter, drier summers pose so much more of a threat due to global climate shifts.

“Fire is natural, and in the past, we've put out too many fires”

This reasoning is a throwback to a time before a combination of global warming; prolonged drought and decades of overcutting produced a very different environment than your grandfather's forest. In an aboriginal state, the old-growth forests of giant trees with thick bark benefited from low intensity “underburns,” which took out dead falls and brush, turning them into potassium rich ash. Insect infestations were also kept at bay with a periodic fire cleansing. Native peoples understood this and were able to deliberately set these prescribed fires. But non-native peoples colonized the land and cut down the old growth;

first in the eastern hardwoods and later in the vast conifer forests of the Northwest.

Post WWII developments in chainsaw manufacture, hydraulic machinery, road building, and logging technology brought irreversible disturbance to most forest land. Our harvesting of the oldest, largest trees to produce the quickest, easiest profits quickly decimated the very forest lands that were most resistant to fire and resulted in Forest Service revenue declines. Hundreds of thousands of acres of former clear-cuts grew back in even-aged, overstocked dense jumbles of young conifers and “brush” (read young hardwood species). This is a *big* problem when fire hits. Additionally, megafires burn so intensely that all is destroyed. This is very different from the “natural,” beneficial fires that burned in the past.

The myth that we “put out too many fires” and that's why it is such a fire prone jumble is a cover for lack of maintenance when Forest Service planning had the chance to invest. The Foresters don't like admitting that we are now seeing the results of overcutting and even-aged management. Rather they want to place blame on Fire Control for doing what firemen do—put out the fire.

“Some fires are good”

We hear this stated often by Forest Service biologists and environmentalists alike. When hearing this, one wonders whether the “good fires” that should be left to burn are the ones next to our houses or theirs. Usually the answer is that fires “way out in the wilderness don't pose any threat (except to wildlife) and should be left to burn.” However, the “wilderness” is finite, and there is always a town or subdivision to be evacuated over on the other side. Also, fire scars from these “wilderness fires” do not have time to grow back before another climate-driven blaze overlaps the same footprint. Over the past twenty years, this author cannot think of a single “good fire.” During fire season (which in California runs all year long), *all* fires should be attacked aggressively and suppressed immediately by all means available.

Another major hazard to letting fires burn, as well as prescribed burning, is the degradation of air quality. Outdoor sports, tourism, and public gatherings, such as concerts and plays, are negatively impacted by unhealthy air. Living in un-

healthy air takes its toll on the residents who must endure it year after year. Breathing the fine particles found in forest fire smoke leads to the same health hazards as smoking tobacco and increases the financial burden of citizens purchasing automobile air filters, home and workspace air purifiers and smoke masks just to get through the year.

“We need to clean up the forest and dispose of the fine fuels through hand piling, chipping and prescribed burns.”

This sounds good and is often stated as the way to prevent large conflagrations and to keep fires at low intensity. But nobody seems to have much of a head for arithmetic. The Forest Service in the West has over 150 million acres of timberland, and the average crew of ten workers can do about 6 acres a day (not counting burning the piles). This figure of .6 acres per person per day also assumes that the crew can drive to the location within an hour from base and in decent weather. Moreover, the work will probably have to be redone at least once a decade. Do the math and you will see the ignorance of this approach (answer: 2 million people working constantly 200 days a year under ideal conditions and only on National Forest land). Clearing flammable debris is a good idea around your house but absurd to think of as an answer to preventing megafires. There is no clear evidence that treated areas fare any better than the surrounding woods once a wind-driven fire gets underway. During fire season, prescribed burning is out of the question and very few winter days are suitable enough to produce a low intensity burn with the necessary smoke abatement. Again, easy access to remote areas is often very difficult and the units that can be successfully treated are hardly a drop in the bucket.

“The problem is in the Urban/Forest interface. Too many homes are constructed too close to forest lands.”

In many recent examples of towns and suburbs burning by wildfires, there were plenty of cleared and treated areas, including streets, yards, and lawns where the fire spread from structure to structure unchecked. The problem was not the proximity of the forest but that the wind-driven flames sent embers flying like swarms of

angry yellow jackets igniting everything for miles. Cleared areas are no match for the “firenadoes” we experience with today’s fires. Could these towns have been saved at the onset by a massive air and ground attack? We will never know.

While it is true that many Americans who can now work by telecommuting have moved out of the cities to more rural areas, and the forest-residential interface is a factor in considering fire threat, blaming the people who live there is a nonstarter.

So where do we go from here?

If we continue as we have been over the last few decades, hundreds of towns will burn to the ground by mid-century. Most of the prime timberland will be blackened along with the wildlife and riparian features. The quality of life for residents will become worse and worse, along with air and water degradation and devastation of wildlife habitat, until the natural beauty and abundance of the west and our rural lifestyle and national access to harvestable timber will be a thing of the past. As has been discussed above, letting some fires burn, the use of prescribed fires, and buying an electric car will not make any difference in curbing the continual threat of massive wildfires. So, what will?

The answer to such a complex issue is deceptively simple and is the same as we’ve always known: PUT THE FIRE OUT AS SOON AS IT STARTS. This sounds like a no brainer but, frankly, the Forest Service has consistently had a higher priority—save money. The Forest Service budget has been drained over the last decade by firefighting expenses, but most of the funds are appropriated only after a conflagration is declared. As mentioned above, since 2002 USFS’s fleet of contracted Large Air Tankers for the entire west has been cut by about 65% and moves have been made to close the Medford tanker base. During its active years from the early 1940s to the early 1980s, the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base near Cave Junction saw a 90% decline in acres burned on the Siskiyou N.F. The base was shut down in 1981, again, on the pretext of saving money. The acres burned, which had averaged less than 1000 per year, shot sky high to hundreds of thousands of acres to where they are today. Similarly, since the

1980s the Forest Service has relied more and more on contracting suppression crews. Up to that time firefighting was worked by in-house employees; both District and “Hotshot” personnel. But, as the dependence on contract fire fighters increased, the response ability for initial attack decreased. Previously, stand-by personnel, along with engines and rapid deployment equipment, had been available on a district level (usually the Ranger Station). Now these contract crews must be rounded up from an availability pool and need to travel hours longer to reach the fire. Being unfamiliar with the territory, out of district fire crews can get lost and return to base without ever leaving their rigs. This has actually happened. Relying entirely on contract crews has proved to be disastrous from an initial attack standpoint. Still, it is another attempt by the Forest Service to save money.

What is being proposed here is a major shift in Pentagon dollars to form a **National Wildfire Defense Force** which would have a separate standing from the traditional guns and bombs military. The force would have all the same intensive training, discipline, and benefits as the traditional services and would be appropriately funded similarly to the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard currently operates under the Department of Homeland Security with a budget request of 13.10 Billion, slightly up from last year. By comparison, for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, the Forest Service discretionary budget is \$5.3 billion, a *DECREASE* of \$155 million from the previous year. In that year (FY 2020) the Trump budget proposed a \$948 million *cut* including a 16% *reduction* for wildfire action plans. Currently, the budget for Wildland Fire Management has been raised back up to \$2.4 Billion, still far less than is warranted.

For comparison, consider the \$80 billion we poured into building and training the Afghan Military only to have it all destroyed in the “Taliban Wildfire” of ’21. As Kandahar fell so did Greenville, California. Think of what that eighty billion could have done to build up our own fire fighting forces over the last twenty years.

A National Wildfire Defense Force would operate as a separate entity, not subject to the punitive cuts within the Forest Service budget appropriation. The force would have many more modern and upgraded aircraft at its disposal.

Large Air Tankers (LAT) would be based at most major western cities with full support facilities and trained crews ready to scramble on a moment’s notice. An airport the size Medford International or Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls would *each* have 8 or 10 LATs. Smaller airports, such as Illinois Valley, Gasquet, Happy Camp or Grants Pass would be based with two or three Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) as well as bucket drop helicopters. Helitack crews and smokejumpers would also be based at some of these smaller airports, as they were in the past. Company sized crews of a few dozen to 200 firefighters, specifically trained in initial attack and with the same esprit de corps as any military fighting force, should be ensconced on rural districts for the entire fire season and bivouacked on moment’s call during periods of Red Flag Warning. Barracks, food, and fuel should be prepositioned in sufficient quantities to maintain a fighting force capable of mounting any initial attack. A large percentage of each Company must remain on their assigned district for the duration of the fire season and become familiar with the terrain and transportation plan.

The network of Forest roads, which were built at taxpayer expense for the express purpose of fire access, should regularly receive a minimum of maintenance to provide access for engines, brush trucks and crew transport. With Infra-red imaging and global positioning, fires can be spotted when they start, enabling air and ground forces to arrive immediately. The key here is to put fires out while they are small. Once a blaze “gets away,” it will frequently become a megafire involving tens or hundreds of thousands of acres which engulfs all in its path.

There is a certain degree of danger associated with first responders of various professions and safety should always be of primary concern to wildland firefighters. Yet, in comparison to a military campaign, fire behavior is generally predictable. In warfare the government doesn’t seem to have any problem with putting our troops in harm’s way. Forest roads and firelines may produce dangerous conditions for passage, but they are not booby trapped with IEDs and guerrillas waiting in ambush.

“What you are proposing is going to cost a huge

amount of money. How do you propose paying for it?"

The tradeoff here is security for our homes, towns, economic well-being, health, and natural resources compared to military adventures on a global scale, including planetary suicide with nuclear weapons. Protracted wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam all squandered trillions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives but how did that benefit the residents of Paradise, Happy Camp and Greenville, California, or of Talent, Phoenix, Blue Lake, and Detroit, Oregon?

How about all those unneeded F-35s. How much good did they do? Consider also the \$1.7 trillion that is set to be spent on new nuclear weapons; just what we need to save a planet in climactic crisis already. Half of our discretionary budget for FY 2022 goes to the military (an amount equal to defense spending of China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil COMBINED!). Why is the Forest Service continually degrading initial attack to save money when the real threat to our citizens is wildfire, not a foreign invasion?

Paying for these changes will be a drop in the bucket when compared to the costs associated with fighting and containing mammoth, devastating wildfires and rebuilding destroyed communities.

The rhetorical answer to the above question is obvious. Establish a National Wildfire Defense Force and transfer the billions of dollars necessary to establish a secure initial attack initiative from the Defense Department budget. This all could be done today. We don't have to wait decades. Even the "Military/Industrial Complex" could get behind it with a shift in focus to a more relevant enemy—climate change. This is not a partisan issue. Red, white, and blue states all need an answer to the terrible threat of continual megafires. So, let's get with it.

Robert originally hailed from the East where his first job out of high school was for the USFS in the Allegheny NE. Arriving in Takilma, OR, in the early 70s, he put together a 40-person suppression crew that endured for several years. He personally planted a half million trees on USFS districts from the Canadian border to Mendocino County.



Redding 1957 Crew

“Ve get too soon old, und too late schmart.”

by Jim Cherry (Missoula '57)

My dad had a plaque with this proverb. It showed an unshaven man in a bowler hat holding a beer mug. The plaque concluded with the words “Better we have another.”

I’ve been thinking about that a lot lately—how long it takes us to figure things out and how quickly we can get ourselves into deep doo-doo. We are being reminded of that with each new fire season and with the ever-increasing warnings about the dangers presented by climate change. In reading the history of fire policy and practice over the decades and seeing the new fire policies that are going to guide activity this fire season, one can hardly escape the impression that we are slow to learn. We have done our best with the knowledge we had at any given time, hoping that we had things figured out, only to find out that we didn’t. There’s no guarantee that our current best efforts will prove any better in bringing the right answers to the complexity of challenges we face.

There is a tendency to speak of a new normal, but the use of such terminology gives the impression that this new normal is somehow a new level of stability when it is anything but that. We are amid many swirling changes that impact one another. The climate is changing and causing water sources to change, causing temperatures to change, causing farming to change, causing financial stresses to change, causing science to change, and so on ad infinitum. The constant is change. There is no stability. At best we are trying to find our sea legs to keep from being cast into an abyss.

We’ve seen how generals used the tactics of the last war to fight the next one. We’ve seen the folly of that in the slaughters and disasters that took place in the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Vietnam, the Middle East and beyond. Chalk it up to failure to adapt to the changing circumstances and the reality that change was and is

the one constant.

I think we would all admit that humanity has managed to mess up some of the balances that natural forces have been experimenting with and refining for a billion years. We’ve brought changes faster than the natural forces have been able to adapt. Our bad. Yet, left alone, the natural forces have a remarkable way of healing the damages inflicted. I’m certain that, in the same way that water will find a way downhill, and as we have seen in the recent Marshal Fire in Colorado, fire will find a way in and around. So, also life will find a way to continue to experiment and improvise. It has been doing that since life reproduced itself a billion years ago and eventually that miracle of photosynthesis resulted in the air we breathe, the food we eat and the forests we love.

Sometimes I have a sinking feeling that in some arenas we are not going to be able to turn this around in time, that we have already gone over the brink of no return. Humankind may very well not be able to survive in the long run, but life will find a way to continue to experiment and branch and grow the tree of life as it has done for the past billion years. Humankind may not be here when things finally shake out, but I am convinced that life will find a way. We are in for a wild ride for some time to come.

There are some very interesting examples of what can happen by doing nothing. The Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea has become a remarkable wildlife sanctuary. The hot zone around Chernobyl in Ukraine has seen something similar happen with all kinds of wildlife having moved into the area. The states that comprise New England have changed dramatically. Where once it was said a squirrel could travel treetops from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River without touching the ground, the forests were cut down, converted to cropland, and then abandoned when the soils wore out. Researchers

at the Harvard Forest in central Massachusetts have documented the changes that have taken place over several centuries (*Forests in Time*, Edited by Foster and Aber). Those worn out and abandoned fields have reforested, largely on their own and once eradicated wildlife has returned. Life has found a way and will continue to do so.

I'm reading a couple of books that are opening my eyes to a whole new understanding of the marvelous complexity and interrelatedness of life. (*The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben and *Finding the Mother Tree* by Suzanne Simard). Although I graduated in forest management, I am only now feeling that my eyes are being opened and, as a result, I'm developing a whole new understanding of how little we know about life in any of its forms. We have a propensity to cast ourselves as pompous, know-it-all when a more appropriate stance would be one of humility. Mankind is the newcomer in the last fractional second of creation (if you think of creation in a 24-hour time span) and has shown a remarkable adeptness for screwing things up. You might say man has had a heavy, clumsy foot on the land.

The "too late schmart" seems relevant.

And yet tradition has it that when Martin Luther was asked what he would do if he knew the world would end tomorrow, he replied "I would plant a tree today." Bill O'Reilly once challenged Molly Ivans about the point of addressing a seemingly insoluble problem they were discussing. Her response: "At least we can try!" A third quote from Jimmy Carter is worth remembering: "Do as much as you can, for as long as you can!" And every forester will remember the words of Gifford Pinchot: "The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number in the Long Run."

As for me, I will fight against despair and hopelessness regarding the desperate state of our earth's ecological networks that have come about because of humanity's arrogance, hubris, and greed. Despite my being "too late schmart," I will seek to keep an open and curious mind with an appetite for new learning and seeking to understand the unfolding mysteries of life in all its diversity. I will do my best to have a humble heart. I would plant a tree today. I will at least try and do as much as I can for as long as I can. How about you?

LETTER FROM RON POND

(McCALL '66)

I DON'T KNOW whether you know about my daughter and my journey to Storm King Mountain July 4, 2021. Our trip went viral on the Associated Press. At the present time (May 2022), we're making plans to travel to Mann Gulch to perform a "Blessing Ceremony" like we did at Storm King.

We don't think we're special people, but we both fought fire and were seriously injured. I suffered a concussion in 1968 on a fire jump in the Salmon River country. My daughter, Lona, was a hotshot for seven

years and suffered a concussion while fighting fire. Neither one of us received proper health-care for our injuries. We feel that other firefighters are also suffering in the same way.

This all came about when my late wife told our daughter that I wanted to honor Vietnam Veterans and the firefighters who lost their lives at Storm King Mountain. She was proud of her children being firefighters. (*Mitch Pond jumped at Grangeville 1990-92. Ed.*)

One must understand that serving as "Whip Woman" is a prominent role. My wife

inherited that role from her mother and my daughter inherited that role from my wife. Now, my daughter is obligated to follow her late mother's wishes. At the end of June, she will honor the Vietnam Veterans and, hopefully, we will travel to Mann Gulch to perform a "Blessing Ceremony" for those who lost their lives there.

Above all, we hope to honor other firefighters the same way. It might be a monumental task, but we're hoping for the best in bringing comfort to grieving families.

A View Of The Largest Wildfire In The History Of New Mexico

by Jon Klingel (Cave Junction '65)

The Hermit's Peak Fire started April 6 from a U.S. Forest Service controlled burn; then the Calf Canyon Fire popped up later from a January USFS burn pile holdover. The two fires burned together. Both fires started by way of USFS actions. The fires burned through some subdivisions, destroying approximately 300 houses.

As of June, the fire was 65 percent contained and has charred 318,599 acres – 498 square miles. There were 2,672 people on the fire with a maximum of more than 3,000.

I don't have a count on helicopters but seemed to be lots of Chinooks and Skycranes. Fixed-wing retardant tankers and bulldozers were numerous, but I don't have a count. Structure protection has been massive with engine crews from all over the western U.S.

We are and have been in extreme drought for some time. Fuel moisture was reported as extremely low, and relative humidity during the day was usually single digits. It had been an extremely windy spring. Wind was day and night for many days, but there were also many nights when the wind quit, and the relative humidity recovered reasonably well.

As far as I can tell, there was no firefighting at night and no line construction or burnout at night. The only mention about night had been that they were monitoring the fire at night – i.e., watching it. During the days, I doubt there was any direct attack on the perimeter. I think there were a lot of large, attempted indirect burnouts during the day. There was hot spotting by hotshot crews during the day with air support, but not likely on the perimeter.

The 65 percent containment was primarily along roads and some dozer lines on what was the head and flanks of the fire. The uncontained portion was primarily the tail of the fire, which was still backing through the Pecos Wilderness

and the “roaded” area downstream of the wilderness.

Crews were constructing dozer “containment” lines that were many miles from the fire. I estimate around 50 miles of these lines were reportedly 300 feet wide.

Reportedly, 300 structures burned and New Mexico Gov. Michelle Grisham estimated possibly 1,000 were damaged.

The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) soils – not vegetation – report for some of the northern portion of the fire came out in June, which included 190,000 acres: unburned, 4 percent; low, 39 percent; moderate, 33 percent; high, 24 percent; with 43 percent unburned or low intensity.

My observations, thoughts and opinions

Most of the evacuations had been lifted and roads opened by June. I drove around and through the north portion of the fire in mid-June. The burn appeared to me to have been pretty spotty with a lot of lightly burned area and some unburned area. A few areas – 24 percent, according to the BAER report – did burn hot and will be problems for flash flooding and debris flows. From the wildlife habitat standpoint, the spottiness looked good to me, which was a relief.

However, since I wrote the above there was considerable burning on the west side and judging from the plumes, a lot of it was hot. It may not be as good as I originally had thought.

To me it looked like a “managed” fire, not a “full containment” fire, more than three months old, in spite of the claim that the goal was full containment. I guess the goal of full containment will be when the weather stops it.

The structure-protection effort looked like it was successful once they staffed up to a massive number of crews and engines. It does take time

to assemble crews and engines from all over the West. I think nearly all of the structures lost were in the early part of the fire.

A conversation I had with the Forest Service

Here is the transcript of the e-mail communication I had with Sandra Lopez, the deputy public information officer whose responsibilities included this fire:

JK – How many crews do they have mopping up the uncontained west side of the fire in the Wilderness?

SL – There are not any firefighters working along the western uncontained side of the fire because it is too steep, rugged and a dangerous area to place fire personnel. This part of the fire has not moved in many days, and we continue to monitor it.

Guess the country got steeper and rougher. We spent a week there on snowshoes a few years ago doing marten surveys. Let me see if I got this right. Calf Canyon Fire (largest in New Mexico history) started from last January's burn pile which they did not mop up. Didn't even mop it up when smoke showed up this spring, just let it get up and run. They are not mopping up the west side of the Calf Canyon Fire because it is too steep, rough and dangerous. Are these folks just slow learners or are they idiots? They say it hasn't moved since the rain started, but the Calf Canyon burn pile didn't move all winter, until it got up this spring to burn 500+ square miles! Perhaps they are just saving it for next spring's fire. Am I getting cynical?

Firefighting at night

Regarding basic fire behavior, on "normal" nights, the wind goes down and the humidity comes up. Under these conditions fires calm down, often drastically. Anyone can watch the plume lay down in the evening and see little or no sign of fire in the morning. Fires normally start to crank up for the day beginning around 10 a.m. Under extreme burning conditions—very low fuel moisture, low relative humidity, and wind—which

we had on this fire, it is difficult to impossible to accomplish much during the day. Further, under these conditions, fire behavior can become erratic.

There are a few approaches possible during the daytime under these extreme conditions – low fuel moisture, low relative humidity, and wind.

1. Stay in camp or safety zones and watch the fire grow. That is what they did on the Ensebado Fire in New Mexico in 2003; or
2. Get way back away from the fire, build line (or use a road) and torch off the fuel between the line and the fire (indirect attack). It means you are burning out a lot of country and that spot fires outside the line are likely making this approach risky at best. You can also do some hot spotting to stop or cool down critical spots, but likely not much along the main perimeter of the fire; or
3. Wait for a change in the weather when you can actually fight the fire during the day with direct attack.

To me it looks like they did a mixture of the above or some hot spotting and waiting for better weather. The "better" weather finally arrived, but they had to wait almost three months and 500 square miles for it to arrive. I don't know how much time was spent in camp or safety zones. It would be interesting to see the actual records of who did what, where and when.

Fighting a fire at night is a different situation. Under the current extreme fire conditions, fighting the fire at night is the only chance of catching it or containing it to minimize the size. This is true because on a "normal" night, the wind goes down and the humidity goes up. It is possible to work much closer to the fire, often a few feet or even inches. The small strip of fuel from the line to the fire can be burned out and, with luck, by 10 o'clock in the morning, the line is cold and there isn't any fuel available in front of the fire.

The most dramatic example of this I have seen was in sagebrush in Nevada. The day crew had bulldozed a fire break they claimed was 10 dozer blades wide. (I didn't measure it, but it was a very

wide, bare dirt swath through the sagebrush.) They said when the fire got to their fire break, it didn't even slow down – it crossed it like the line wasn't there.

However, that night the fire laid down, and we could PUT OUT (no mop up in sagebrush) that same line of fire with a shovel, almost as fast as you could walk. Flame length was only inches.

In my opinion, under these extreme burning conditions and once a fire escapes initial attack, the only chance to control the fire is at night. If you aren't fighting a fire at night under extreme burning conditions, you aren't really fighting the fire.

As far as I can tell, there was no nighttime firefighting on this fire. A witness who did not evacuate said he saw no people on the fire at all during the night, no activity. The only mention of "night" in the daily updates and plans was the mention of "monitoring" the fire at night – i.e., just watching it. This is in spite of the fact there had been numerous nights in the previous two months that would have been good for firefighting: calm, cool and fairly good recovery of the relative humidity.

How big would this fire have been if they'd fought it? It's impossible to say but an estimate could be made by analyzing the weather, available manpower, etc. It certainly would not be 500 square miles. I suspect at worst it would have been a few thousand acres instead of more than 300,000 acres.

Why was the fire apparently not fought at night?

Supposedly, the Forest Service has a new policy of not fighting fire at night for safety reasons – though the Washington, D.C. office has not confirmed this. If true, it would be interesting to see the data on which that policy was based. This fire had three Type 1 overhead teams on it at one point. You don't end up on a Type 1 overhead team if you don't know basic fire behavior. So, they certainly knew the only chance to keep the fire small and control it in a timely manner was at night.

It seems very probable that they were forbidden from fighting the fire at night. A policy like

that had to come from near the top of the agency. In my opinion, someone should be hung for that policy.

Safety is claimed as the reason for the apparent policy, and perhaps it is their reason no matter how ignorant the policy is. I can't help but wonder if it could be related to money. Big fires are big money for all the support industries: aircraft, bulldozers and other heavy equipment (e.g., masticators); fire camp meals, tents, showers, water, hotel bills, etc. I suspect there is a lot of political pressure at the top from all this support.

Bigger fires mean more support money. Is it a case of "follow the money"? Is there fraud involved? Maybe it's far-fetched – but maybe.

From the Midnight Fire, June 14: "Crews resumed direct line construction at daybreak building containment lines to the north with support from aviation." It was a calm night but they did not work. The original dispatch report gave directions of how to drive to the fire and where to meet to talk about it. There was no mention of helitack or smokejumpers. The fire was reported at 7:46 p.m. at 25 acres. It was about 5,000 acres when the wet weather arrived.

Is that what they call initial attack – drive over and talk about it?

Public opinion

The public seems to erroneously think the Forest Service was aggressively fighting this fire. They also seem to think that water and retardant drops put out the fire. When there is no one on the ground to work with the water drop, it is mostly just for show.

Someone should write a book! Oh, **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65) did. I look forward to reading *Too Steep, Too Rough*.

Jon jumped at CJ, Redmond, and Fairbanks and has degrees from the Univ. of Minnesota, Univ. of Alaska, and Univ. of New Mexico. He has worked as Fire Suppression Specialist in Alaska, as Pipeline Inspector in Prudhoe Bay oil fields, and for the New Mexico Dept. of Game & Fish for 13 years. Jon retired from paying jobs in 2016. He is currently doing NSA volunteer trail work, biology projects, and maintaining his home and cabin in Santa Fe, NM.



ODDS AND ENDS

Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59) Congratulations and thanks to **Brad Sanders** (MYC-88) who just became our latest Life Member.

Bill Yensen (MYC-53): "I started smokejumping at the age of 20 and in my 30 summers had 159 fire jumps. Back in my days we had lookouts all over the forests. They called in fires as soon as they saw smoke and jumpers would be on their way in minutes. My advice is to get the lookouts manned again and get smokejumpers on the fires as quickly as possible."

Davis Perkins (NCSB-72): "I'm back from Ukraine. It was an intense experience, but I was with a great team (half American, half Brits). We initially were sent to the Bucha and Irpin region (NW of Kyiv), where the Russian advance had been stopped cold. What they left in their wake was near apocalyptic: bodies in the street, blasted and burned-out hulks of armored vehicles. The surviving civilians were near catatonic. Such incredibly evil and mindless destruction. The setting made one question the future of humanity. We treated casualties, transported patients, and distributed supplies. From there we were assigned to the east, the Donbas region. More of the same. The courage and resistance of Ukrainians is awe-inspiring as they fight for their survival. Tough bastards! Perhaps I'll return in the Fall if the situation continues. Frankly, it's hard to be back."

(Davis left March 23 to join a medical team helping those in need in the Ukraine. He returned in late May. Ed.)

One downside of doing a quarterly magazine such as *Smokejumper* is being behind current events. My main goal is to record "the history and lore" of smokejumping. For those of you who want to keep up on the latest information on wildfire, go to Bill Gabbert's *Wildfire Today* found on the internet.

Today (May 28) I'm looking at informa-



tion on the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak fire in New Mexico. These merged fires are a result of escaped prescribed fires and have burned 341,000 acres to this point. The Calf Canyon Fire was caused by burn piles that were never put out from a January project. These prescribed burns have resulted in the largest wildfire in New Mexico history. Look for this to be more commonplace in the future.

Jim Petersen (Founder/President Evergreen Foundation): "There is a time and a place for prescribed fire. It's a great tool. Been used for decades, generally in combination with thinning. In my opinion, now is not the time and there is no SAFE place in national forests. 'Fire on the land for resource benefit' is a doomed-to-failure fantasy that is being foisted on the public by [1] a USFS that has lost its way amid decades of criticism from the public that opposes cutting down trees for any purpose and [2] more recently, a very well capitalized wildfire fighting Industry.

"Worse, most of this industry's aerial assets aren't designed for rapid response, especially in rural areas where our national forests are concentrated. (Use) single-engine air tankers, smokejumpers, and helicopters. Have we learned nothing in New Mexico?"

"Lives lost. Towns lost. Municipal watersheds lost. Historic and cultural resources lost. Outdoor recreation opportunity lost. I don't think the public will stand by while the rest of our western national forests are burned to the ground 'for resource benefit.'"

In letter with GSF donation by **Mel Tenneson** (FBX-86) honoring Bill Steck (Pilot): "I had the pleasure to spot with him for many years. He was one hell of a pilot and a great person. Although he didn't always mention his career, after flying with him for quite some time, he would open up and tell some stories. Whether he was flying the

SR-71(Blackbird) or test piloting another aircraft, or just dropping jumpers, he was an incredible person. He will truly be missed.”

Bruce Jackson (RAC-69) in response to articles in *Smokejumper*: “Just the ‘wake up’ call that your efforts and articles have achieved in returning some sanity to the Forest Service with Initial Attack is a Herculean accomplishment. Forcing any course correction on such a monstrous bureaucracy is rare, especially when such vain philosophies and policies are entrenched at the highest levels. The ‘Standing Tall’ article (April 2022) that you published is compelling evidence of the great need to return to early detection and IA, especially during those most hazardous months of the fire season. The results speak for themselves and, hopefully, the leadership and courage demonstrated by Merv George and his team will motivate other forest supervisors and regional overhead to follow suit.”

Karl Brauneis (MSO-77): “Hi Chuck, I just got the *Smokejumper* (July issue) and read your article on Albuquerque. You nailed it. And your point about hiring locally, the best of the best or those that came with outstanding recommenda-

tions - again - you nailed it. But the impressive front cover picture is worth a big ‘Shout Out.’ That is the reality of smokejumping - the 110-pound packouts. Not for the faint of heart. The picture actually looks like ‘Yours Truly’ from 1979, but it’s not.”

Mike Nielson (MYC-73): “Congratulations on the July Issue. A truly wonderful composition. That said with sincerity. I’d also like to commend you for your tone in ‘Sounding Off.’ It has the forceful emphasis that’s needed and is direct and emphatic. Continue to take your full liberties as Editor to make the points that need to be made.

“To the list of jumper characters whose stories deserve to be told, Jerry Ogawa (MYC-67) is near the top of that list. We both were boosted to Fairbanks in ’78 and reading our material choices. I was reading the autobiography of Saburo Sakai, the leading Japanese fighter ace in the South Pacific in WWII and Jerry was reading *Roots* by Alex Haley. Go figure.”

Got a note from **George Cross** (Missoula ’74): “Hi Chuck, I’m 97 now and a WWII vet. Don’t get around as well as I use too and won’t make the reunion. Have a great time and give tidings to all.” (*George currently lives in Buckeye, Arizona*)

Wheels Off

by “Swede” Troedsson (Missoula ’59)

I noticed **Rondey Lay’s** (MSO-67) name on p.23 of the January 2022, issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. It brought back a fond memory of Rondey.

In 1996 I attended Rondey’s retirement party held on his ranch near Florence, Montana. His party was combined with the jump season termination party. Rondey had jumped for 15 seasons. Prior to retiring, he was working in the warehouse at the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula servicing chainsaws and pumps. To say he was a

legend would be an understatement.

I was impressed with one of Rondey’s uses of his mules and wagon. His favorite elk hunting area was at the head of a drainage on the east side of the Bitterroot Valley. It was a haven for elk. Motorized access into the area was blocked by a locked Forest Service gate.

During the start of hunting season, Rondey would hitch up his mules to his wagon and proceed to the gate. Upon arriving at the gate, he would unhitch the mules and remove the wag-

on wheels. Then he would walk the mules around the gate and have them drag the wagon bed under the gate. After replacing the wheels, he would load his camp, grub, and various nectars onto the wagon. Then he and his bros would proceed to the head of the drainage, set up camp, cook steaks, drink beer and whiskey, tell jump stories, and kill elk.

Currently (1/22), Rondey is alive and well. He sold his ranch in Florence and lives on his brother’s ranch in Ryegate, Montana.

Mitch's Last Jump

Dan Green (McCall '67)

We were on patrol over the Chamberlain Basin area of the Idaho Primitive Area. (With the passage of the Wilderness Act, this area became the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area in Idaho). My jump partner was **Mitch Ruska** (MYC-63), a tough veteran of Korea. Chamberlain is about fifty miles from the road and is in the middle of the "Frank" (the largest wilderness area in the lower forty-eight states).

We were flying in a Turbo Porter, a single-engine turbine-driven plane that was an excellent jump plane. The Porter could ease down to about fifty miles per hour for accurate jumps on tight spots.

We flew out to the east of Chamberlain over Flossie Lake and headed towards Sheepeater Look-out. Lightning storms had gone through the area the previous two days, and we were looking for sleeper fires. Out to the north, we saw a trail of thin smoke rising from a ridge.

As we circled, a herd of about thirty elk moved out of the meadow below. Thoughts of a hunting trip with some jumper friends entered my mind. We were on good terms with the Packer (Shorty) at Chamberlain Basin and could borrow a few mules to set up an elk camp near this meadow.

Several of us made arrangements to purchase three of the Chamberlain mules for twenty-five bucks an animal. **Dick Lynch** (MYC-64) arranged to rent a plane for the three of us to fly in at the end of the fire season. We had our elk spotted. A late fire bust in Alaska ended the opportunity for that "dream hunt." We were needed in Alaska and elk hunting was second fiddle.

Our fire was burning on a ridge near a small meadow where a couple of mountain lakes had filled in with sediment. Our spotter, **Dale Schmaljohn** (MYC-60), directed the pilot to fly over the spot and he dropped streamers. Jumping conditions were ideal, so we checked our gear and got ready as the plane turned for final pass. My jump partner slipped in behind me so he could go out

of the plane on a two-man stick. It was an easy jump, and Dale dropped us a little higher than the usual 1000 feet above ground, just to enjoy the ride down. The slow descent gave me time to give the elk herd one last look before I turned into the wind and headed for the spot.

I came into the spot bucking the wind with almost no ground speed, an ideal landing. As I hit the "meadow," which looked to be tall reed grass, I sunk to my waist in a soup of peat. The lake had become a wet meadow that was halfway between a swamp and a meadow. Beaver had made a dam in the outlet stream and most of the trees in the "meadow" had been flooded out and died—snag city.

I had a very difficult time extracting myself from the peat bog. As Mitch headed toward the spot, I tried to wave him off. He saw the mucky mess at the last minute, but it was too late to turn. He headed right into a patch of three lodgepole snags. His chute crowned the three snags and for a few seconds, it looked like it would hold.

As his weight worked on the snags, he broke out and fell to the ground, landing on his back in the mucky ground. The soft ground probably saved him from a broken back. Big chunks of the snags followed him to the ground. One piece came down almost vertically and hit him in the arm, giving him a compound fracture and almost tearing off the bicep. Another bigger chunk came down parallel to the ground and landed across his legs. The soft muck saved him from a terrible compound fracture of the femur, but his knees were really messed up. He couldn't walk or stand and was in a great deal of pain. As far as I could ascertain, both legs were broken.

I quickly put out signal streamers for broken legs and started waving a streamer at the jump plane. Schmaljohn got the message and dropped an AirNet radio. I waded out into the swamp and pulled the logs off Mitch. He was in awful pain, and I was hesitant to move him. It looked like he needed to be very carefully picked up and put on

a stretcher. The mountain lake water was damned cold, but it was doing a good job of keeping the swelling down. I carefully dragged him a few feet to where he was on drier ground.

His arm looked terrible, but the swelling had shut down most of the blood flow and there was no continued arterial bleeding. I considered a tourniquet, but it looked like the bleeding had stopped so I just took an extra shirt from my PG bag and wrapped the bicep area.

I took a minute to retrieve the radio and described the injuries to the spotter. Dale decided to jump and send the plane back to base for more

Dale decided to jump and send the plane back to base for help.

help. It looked like it would take four guys and a good stretcher to carry Mitch out. Dale jumped into the nearby meadow. Before jumping, he dropped a medical kit in the spot where Mitch was down.

I opened the supplies and found some Demerol and told Mitch that I was going to give him a shot. Mitch had served in Korea and seen a lot of action. In Korea he had heard stories of North Korean troops capturing Americans and giving them stronger and stronger doses of morphine until they were addicted. Apparently, the interrogators offered morphine if the American prisoner would talk. Mitch was cognizant enough to explain all this to me and to make it clear that he didn't want any "dope." He was in terrible pain, and I was concerned about him going into shock. I should have just given him the shot. He was in no condition to prevent me.

It was not long before Dale arrived, and we made a quick decision to start the medical evacuation to the meadow he had landed in. We knew it was a long flight back to McCall and help would be hours in arriving.

We cut two long, straight poles, cut up a parachute and wrapped it around each pole creating a make-shift stretcher. Before we tried to put Mitch onto the stretcher, Dale, with my help, put a splint on each leg and on the left arm. We carefully lifted him onto the stretcher, a very painful business for Mitch who didn't cry out but grimaced through the whole process. One of us

manned each end of the stretcher, and we carefully headed down to the spot with Mitch.

At first it went pretty well. The meadow was easy going if you stayed to the dry ground. As we got into the timber, it got a lot harder and Mitch got heavier. The timber was small diameter lodgepole, growing too close together in most places to get the stretcher through. As we went deeper into timber, we started encountering a lot of downed and dead trees. All of this jostling around caused a lot of pain for Mitch. I was surprised that he didn't pass out.

We continued working through the trees. The downed timber got so deep that in places it was over our heads. Progress with the jury-rigged stretcher was slow and it seemed like hours went by. Eventually the jump plane returned and dropped four guys in the meadow below.

We "hooted" back and forth, and they came up and spelled us as stretcher bearers. Before we knew it, we were in the big meadow with a Jet Ranger helicopter waiting to ferry us out. The other jumpers stayed and manned the fire. I went out with Mitch and Dale on the chopper. None of the three of us even got credit for the fire jump because we never manned the fire. It sure seemed like Mitch should have been given credit for several jumps, given the ordeal he went through.

It was a long flight out to McCall, and Mitch didn't get any better as far as we could determine. When we arrived at the McCall Hospital, a surgeon greeted us, and he literally had a syringe of morphine in his hand. It went right through the pants into Mitch's butt. It didn't take long for the painkiller to take hold and Mitch passed out. The Doctor boarded the chopper with Mitch, and they headed for St Luke's Hospital in Boise where Mitch was scheduled for the operating table.

I never saw Mitch again. We heard that the surgery went well, but there was enough damage that he was never able to jump again. He was the second squadleader that we lost that summer due to serious accidents. **Bill Bull** (MYC-64) had been injured in a plane crash earlier that summer when a new Turbo-Porter developed a fuel line problem and the pilot had to do a cold-stick landing. I understand that Mitch was able to get a job with the Idaho Highway Patrol and served them for years.

Seventy-Seven Years Ago, In Smokejumper History

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

History has a strange way of surfacing. About ten years ago, I got a call from a gentleman who was on my Type II Crews when he was a student at Chico State University. By this time, he was a Chief in the fire department of a town about 40 miles south of Chico.

He informed me that he had met a lady who was related to a person named **Frank Derry** (MSO-40). Had I ever heard of him? Wow, that was like asking a citizen if he/she had ever heard of George Washington. If you know anything

about smokejumper history, you know that Frank and his brothers Virgil and Chet, along with Glenn Smith, were the professional parachutists hired for the 1939 experimental program. That program showed that it was possible to drop fire-fighters safely near isolated fires saving hours and days of hiking by ground crews.

I was able to get a collection of photos that are invaluable. There are nine pages in the Smoke-jumper Collection at Eastern Washington University. One interesting shot shows the Derry Parachute Team standing in an open place called



Wardell Davis (MSO-45) (Courtesy Angel Davis)

Mines Field in Los Angeles. The airport has grown somewhat since 1935 and is now call LAX.

Now on the latest find. As I hope you know, smokejumping 1943-45 was mainly handled by the Civilian Public Service 103 group—conscientious objectors. They kept the program going during WWII when the jumper program was in danger of being shut down due to lack of manpower.

The first African American smokejumper, **Wardell Alphonzo Davis** (MS0-45), came from CPS-103. **Jim Damitio** (RAC-69) did an excellent job of researching Wardell for our History Preservation Program and came up with the following information:

Wardell, 51, the first African American smokejumper, died January 1977 in Camden, New Jersey. He was born February 11, 1926, in Lynchburg, Virginia, where his father was listed as a “farm laborer.” By 1940 the family had moved to Philadelphia where his father was employed as a paper baler. Wardell was 14, one of 12 children, and a member of the First Gospel Church. He was drafted into Civilian Public Service in April 1944.

Wardell jumped at Missoula during the 1945 season and had seven training and three fire jumps. He was discharged in 1946 and returned to Philadelphia where he married Earlene Edwards in 1948. Wardell married Mollie Craft in 1973.

Last May I received an email from Angela

Davis: “Hello, I am one of the granddaughters of Wardell ‘Knuckles’ Davis. I wanted to ask if you could tell me more about this photo I attached. My dad gave it to my mom when he passed away, and I wanted to learn more about the uniform my granddad wore. Sorry about the condition of the photo. I found some articles with his name attached and one said to send picture records if you can. This is the only photo I have of him. I never knew what he truly did until today.”

The photo was in color, bent, and creased by many years of wear. Angela took it to a professional and had it restored. We know for sure that this photo was taken in Missoula 1945. Obviously, we can identify Wardell but none of the other gentlemen. It is hard to estimate the historical value of this photo. Every now and then a person strikes gold!

As a side note, I could not stop looking at the gentleman at the far left not in jump gear. I’m guessing that many of you have the same thought: Who is this? Wardell was a middleweight boxer and I’m guessing he stood somewhere in the 5’8” range. Take Wardell’s cap off and his head hits just about the tip of the big man’s shoulder. He is probably in the 6’8” range. Looking at his arms, I wondered if he was one of those Iowa Mennonites who started lifting a calf each day when it was young and continued until it was a cow. Another mystery for another day. Smokejumper history is great!

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- Tom Carlsen Film on Smokejumping (1939)
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RECORDING SMOKEJUMPER HISTORY



1947 Rookies—The Post WWII Era

NSA History Preservation Project

I'm bouncing between the conscientious objectors years (1943-45) to what I consider the years of the WWII veterans (1946-49). In the last issue we covered the 1945 group of COs who kept smokejumping alive during the war years. The smokejumper program was within seven men of shutting down in 1943. In this issue, I want to get back to the crew of 1947 and some more very interesting individuals. Remember, these are only thumbnail sketches. Complete bios can be found at <https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumpers>. Take the time to read the full bios of some great individuals. You cannot appreciate the depth and contribution of these individuals without reading their whole bios. Many of these men were the G.I. Bill generation where many went on to university educations they would never have had without the G.I. Bill (Ed.)

Max Aiken (MSO-47) Army, master's in Divinity, juvenal court counselor.

Marvin Amundson (MSO-47) Marine, District Ranger, career USFS.

Al Ayling (MSO-47) Head Forester Detroit, started and owned paving and construction business.

"Bus" Bertram (MYC-47) Airborne, Master Sgt., WWII/Korea.

Bill Brandt (MSO-47) Navy, U. of Montana track team, Ph.D., 34 years Botany faculty Oregon State University.

John Brinkerhoff (MSO-47) Seabees WWII/Korea, career USFS.

Joe Buhaly (NCSB-47) Army Air Corps, career forester.

Chuck Burk (MSO-47) Navy, career USFS.

Dave Burt (MSO-47) 82nd Airborne, skydiver, stunt man Hollywood.

Bill Carver (MSO-47) Navy, career USFS.

Del Carlin (MYC-47) Airborne, Corregidor combat jump, head man at McCall 1957-77.

Bill Cherry (MSO-47) USAF WWII/Vietnam, Lt. Colonel, private forest industry.

Leo Compton (MYC-47) B-17 pilot, public school teacher.

Bill Covey (MSO-47) Army, career USFS.

Rod Davidson (MYC-47) Navy, career Mobile Oil Company.

Ted Dethlefs (MSO-47) Navy, Oregon State Parks.

Al DeVoe (CJ-47) Blue Devils 88th Infantry, land surveyor, community college instructor.

Wally Dobbins (MSO-47) Army, CIA, public school teacher/coach.

Don Durland (MSO-47) Army Air Corps, career USFS.

Jack Elliott (MYC-47) Career Navy, Lt. Commander.

Terry Fieldhouse (CJ-47) Forester, public school teacher.

Rollie Fisher (MSO-47) Executive V.P. Montana Hospital Assoc.

Hugh Fowler (MSO-47) Career USFS, Director Emergency Services State of Washington.

Charles Garrison (MSO-47) Navy WWII, Col. USAF Korea/Vietnam.

Max Graves (MYC-47) Capt. Marine Corps Korea, insurance business.

Bob Gorsuch (MSO-47) Army, career USFS, FEMA.

Jim Harrison (MSO-47) Stopped jumping after 1947 season as mother considered it "too dangerous." Was working as a fire guard when he died with jumpers at Mann Gulch in 1949.

Gus Hendrickson (NCSB-47) USAF, killed in twin beech crash while dropping cargo on Eight Mile Fire, foreman NCSB.

Gene Hinkle (MSO-47) Real estate, Outstanding Young Man Albuquerque 1957, same honor state of New Mexico 1958, started the Hinkle Corporation.

Jack King (MSO-47) Quarterback U. Montana, Chairman Bankers of America, founder Highlander Track Club.

Norm Knapp (MSO-47) Sgt. Major Marine Corps WWII, career Mobile Oil.

Bob Nolan (CJ-47) 82nd Airborne, National Sky-Diving Champion 1951, owner Nolan Logging Company.

Al Pappenhagen (MSO-47) Ph.D. biochemistry, breakthrough research in field of Hemophilia that resulted in the creation of medicine used in treatment of Hemophilia today.

Chuck Parker (MSO-47) Merchant Marine, Army Capt., Ph.D., founded Dept. of Speech and Pathology at Montana State University.

Richard “Paperlegs” Peterson (MYC-47) 82nd Airborne, smokejumper, CIA.

Lyle Rogers (MYC-47) Navy, career Boeing,

worked on B-52, B-2 flying wing, and Saturn 5 rocket during his career.

Hank Shank (MSO-47) Navy, Iwo Jima/Okinawa, career forester Utah/Idaho.

Skip Stratton (MSO-47) Army Air Corps, career USFS.

Vern Sylvester (MSO-47) Navy, career USFS.

“Doc” Tyler (MSO-47) Army Bougainville, Saipan, Okinawa, Loft Foreman MSO 1954-57, USFS Equipment Development Center.

Hal Weinmann (NCSB-47) Navy, career smokejumper.

Dick Wilcomb (MYC-47) Army Air Corps, one of the top javelin throwers in nation, partner in large construction firm throughout Landmark Valley in Idaho.

Glen Youngblood (MYC-47)—private forester, bought and ran *Cascade Star News*.

The Four Texan Fire

by **Tommy Albert** (Cave Junction '64)

Well, here we are 56 years later. Some of the details aren't as sharp as I would like. Still, recollections of my smokejumper past are priceless. The year was 1966 and the season in Oregon started out with a bang. We normally had a slow June at Cave Junction. The winter crew refreshed in early May and upon returning to base after their second refresher jump, surprisingly got a fire call to the Siskiyou. Region 5 was also active, and soon the guys were jumping small fires in northern California.

The college kids started reporting in for their refresher training. Among them were **Ray Farinetti** (CJ-64), **LeRoy Cook** (CJ-64), and me. Ray and I had taken a “sabbatical” from the tall trees the previous year and jumped in Alaska. It was good to get back to the Gobi, certainly not because of the jump country but for the comradery that was an outstanding part of working at CJ.

The rookie class reported for training and had moved into the barracks ready to start training that Monday. Late the next morning (June 14), a fire request from the Klamath N.F. came in. The

Klamath “*National Brush*,” just my luck. For those of you who have not had the wonderful experience of jumping the Klamath in northern California, good for you. Much of it has a triple layered canopy: tall Douglas Fir, fifty-foot plus Madrone trees, and fifteen-foot mixed Tanoak and Manzanita brush, so thick one can almost walk on it; this, coupled with steep topography and spine-like ridgelines. Who am I to complain, it was a fire jump.

John Cowan started the Twin Beech, spotter **Terry McWhinney** (CJ-64) checked us out prior to boarding. I don't think any of us who were jumping in the “round engine” era will forget the smell of the engine exhaust as one walks behind the wing to get into the plane. Squad leader **Tommy Smith** (CJ-61), Ray Farinetti, Leroy Cook, and me boarded in reverse order and off we went for the short flight to the *Green Bear Fire*. Just so happens all of us were from Texas at one time or the other.

When we arrived over the fire, it was definitely a four-man fire but other than the steepness of the terrain, nothing out of the ordinary. Our jump spot was a knife edge ridge top above the fire as there

were no meadows or such in the vicinity. Like I said, just a typical fire jump in Northern California. Terry decided to drop us single stick. Tommy Smith went out first. As we came around and lined up for the second jumper, John Cowan yelled back that Smith hadn't descended much and he aborted the run. The next time around, Ray Farinetti went out and Tommy was still in the air, not that far below Ray. On the third pass, I think John adjusted the flight path slightly to the left and Leroy departed. I got in the door and as we turned base leg, all three jumpers were still in the air, well above the ridge.

As I said, my memory isn't totally clear, but I believe Terry carried me a little further. Whether he had determined that there was a notable updraft produced by the steep ridge, I just can't remember. I was soon passing the other chutes, and though I was number four out of the airplane, I was the first one down. This may well have been the catalyst to my later nickname, "Gravity."

Tommy Smith eventually made it to the ground. LeRoy honed in on my chute and landed next to me. Poor Ray, the lightest of us four, was still only a third of the way down. Cowan flew comfortably below Ray and dropped our fire packs. We didn't have a radio, so all communication with the plane was with signal streamers. Next thing we know, an air tanker appeared overhead, and he made a single pass drop on the fire, again while Ray was still in the air.

Ray had started to drift away from the jump spot, though still over the ridge line. We lost sight of him through the trees, so all three of us started running along the ridge, finally finding Ray partially hung up approximately a quarter mile from the jump spot. Ray had been "airborne" for nearly fifteen minutes. I don't know if this is a record for smokejumpers, but if not, it must be in the top tier. Later, he related that it was fun at first but then became worrisome when he couldn't get down.

As for the fire, even though it was an early season fire, it was surprisingly active. Tommy had us secure the bottom and we started working up the left flank. Late afternoon a crew from the forest arrived after hiking in. The crew was composed of new hires, fresh out of school. The newbies were exhausted, and most had blisters from their new boots. We felt for them. The hike in had to have been difficult because of the steep terrain and brush. They

were unable to contribute to the suppression effort, which we fully understood, so we worked through the night containing the fire.

Luckily, the expectation of new fire starts prompted a Bell-47 helicopter ride out of the fire. We were choppered to a road, one jumper with gear at a time, followed by a crummy ride to Gasquet, CA, and on back to CJ via Highway 199. I can only guess the forest crew had to walk out after mopping up the fire a few days later. Hurts to think about it.

The 1966 season was a good one on and off the job. The only blemish was Vietnam which was looming on the horizon and scooped up a number of the crew the next year. Ray joined the Air Force to avoid the rice paddies. He was in Top Secret Crypto communications assigned to Thailand. Ray retired as an FMO with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Florida. Leroy joined the Army and was a Green Beret assigned to an A-Team in the Seven Sisters area on the border of Vietnam and Cambodia. He retired as an Area Manager with BLM in Idaho. Me, I got in the National Guard and was trained on several weapon systems, all fun to shoot. I retired as an Aviation Manager/Pilot in Region 5 and from the National Guard as a UH-1H Huey driver. Tommy Smith was in the Reserves, but unfortunately drowned in the Illinois River the next spring on a packout after constructing helispots around the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area on the Siskiyou National Forest. We toast Tommy to this day.

Still Looking for Your Biography

The response has been good for the bio request. I've got close to 1,500 done. If you have not taken the time to send me one, please sit down and do so. Information in this order:

Born: Month, day, year, city, state. **Grew Up:** City, state, graduated from H.S. including location. **Further Education:** Location, degree(s). **Career:** Chronological order **Military service/Honors/Awards?**

Your Life: Have been getting good extra information—go for it!

If you can send in an email or Word document, it saves me a lot of typing.

Please do not send in pdf. Otherwise, I'll take it written longhand. (*Ed.*)

Not Forgotten

By Larry Edwards (Missoula '02)

Steven R. Grammer (RDD-70)

Steve died September 28, 1970, in a helicopter crash while on detail with the Redding Hotshots. He was a graduate of Calaveras H.S. in San Andreas, California, and attended American River College where he was a forestry student.

During the summer of 1968, Steve worked for the Division of Forestry in San Andreas and in 1969 for the Dorrington Station of the Stanislaus National Forest in Calaveras County.

Steve was one of five men who died in the crash on the Angeles National Forest outside Los Angeles on the San Gabriel Canyon Fire. The men were in the five-place Alouette helicopter which crashed while they were attempting to establish a second heliport for the 4,000-acre brush fire. The copter plunged into smoke-filled San Gabriel Canyon two miles east of the Rincon Forest Station off the East Fork in the Canyon. Also killed in the crash were Redding Hotshots Ronald Scott and William Wales, along with Angeles NF Helitack Foreman George Lopez and the pilot.

Mark Urban (NIFC-03)

Mark died September 27, 2013, while making a training jump on to a field near

Prairie, Idaho, about 45 miles east of Boise. He was a 10-year jumper with 324 jumps including 102 fire jumps.

Mark received a degree in Building Materials and Wood Technology from the University of Massachusetts and served in the Air National Guard from 1991-1997.

He began his career as a wildland firefighter in 1999 with the U.S. Forest Service joining the BLM Great Basin Smokejumpers in 2003. He was an avid bicyclist and contributor to the Boise Bicycle Project. Mark is survived by his wife, Rebecca.

Lester Lycklama (MYC-46)

From the recollections of McCall jumpers **John Ferguson** (MYC-43) and **Wayne R. Webb** (MYC-46). Payette National Forest fire dispatcher Harold "Slim" Vassar received a lookout's report July 3, 1946, of a small lightning fire on Fall Creek Ridge, near the Middle Fork of the Weiser River. Vassar discussed initial attack procedure with Fire Control Officer Glenn Thompson. They agreed the fire was in a remote area and **Stewart "Lloyd" Johnson** (MYC-43) and **John P. Ferguson** (MYC-43) decided the fire was a smokejumper assignment.

Among the jumpers on call that day were Lester Lycklama, **John L. Hennessey** (MYC-46) and **Coston T. Aguirre** (MYC-46). They were dispatched to

the fire, along with spotter Lloyd Johnson, pilot Bob Fogg, and John Ferguson, who assisted on the fire run. Johnson, who spotted the jumpers, watched them bail out and land in the spot without incident. The operation was routine in every respect.

Meanwhile, on the fire, Lycklama and Hennessey were using a crosscut saw to fell a ponderosa pine that had been struck by lightning and was burning about two-thirds of the way up the tree. Aguirre was posted up the slope to serve as lookout for possible falling tree limbs. While they were sawing, the tree burned in two and the top third fell, almost in an upright position. Aguirre shouted a warning and the sawyers started running in their pre-selected escape routes. Lycklama tripped on a root, fell face-down and was struck on the head by a tree limb, knocking him unconscious with a severe head injury.

The incident occurred at approximately 9:30 p.m. Hennessey and Aguirre stayed with the victim until daylight, when Hennessey went for help. He traveled about eight miles cross-country to a road on the Middle Fork of the Weiser River. He had started downriver when a passing motorist stopped at his urgent plea and drove him to Council, Idaho. He found a phone and called the forest dispatcher in McCall.

A rescue squad jumped in and carried the injured jumper

on a stretcher about four miles cross-country to a trail. They had started down to the road when they met the ground party headed by a Dr. Thurston. Johnson, Ferguson, and Aguirre continued

with the group to the hospital, while Wayne Webb, Ed Case (MYC-46) and Bruce Froman (MYC-46) returned to the fire to finish putting it out and to gather the gear to await the packer, who

came in the next day.

Lester Lycklama died at 5:30 a.m., July 5, 1946, on the operating table at Council Hospital, having never regained consciousness.

Final Request

by "Swede" Troedsson (Missoula '59)

On August 3rd, 1959, eight of us jumped the Fawn Ridge Fire above the Salmon River. The next day, after declaring the small lightning-caused fire out, we hiked down to Lanz Bar and were transported upriver by jet boat to the Corn Creek boat ramp. We spent the night at the Salmon Ranger Station. The next morning, we boarded a Johnson Flying Service DC-3 at the Salmon Airport for the flight to Missoula.

On the flight to Missoula, the word was passed that two jumpers died the previous day in a fiery Ford Trimotor plane crash in Moose Creek. One

of the jumpers was **Gary Williams** (MSO-59), a good buddy and college classmate of mine. Gary and I had trained together that year. The news brought tears to my eyes.

Shortly thereafter, Gary's fiancé came out to the Missoula Smokejumper Base to look me up. She wanted to know how Gary died. I took her by the hand and led her into an unoccupied room in the dorm and quietly closed the door. Struggling to keep my composure, I gently related the circumstances and cause of Gary's death.

When that gorgeous and devastated woman left, I wondered what the future held for her.

I found out later that Gary was sitting in the cabin under the aircraft wing. When the plane crashed, gasoline from the wing fuel tank poured over Gary and ignited. Gary, critically burned, dashed out of the plane and collapsed on the ground. Two jumpers, **Roland Pera** (MSO-56) and **Bob Reid** (MSO-57) had hiked into Moose Creek earlier that morning off a two-man fire and were waiting to be flown to Missoula. They witnessed the crash and ran over to **John Rolf** (MSO-57) and Gary, who were both badly burned, to render aid and comfort. Gary died about an hour after the crash. John, who was still lucid, knew that Roland had a beautiful singing voice and asked Roland to sing to him. It was John's final request. He died in Grangeville later that afternoon from his burns.

Eventually Gary's former fiancé married a college classmate and good friend of mine. I was elated. I had the pleasure of being invited to their fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration at the Chico Hot Springs Resort in Pray, MT.

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Farewell To “Animal Ed” Weissenback

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

After two years of postponement due to COVID, Ed Weissenback was interred at the Eagle Point National Cemetery, Oregon on June 17, 2022. This has been a long journey for Karen Weissenback Moen. Read her story in the April issue of Smokejumper. I do not know how she had the fortitude and energy to travel to Laos and find the location of the Air America C-123 crash site. Her determination over a period of many years should be made into a book or movie.

Ed was a New York guy who headed west to become a smokejumper. He was one of 13 rookies I had a part in training in 1964. Nine of these men were CJ rookies and four of them went to Redmond as part of the start-up of a new smokejumper base. He stood out during training, quiet, but with a tremendous work ethic and physical conditioning.

In the July issue of Smokejumper, I talked about the Pyramid Peak Fire where six rookies and two others of us jumped a going fire after a lightning storm. It was one of the best examples of the positive results of quick initial attack that I can ever remember after 34 fire seasons. We called him “Animal Ed” due to his work ethic and not for his love of animals of every kind.

Ed went on to Redmond and was drafted into the Army in 1965 where he served as a member of the 1st Cavalry Division and saw action in the central highlands. He married Karen in July 1968. He joined Air America in 1968 and was furloughed in 1969. Ed was seriously injured on a fire jump in 1969 but returned to Air America in 1970. On December 27, 1971, Air America Flight #293 was hit by enemy fire near the China Road and all aboard were killed.

I want to continue this farewell with a piece from **Bruce Jackson** (RAC-69) that was read at the gathering for Ed’s remembrance:

“Karen, thank you so much for your kind and informative replies to my inquiry. I just learned of ‘Animal Ed’s’ memorial yesterday afternoon

when I read your incredibly well-written article in the April issue of the Smokejumper quarterly magazine. Spring is such a demanding time for my wife, Kristine, and I at our ranch, at the base of the mountains in the far corner of N.E. Washington that my first chance to read the SJ magazine was at lunch yesterday. Your article should be expanded into a book and a properly produced movie!

“Your story, and the information on the June 17th memorial at the end of it, propelled me into ‘fast forward’ to see if we might be able to re-arrange other scheduled commitments to make the run to Eagle Point next week. Unfortunately, a difficult-to-get medical appointment set for Thursday, June 16th preempts our attendance. Nevertheless, be assured I will be present in spirit with a heart full of gratitude and a mind filled with memories for the formative role that Ed played in my life.

“From the first day that I met Ed in rookie training, through that ordeal of Ed’s jump injuries in the Umpqua NF, to the last conversations that I had with him that summer of ’70 as he ‘rehabbed’ working in the paraloft and around the RAC base, Ed had a unique impact on me that no other man in my life has. I think he took some form of concealed pity on me; in that I was only 19 and the youngest SJ on the base. Naturally, that subjected me to the expected hazing that being so green brings in the company of older and more experienced jumpers, all possessing very strong personalities. Yet Ed would step in when it exceeded what was profitable for me and with just a few words keep the game in bounds.

“Ed was so much larger than life and such a robust ‘Man’s Man’ that he was intimidating to me at first. From his imposing physical stature and capacities to his booming voice and ‘rough’ commanding language, Ed could be very daunting. Yet I learned early on that beneath that hard shell persona beat a very kind and generous heart. The many personal conversations that we had and the advice that Ed invested in me not only instructed

but inspired, and it set a high bar standard of motivation and conduct that has served me well all my life.

“There are so many fond recollections that I have

of Ed that a brief email reply utterly fails to touch on them. Yet it is my hope that we might be able to talk on the phone after all the logistics and demands on you of the upcoming memorial have passed.”

Getting Old

by Cecil Hicks (NCSB-62)

The following is a response to a question asked me by a young reporter concerning aging.

You say I’m getting old, but I don’t feel old. I’m still in the prime of my life, although I have a son who just turned 50. I still have a life! I’m not old and I still feel bold.

You say my head is bald and I’m quite a sight, and what hair I have has turned white. So, what if I enjoy afternoon naps, but then again who wouldn’t enjoy a nap if they could. If I were able, I’d gladly split a cord of firewood and build a picnic table.

You say I don’t have endurance. I still have it, but it just takes me longer when I stroll around the block or play a round of golf. Now, I have to watch what I lift due to a herniated disk that’s out of whack. Yes, it’s a fact, I blame current physical problems on my smokejumping years of digging miles of fireline bent over with a Pulaski in hand. And don’t forget those packouts hoisting a 100 plus pound pack. While I’m not one to whine, when I started out as a rookie, I stood six foot two, but after all those hard mountainside parachute landings, I seemed to have shrunk to five foot nine.

What about my love life you ask? Hey, I was married for 51 years until my wife died and we had five kids—you think we didn’t have sex? Ask another dumb question.

As for my eyes, they’re fine if I wear my glasses. You say my hearing is bad, not anymore, as I have hearing aids. Of course, I don’t always wear them when I’m home and no one’s around and I’m watching TV. All I have to do is turn up the sound.

I may not be a chef, but I can still cook, and I only use one *Good Housekeeping* cookbook.

You say I’d had medical problems in my life, well I’m still here. But who hasn’t had some medical issues? Yes, I’ve had a quadruple by-pass at 64, a herniated disk problem, a right knee operation, carpal

tunnel problems with my hands, and a broken nose from a Golden Glove boxing fight. Although I have sleep apnea, I do alright if I sleep on my side. In other words—who’s perfect. And when I was serving a tour in the Army, I ended up with a hernia from all the grunt work I had to endure.

You say I’m getting old. That’s alright as at 78 I’m still here drinking beer, hosting my smokejumper buddies, eating pizza, and enjoying my German Chocolate birthday cake. You can say I don’t know where I’m going, as I only know where I’ve been, and I’m having fun doing it until the end.



Piper Adams dressed up like a smokejumper on Halloween night in 2021 in honor her great grandfather Earl Cooley. (Courtesy Mike Bina)



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

Update on History Preservation

AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR Mission Statement reads “The National Smokejumper Association is dedicated to preserving the history and lore of smoke-jumping...” This has been my primary focus in my 22 years of editing *Smokejumper* magazine. As one gets older, preserving our history has gone right to the top of my priorities. With that I want to update you on what has happened in the past months.

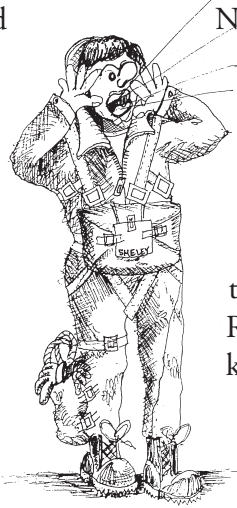
I went to Cheney, Washington, the home of Eastern Washington University, for three days last spring. Over the past four years, we have developed an extensive collection in the “Smokejumper Digital Archive” available on EWU Digital Commons. Recent additions include very rare photographs, including the “Frank

Derry Collection” and the Albert Davies Photographs, from the 1939 experimental program. Under “Smokejumper Biographies by Rookie Year,” I just added the 1947 rookie group that includes 65 bios.

While there I had an opportunity to sit down with Steven Bingo who recently was officially hired as Archivist. Steve has been working with us since the inception of the program but has finally gotten the top job. **Stan Collins** (MYC-67) is the number one guy for the NSA in this effort. Stan continually coordinates with Steve to add to and improve this collection. The key to this effort, in my opinion, is that all this material is available online to any researcher in the world.

Under Stan’s leadership and work abilities, the NSA has now published six books: *Smokejumpers and The CIA*, *The History of the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base*, *A History of the North Cascades Smokejumper Base*, *A History of the La Grande Smokejumper Base*, *Smokejumper to Global Pilot*, and *Air America Inc.* All are available on our website store.

While in Cheney, I met with **Bob Bartlett** (Assoc.) who is the primary researcher in the Triple



Nickles’ 1945 season and “Operation Firefly.” Bob is trying to find out the roster of the 100-man crew of Triple Nickles that was stationed in Chico, California, and has been forgotten by history. I put Bob in contact with Richard Elsom, who has been key in finding us historical information at various National Archives.

Time allowing, my goal is to continue to add to the rookie year collection of bios. A lot of this information has been published in *Smokejumper* magazine, but in thumbnail sketches in many cases due to page limitations. The EWU site will have the complete bios.

I’m still seeking and receiving bios from our current membership. It would be a big help if you would write them in narrative form in your own words, saving me hours of typing and editing. Start with when and where you were born, where you grew up, graduated from high school, further education, any military, and career experience. Those who have added personal comments really add a lot of flavor and interest to their bio. Another big time saver is to put this information in a document or an email that I can copy.

We are currently negotiating with the National Museum of Forest Service History for a spot to feature smokejumping

that would include USFS and BLM smokejumper history. The National Museum group is a 501(c)3 organization like the NSA. Their planned \$11 million facility will be located near the

Missoula Smokejumper Base.

As I record and write your bios, it is apparent that smokejumping was the magnet or job that brought together a breed of independent thinkers. Put-

ting out fires was the job—what they did later in making such positive contributions to the many phases of our society is the part that needs to be saved for history.

Doug Houston Memorial

by Bruce Jackson (Redmond '69)

I could not have been more impressed with the large group of former smokejumpers that came to honor and celebrate Doug's life. Clearly, within this unique and elite community a special bond was created and continues throughout our entire lives!

It was a stunningly beautiful June day in the Methow Valley. Blue skies, white clouds, no wind, warm sunshine with shirtsleeve temperatures. The

event was very well planned and prepared. On arrival we were directed to ample parking on a manicured field. It was a short walk to the club house where large white canopies, tables, and comfortable chairs were set up. In front of the podium and elevated deck was additional seating without a canopy, and more tables and chairs were set up on the side deck. On arrival at the club house, tables were set up and staffed by very gracious ladies who greeted us, got



Doug Houston Memorial (Courtesy Bill Moody)

us signed in, and provided name tags.

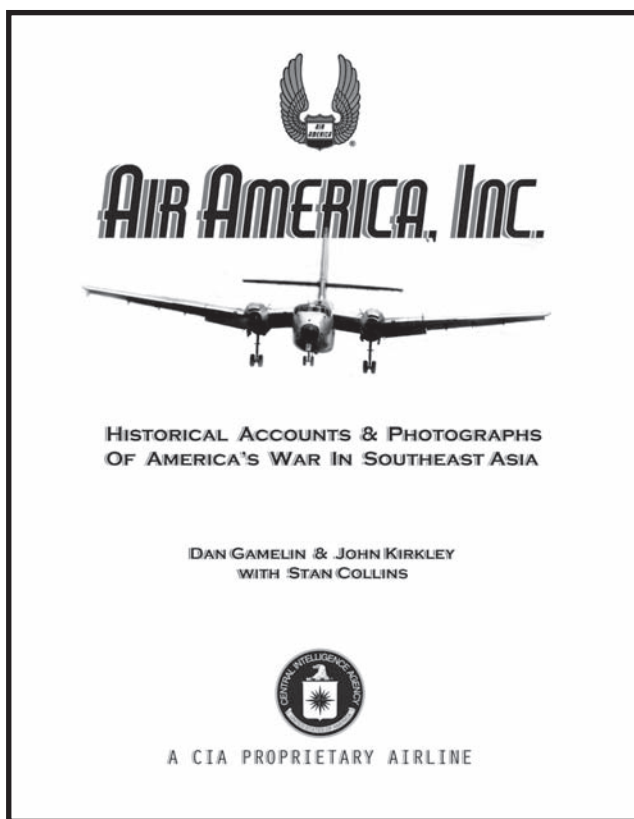
Inside the club house, there was a photo montage video running that displayed a broad history of the many professional and recreational activities that Doug enjoyed. On tables were photo boards of Doug that ranged from his high school graduation picture to the various annual crew photos taken at RAC and NCSB. Included were photo albums that we could page through. Several large floral stands were displayed. There was a no-host bar and plenty of water available.

Most impressive was the large number of jumpers, family, and friends in attendance. The deck set up with the podium and the sound system was a blessing to those of us with “challenged” hearing at this stage of life. Gary, our MC, and each speaker could be clearly heard all the way out to the back tables and off to each side. The recollections that were shared contained a nice balance of jesting and humor combined with some very deep and touching memories of how Doug had been such a positive influence in their life. The overall atmosphere was very relaxed, affable and, as the service and lunch following it proceeded, all present just enjoyed a close and cordial interaction. Even those I had never met before related as close friends.

Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

On June 11, 2022, 150 family, friends, ex and current jumpers and other folks gather for a Celebration of Doug Houston's life. The five-hour event was emceed by **Gary Johnson** (RDD-69). Gary gave a “Houston Life Sketch.” Doug was a devoted father, high school/junior college athlete, Army vet, care giver for his brother, smokejumper, smokejumper base manager, local high school Cross Country Coach, instructor for Mission Centered Solutions, NSA President, owner of Flyboy Angler fishing business, hunter, fisherman, and Suzanne Nebeker Houston's loving husband.

Doug rookied at RAC in 1973, served as supervisory smokejumper at NCSB 1978-80, back to RAC as foreman, and 1990-2000 as NCSB Base Manager. Other speakers included Doug's nephew, Isaac, sons Justin and Cody, **Ash Court** (NCSB-63), and other “open mic speakers.” Suzanne gave closing remarks. **Fred Cooley** (NCSB-76) sang two songs and **John Doran** (NCSB-72) played Amazing Grace on the bagpipes following an American Legion color guard gun salute and taps. The final tribute to Doug was enjoying his favorite ale, Kettle House Brewing Co. Scottish Ale (Cold Smoke) and ending with a toast, appropriately of Smokejumper Bourbon.



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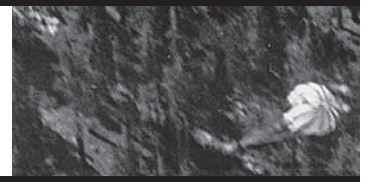
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THE JUMP LIST

MEN OF 1955



This column is part of the NSA History Preservation Project. All information will be kept in the Smokejumper Archives at Eastern Washington University. The following jumpers have responded to my request for bio information. Many thanks. I do have more bios but am only doing NSA members at this time. (Ed.)

WILLIAM D. "BILL"

BREYFOGLE

(Missoula '55)

Bill was born August 9, 1933, in Three Rivers, Michigan, where he grew up and graduated from high school in 1951. He then earned his bachelor's in Science and Education from Western Michigan University in 1955 and spent two years as a 2nd Lt. in the Army. He had read about smokejumping in "Boys Life" magazine as a Boy Scout and decided he wanted to become a smokejumper.

Bill worked two years in blister rust control in Idaho before becoming a jumper in 1955. He jumped the 1955, 57-58 seasons. In 1959 he went back to the Boy Scouts to work as a director of ecology/conservation and has stayed with the Scouts for over 50 years. Bill also taught Junior H.S. Science for 36 years. As an adult Scouter, Bill was a scoutmaster for 19 years, and taught an ecology/conservation section at the Scout National Camping School for 35 years.

After retirement, he worked 15 years as a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity building homes. He now spends time at his local church and tutors math at a local school. He did smokejumper trail work in the "Bob" from 2002-08. Bill considers smokejumping one of his life experiences that has made him who he is today.

ROLAND M. "SAM"

GROTTE

(Missoula '55)

Sam was born March 22, 1933, in Northwood, North Dakota, where he grew up before moving to Hamilton, Montana, where he graduated from Hamilton H.S. in 1951. He graduated from the University of Montana in 1955 and started his USAF 20-year career as a pilot, leaving as a Major. Sam then flew for American Airlines for 25 years before retiring in White Salmon, Washington where he is still living at age 88. Sam jumped at Missoula in 1955.

ALDEN R. "RON"

HIBBERT

(McCall '55)

Ron was born in Victor, Idaho, in 1928 and became a McCall Smokejumper in 1955 while attending Utah State University where he completed bachelor's and master's degrees. He pursued a career with the USFS in forest hydrology re-

search working eight years in North Carolina and 21 years in Tempe, Arizona before retiring in 1987. Ron currently lives in Yarnell, Arizona.

PETER J. "PETE" HOIRUP

(Missoula '55)

Pete was born January 11, 1936, in Tacoma, Washington, and grew up in Buckley, Washington. He graduated from White River High School in 1955 and went to Teachers College in Silver City, New Mexico, 1958-59.

He worked two summers for the Washington State Forest Service 1953-54 before jumping at Missoula 1955-58. Pete was drafted into the Army, E-4, light vehicle driver, mechanic, battalion clerk in Fort Benning, GA, 1959.

After his discharge he went to work at Boeing in Washington, worked at their electrical equipment supply store and two years at A&P School to receive Airframe and Power Plant License. He then went to work at Alaska Airlines 1967-2005. "During this time, I went to school for my commercial pilot's license and flew engineer on C-130s for a short time. I worked 25 years in the oil field in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, for Alaska Airlines doing two weeks on and two weeks off.

Pete retired in 2005 and is living in Bonney Lake, Washington, Tempe, Arizona, and

has a summer fishing cabin in Yakutat, Alaska. He is happily married with three wonderful kids and their spouses. "We have five beautiful and smart grandkids. I had the opportunity to travel to Russia in 1992 and worked the Dog Mushing 1200-mile race. I volunteered on the Smokejumper Trail Crew for 5 years. I drifted many beautiful rivers in Alaska and hunted for moose, caribou and grizzly bear. Being a smokejumper was the best job in the world. I have a wonderful life."

**RAYMOND E. "RAY"
HONEY**

(North Cascades '55)

Ray was born June 27, 1936, in Riverside, Washington. "We moved to Winthrop when I was six weeks old as my dad, George Honey (NCSB-40), was packing ore out of the tungsten mine to Winthrop. I grew up in Winthrop and went all 12 years of school graduating from Winthrop high school in 1955. I attended College of Puget Sound and Wenatchee Valley College.

"I had a very early interest in smokejumping because my mother reminded me that in 1939, she walked me down a small hill where men were experimenting jumping out of planes to get to forest fires faster as my uncle Allen Honey was one of these men. At this site they were experimenting jumping into trees and getting to the ground safely. The next year, 1940, my Dad, George Honey, was in the first group trained as smokejumpers. That was the beginning of his career with the Forest Service, He retired from

the forest service after a long career.

"After I graduated from High School in 1955, my first job was smokejumping at Winthrop. There were three from my class that jumped that year: Virgil Imes, Melvin Northcott, and myself. My jump partner was Virgil and Melvin jumped with Mike Bowman The next summer, 1956, I jumped again. After fire season I married and moved to Santa Monica, California, where I worked for Southern Counties Gas Company and Douglas Aircraft before joining the Los Angeles City Fire Dept. in 1958. I retired from the fire dept as a Captain in 1978 and moved back to Washington.

"I managed to keep busy after retirement, built Seven Bays Marina on Lake Roosevelt, managed a golf course in Bridgeport, Washington, and owned a gift store in Winthrop. In 2013 my wife and I moved to Rathdrum, Idaho. We've been married for 65 years."

**HAROLD "HAL" H.
HOWELL**

(Missoula '55)

Hal was born June 13, 1934, in Samson, Alabama. He grew up in and around south and north Alabama, graduating from Decatur Alabama H.S. in 1952. He then attended Auburn University in 1952-53 before transferring to University of Montana in 1954, where he graduated with a degree in Forestry in 1957.

Hal served as a US Air Force pilot from 1957-63 reaching the rank of Captain. He continued with the Washington Army

National Guard from 1964-82 as fixed-wing and rotary-wing pilot. Hal worked as a United Airline pilot/flight manager from 1966-94 with bases in Seattle, Denver, and London. He retired in 1994 and is living in Tapps Island, Washington. Hal jumped at Missoula during the summers of 1955-56. He served on the NSA trails crews from 1998-2013.

**WILLIAM ELLIS "BILL"
LONG**

(Cave Junction '55)

Bill was born August 18, 1930, in Minot, North Dakota, and grew up in Oregon and California where he graduated from Richmond (CA) H.S. in 1947. He furthered his education with a bachelor's in Geology from the University of Nevada in 1957, a master's in Geology from Ohio State in 1961, and his Ph.D. in Geology from Ohio State in 1964. Bill served in the USAF as a Survival Instructor at the USAF Advanced Survival School.

Work Career:

Explorer, Geologist, 1954-64, Antarctica

Geologist, Exploration Geologist, 1964-65, Texas

Professor, Geology, 1965-76.

Alaska Methodist University Hydrologist, State Hydrologist, 1977-97, Alaska

Consultant, Hydrologist, 1997-2001, Alaska

Bill jumped at Cave Junction during the 1955 season and is an NSA Life Member.

**DON R. MATHIS
(MISSOULA '55)**

Don Richard Mathis was

born on March 18, 1930, at home in Salt Lake City, Utah. His early life was in that city and his education began at the age of 5 years at the University of Utah Training School. Don was a student on the University Campus until he completed high school. He began his USFS work after graduating from high school during the summers of 1948-49 as a Lookout Smokechaser for the Red Ives Ranger District in the St. Joe N.F., Idaho.

Don enlisted in the Naval Reserve at the age of 17 and completed active-duty tours in the Pacific on the aircraft carrier Rendova and the attack transport General Randall. He was placed on inactive duty assigned to the Naval Attaché in London, England, for two years, 1950-52, while serving a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was at a bed and breakfast in London that he met his wife, Sara-Beth Barnes, who was also an American missionary in Britain.

Upon his return to the U.S. in 1952, he resumed study at the University of Utah for Spring quarter. At the end of that quarter, he began smoke-jumper training at Nine Mile, Montana, in the summer of 1952. After completing three training jumps, he was inducted into the Army for service during the Korean War.

Don served as an enlisted man for several months then was commissioned as an officer for the remaining period of his active and reserve duty. After being discharged in 1955, he returned to the University of

Utah, eventually graduating with a B.S. and master's degrees in History. He continued to serve the army as a reserve officer into the mobilization for Vietnam after receiving several advance training tours. He left the military as a staff officer for the 96th Infantry Division. Total military service active duty and reserve was 22 years.

During the summers 1955 through 1962, he returned to work for the USFS as a smoke-jumper and was awarded a gold jump pin after making 50 parachute jumps. His interest in forest projects continued after 1962 and he did research on fire lookouts in the St. Joe Forest, Idaho and the Ashley Forest, Utah. These two lookout projects eventually were placed on the National Register of Historic Places: Mallard Peak, Idaho and Ute Mountain, Utah.

His work as an educator involved teaching history, economics, speech, and aviation education. He taught high school, community college, and university classes. While teaching at the University of Utah, he utilized his commercial pilot certification flying and broadcasting traffic conditions for radio station KALL in Salt Lake City.

After retiring from teaching in 1993, he was asked to coordinate religious education programs in the Eastern European countries of Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. Don and his wife spent three years doing this work for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in those countries.

World travel has always been

an interest for him and his wife, and they have travelled to all seven of the earth's continents, from east to west and north to south. He continues to enjoy good health and a variety of interests into his 92nd year (2022). He and his wife celebrated 69 years of marriage in 2021. Don jumped at Missoula 1955-58, 60-62, and at Grangerville in 1959.

HAROLD JAMES "JIM" MAXWELL

(Cave Junction '55)

Jim was born May 23, 1937, in Fresno, CA. He grew up in Kernville, California, and graduated from high school there in 1954. Jim then graduated from San Jose State University with a degree in Business Management. He jumped at Cave Junction 1955-56 before entering the Marine Corps, where he flew jets until 1960.

Jim went back to smoke-jumping at Fairbanks, the 1961-62 seasons, before reentering the Marine Corps and being sent to Vietnam in 1965. He then returned to the states and Meridian, Mississippi, where he was an instructor for student pilots. After leaving the Marine Corps (Major), Jim was with Colgate Palmolive Corporation for 20 years, finishing as Chief Manager. He is currently living in Vero Beach, Florida.

JAMES A. "JIM" MEIER

(Missoula '55)

Jim was born May 6, 1936, in New Salem, N.D., where he grew up and graduated from high school in 1954. He worked for the USFS on the Clearwater

N.F. on a brush crew before he trained as a smokejumper in 1955. Jim jumped 1955-56 and 1958. He earned a bachelor's in Mathematics from North Dakota in 1959 and went into the USAF as a 2nd Lt. Jim studied Meteorology at UCLA and spent two years active duty at Dow AFB, Maine. He was discharged in 1962 but remained in the Active Reserve and the Michigan Air National Guard for 20 years, retiring as a Lt. Colonel.

Jim taught high school in Garrison, N.D., 1962-65 before returning to NDSU to earn his Ph.D. in Chemistry in 1971. He then took a job with Inmont Corporation, an Automotive Coatings Supplier located in Detroit, as a resin development chemist where he worked for 10 years before moving to PPG Industries in 1981. In 1987 Jim was named President, General Director of PPG France, the largest and oldest PPG coatings subsidiary of PPG outside the US. "In 1992 I returned to the Cleveland facility as Director of Technology for Auto OEM and retired from that job in 1997." In 1999, he moved to Brighton, Michigan. Jim is an NSA Life Member.

JESSE J. "JESS" NELSON

(Missoula '55)

Jess was born October 4, 1934, in Chester, Oklahoma, and grew up in Clinton, Oklahoma, where he graduated from high school in 1953. He received his bachelor's from Southwestern State University in Weatherford in 1958 and his master's from Oklahoma State

University in 1965. Jess spent six years in the Army reserve and was discharged in 1963. He worked two summers for the USFS in Idaho before starting smokejumping in 1955. Jess jumped at Missoula 1955, 60-61, 68-73, and at Grangeville 1956-57, 59.

Jess started his career in education teaching 6th grade in Buffalo, Oklahoma, 1958-59. He moved into administration in 1960-70 as an Elementary School Principal in Shattuck, OK, and 1970-94 as a Principal/Elementary Coordinator in Guymon, OK. He retired in 1994. Jess has been a Scoutmaster for the Boy Scouts of America for 20 years. He also has been heavily involved in community affairs being on the Guymon City Council for 28 years and Mayor for 14 years. Oklahoma Representative Gus Blackwell describes Jess' service as, "yeoman work in representing and furthering rural issues for small cities."

KARL H. SEETHALER

(Missoula '55)

Karl was born January 21, 1934, in Los Angeles, California, where he mostly grew up and graduated from Long Beach Polytechnic H.S. in 1952.

He then earned his bachelor's in Chemistry from Whittier College in 1956 and a master's in Wildlife Ecology from Utah State University in 1979. Karl served in the Army 1956-59 in medical research with the Army in Fort Knox and Boston.

He worked 1953-54 on the Kootenai N.F. prior to becoming a smokejumper. Karl

jumped at Missoula 1955-56, 59, and at Fairbanks 1962-63 before joining Air America in Laos and Vietnam 1964-73 where he racked up over 10,000 hours in the air. Karl later worked 1989-93 for the State Dept. in Peru with the Drug Interdiction Program.

While jumping in Fairbanks, he was one of the four "Survey Jumpers" involved in a unique program of jumping from helicopters to clear a helispot for a survey crew to be brought in doing mapping work in Alaska.

He is currently (2022) retired and living in River Heights, Utah.

Personal Comments: "My life might be characterized as eclectic - composed of many diverse experiences. Yet, the fundamental influence on my world view and who I like to think I am, I identify as rooted to influences from my time as a smokejumper and the employments in East Asia and Peru that stem from that smokejumper background. I consider myself fortunate to have had that experience."

DONALD G. STEVENSON

(Missoula '55)

Don was born November 26, 1935, in Kalispell, Montana, and grew up in East Glacier where his father was Chief Engineer for the Glacier Park Hotel Company. He graduated from Gonzaga High in Spokane, Washington, in 1953 and received a degree in Forest Management from the University of Montana in 1958. "I worked trail for the Park Service in the summers of 1952-54

and jumped at MSO in 1955 and had 7 training and 6 fire jumps.” Don had an extensive career with the USFS in Alaska and Montana. “In Oct.1990 I retired from the Forest Service and went to work at Whalers Cove Sportfishing Lodge (WCL) near Angoon in SE Alaska. For about two months in the summer of 1995-96, I volunteered with USAID giving Forestry assistance to the Kazakhstan forestry organization. Beginning in 1991 my wife and I took many trips/cruises to Europe and China during the off seasons. We also helped sell fishing vacations at sports shows all over the western US.”

Don's bio has been shortened to fit magazine space but will have the complete bio in the EWU files. (Ed.)

THOMAS J. “TJ” THOMPSON

(Missoula '55)

TJ was born June 27, 1935, in Mobridge, South Dakota. He grew up in the Dakota's and moved to Washington in 1945 where he graduated from Central Valley H.S. in 1954. He attended the University of Montana for a quarter in 1957 before serving in the 2nd Airborne and then the 101st Airborne for two more years. TJ jumped at Missoula 1955-57, and 1959.

TJ started work with the USFS in 1953 and reported to MSO in 1955 for smokejumper training. “What a great experience meeting all the top Foremen and squadleaders. Over the next six weeks, the training programs were the major things

that stayed with me for the rest of my very long career in parachutes and aerial delivery.

“During the fall of 1960 I was interviewed by a representative from the DOD. Over the next four years, I was a contract employee of the DOD. In 1965 I was upgraded to Staff Officer. I remained in the staff officer career for 35 years and retired with over 38 years as the Director of Airborne and Aerial Delivery operations on a world-wide scope. After retirement in 1996, I was called back on contract for the next 14 years as a consultant and gave talks on operational history and operation.”

TJ received the Trail Blazer Award from the Agency of which only 83 have been given. He is the only smokejumper from the many who worked for the Agency to receive this award.

DOUGLAS M. “DOUG” WHISMAN

(McCall '55)

Doug was born January 8,1937, in French Camp, California, and grew up in Loyalton, California, where he graduated from high school in 1955. He then graduated from Sacramento State University in 1969 with a bachelor's in Environmental Resources. Doug was in the Navy 1957-61 and jumped at McCall 1955-56.

Work Career:

NASA with Apollo 11 Program,
Lab. Tech, 1963-69/Aerojet
General Corp
Washington State Parks, Park
Ranger, 1969-97, working
in various parks until retire-

ment as a Ranger 5.

He retired 1997 and moved from Park housing to Bellevue, Washington, where he and his wife, Judy, current live.

DWIGHT WILLIAM ZWICK

(Missoula '55)

Dwight was born March 9, 1935, in Fargo, North Dakota, and lived in Texas and California before returning to Valley City, N.D. where he graduated from high school in 1953. He earned a bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering from the University of North Dakota in 1957 and an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1964. Dwight served in the USAF at Vandenberg AFB and was discharged in 1960 as Captain.

“After my discharge from the Air Force, six friends and I rode from Naples, Italy, to Northern Europe and purchased a sailboat with intent to go to California. We found ourselves short of funds, so we ran cigarettes and Cognac between Northern European countries for six months until we put the boat on the rocks off an island in Northwest Germany. I decided that fun and games were over, so I applied to the Harvard Business School.

“After graduating from Harvard, I interviewed but could not get myself to take an office job, so I bought an 11,000-acre ranch in Northern Minnesota on credit. Did my best for four years, but the lack of working capital forced me to sell right before they foreclosed.

“From the ranch I went to Denver and found a 40-unit

apartment that I could acquire for no cash. From there I engaged in about fifty ventures of one kind or another. Occasionally one of them made a profit.

“I married a lady from Cheyenne, Wyoming, and we had two children. They grew up well and never got into any of

the trouble that I experienced. My wife died in 2012. I am now living with my college sweetheart, the widow of actor Jack Elam. We live quietly and are very happy.

“I have had a wonderful life. It could not have been programmed better. There have been

many bumps in the road, but overall, near perfect. I loved being a smokejumper and believe that it was part of the reason that I could not take an office job. Each day I am thankful that I never was a loyal employee for forty years.” Dwight jumped at Missoula 1955-56.

Mess Hall Crisis—Fairbanks 1964

by Ronald V. Rockwell (Missoula '59)

The Fairbanks crew in 1963 numbered about thirty men stationed at 3 1/2 Mile Airport Road. We had a very good mess hall with an elderly couple doing all the cooking for us. At the close of the 1963 fire season, the jumpers presented the cook, Cliff, and his spouse with a nice plaque which they proudly displayed on the mess hall wall. Sadly, the story does not end here.

Sometimes forest fires can get too scarce to keep a smokejumper base in good humor. Smokejumpers tend to get grumpy and cranky if they are not kept busy fighting fires and socking away greenbacks for the winter. Sometimes innocent, undeserving people can fall prey to smokejumper wrath. The victims in the 1964 season were two very fine people, our cook, old Cliff, and his loyal wife. They always worked as a team. We had the finest meals anyone could ask for. There was also an ice cream freezer full of delicious ice cream, and a hungry jumper could get a second dish if he wished. At some point Cliff was a little short on ice cream and stated, “Fellas, I will have to ask you not to take seconds on ice cream. We are a little short.” The next day Cliff spotted a sly jumper thief heading for a second dish of ice cream. “Fellas, as I told you yesterday, please don't take seconds on the ice cream. We are short.”

Well, this was too much mess hall discipline for some cranky jumpers. The next day at breakfast in the mess hall, Cliff's plaque was missing

from the wall. It had been stolen during the night. It was the very plaque we had given them the previous season and they were proud of it. Word went silently around the mess hall, and everybody became aware of the crisis. Cliff was sullenly flipping his hotcakes and his wife did not look happy either. Minutes passed and suddenly Cliff tossed his spatula on the stove with a resounding crash and turned on us innocently sitting there eating our breakfast. He shouted something like this, “Of all the low down, dirty damn tricks I have ever seen in my born days! My wife and I work our fingers to the bone for you fellas and this is the kind of treatment we get. You steal our plaque, Goddamn you all!” Having had his say, Cliff picked up his spatula, wiped it off, and went back to work. Since we were all innocent, of course, none of us responded to Cliff's triade.

That afternoon **Orville Looper** (CJ-49), the jumper God at Fairbanks, called us together for a short meeting. We all had some idea what would be discussed, and believe me, nobody argued with Looper. He stated something like this, “Fellas, I don't know what brought this all on, but it is coming to a stop right now. I am not going to ask for any details, but I am telling you right now, give Cliff back his plaque!” The next morning for breakfast Cliff was whistling, his wife was smiling, and the plaque hung proudly on the wall. End of story.

Dave Nelson 1935–2022—A Good Run

by Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

—MAY 1965. THE REDDING ROOKIE TRAINING WEEK ON SQUAW RIDGE.

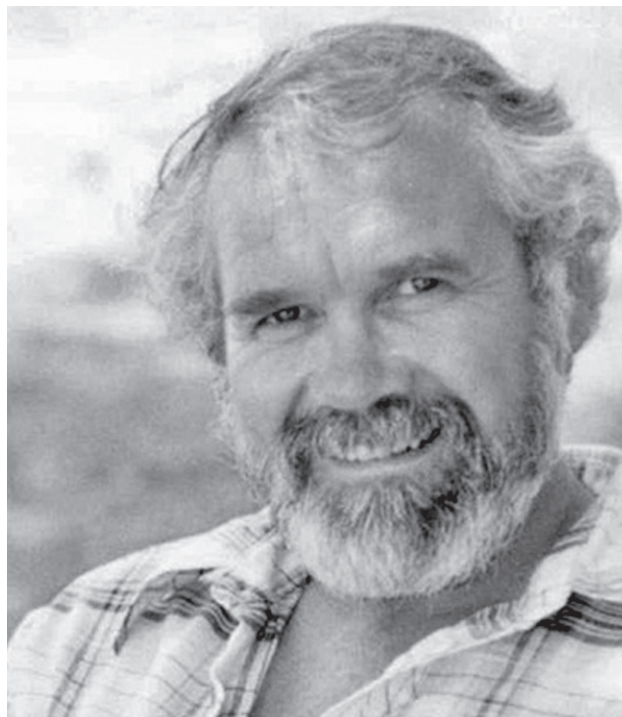
“74 Romeo, this is R-Five jumpers. Channel One.” Seconds passed. The radio came on with engines roaring in the background. “R-Five jumpers, 74 Romeo.” My new boss smiled. “74, we’re at your ten o’clock, about three miles.” Moments later Bert Train’s Twin Beech made a low pass over our rookie group on Squaw Ridge. The man on the radio was Dave Nelson, our new Redding Base Manager. He was twenty-nine. That moment on the ridge was the first time I saw something special in Dave. Good looking and well built, wearing green Levis, a short-sleeved Forest Service shirt with the official patch on the shoulder, name plate, badge, and new red bullet hardhat. After a few days of watching his football coach style in dealing with us and the way he enjoyed it, by the end of the week I not only admired Dave Nelson, I wanted to be Dave Nelson.

Some of Dave’s family and friends gathered at a downtown bar in Sacramento in late April to celebrate his life. A video, entitled “A Good Run,” was shown and several people spoke of their admiration for the man, his life, and his character. When we first heard, via an old fire dog email chain, that Dave was seriously ill, Ron Raley responded writing, “Dear God, don’t let this giant of a man leave us.” The people who spoke used that word, “giant,” many times.

From the family:

Father, friend, forester, firefighter, smokejumper was the order in which Dave described himself in his later years. Born in Aurelia, Iowa, he was one of eight siblings raised in the Heartland. This is probably where he got his strong work ethic and his legendary stubbornness. During his college summers, he fought fires one season in Alaska, then a few as a Missoula smokejumper in the northwest and New Mexico.

Upon receiving his degree in Forestry from



Dave Nelson (Courtesy Kent Nelson)

Iowa State University, he joined the USFS so he could fulfill his dream of becoming a forester. As a District Timber Officer in Mt Shasta, CA, he married the former Barbara Day. A couple of boys, Michael Bo and Robert Kent, were created and distributed over the next couple of years. Soon enough the whole clan was dragged by the newly minted District Ranger Nelson to Southern California where they were surprised, yet delighted, to find themselves living on top of a mountain with a million-dollar view of Big Bear Lake. Dave then transferred to Nevada City, CA, as the Fire Management Officer on the Tahoe NF, family in tow. As a Type 1 Incident Commander, Dave took charge of some of the largest forest fires of his day. As a team leader and fireman over the years, he became known as one of the best.

After the Forest Service, Dave continued in public service for the next 20 years, selflessly chasing disasters or helping shape emergency response policy for FEMA. This work took him from the front lines of Hurricane Katrina to the cyclones of

the South Pacific, to Texas on the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster and long stints in Washington D.C. The D.C. effort was to refine and perfect policies that aid in alleviating the human trauma and suffering caused by natural disasters.

Dave enjoyed doing many things over the years. Skiing, tennis, boating, hunting, fishing, playing cards, and later in life taking cruises with his brothers and sisters to many exotic locales. Most likely, though, he liked smoking cigars while burnin' sh*t in the back yard best. Nothing too macabre, mostly the leaves, pine needles and cones he was constantly raking into a great funeral pyre. Once a Fire God, always a Fire God.

Dave passed comfortably in the hospital just hours from being relocated back to his home of 50 years. His sons, Bo, and Kent were with him. He put up a good fight. He was 86. He was a great man.

He is survived by his two sons, his two step kids Pete and Amy, grandkids Jordan, Logan and Kyle, and former wives Barbara and Sherry.

Jim Stumpf:

Dave Nelson and I were both Incident Commanders on different Region 5 USFS Incident Management Teams. Although we never worked directly for each other on IMTs, we did share a lot of experiences and coordination on annual Incident Commander meetings. I also had the pleasure of working with Dave on various committees within the California region. Dave always was willing to share his experience, our experiences, and backgrounds. Potential solutions did not always follow the same track, but we both got our own ways on different occasions.

From Dave's stepdaughter, Amy Brow:

I don't have long stories, just sweet memories. A favorite would be when we went out to chop wood one day. We had that old truck way out in the forest and must have worked to drop this tree for a good two hours. We had rope attached to it and were using our weight to try and get it to fall. Well, it did—in the opposite direction. I thought it was flipping funny. Dave did not. But we just moved on.

One of my favorite memories is when he made me "learn" algebra. He would stay up as late as

it took for me to complete my work. He'd check each answer and make me redo anything that was wrong. I used to swear at him under my breath but as I got older, I realized it was his way of showing his love for me. He wanted me to succeed. He'd sit in one of those pink chairs in the living room and read the paper, and I'd be at the kitchen table.

One of the biggest things I got from Dave was that he wanted me to have an education. He told me early on that I would go to college and get a degree. He showed me what hard work was all about. He wanted me to contribute something and not take things for granted. He accepted and loved me and provided so much guidance but never stepped on the toes of my real dad. Dave was always there. He came to all graduations, baptisms, and birthday parties. I loved the guy with all my heart.

Dick Williamson, Redding rookie smokejumper '67:

I first met Dave when he was recruiting smokejumpers for the 1967 season. When I shook his hand and looked into his eyes, I felt like I had known him all my life. He made that kind of impression on me and probably many others. That connection continued whenever our paths crossed on fires, training sessions, reunions, and other events. He was one of a kind.

Bruce Van Zee, Forester R-5, WO, and R-10:

All of us who spent time with Dave Nelson knew that he was a damn diehard, ornery, fun, and uncompromising. I enjoyed my years with Dave—staff meetings on the Tahoe, skiing, cutting firewood, drinking beer, and saving the Forest Service. But one of our episodes is a fitting characterization of Dave.

Both of us were retired and out cutting wood on the Tahoe NF. We drove down a brushy road knowing that if we saw some nice standing dead, the USFS cops would not scratch their shiny rigs down that road. We were cutting up dead oak, and Dave got into yellow jackets and took off running. A bum ankle from his jumper days folded, throwing him against an Incense Cedar. There was a stab sticking out, and he ripped his forearm wide

open. I was staring at a real nasty wound: exposed tendons, muscle, and a hell of a lot of blood. I ran down to my pickup and grabbed my cleanest dirty shirt, wrapped his arm up, and helped him into the truck. Threw the saws into the bed and took off for the emergency room. "Damn," Dave stated, "Aren't you going to pick up the wood?"

From Rick Cartocelli:

I recall Dave Nelson best during the planning phases of the Grass Valley Interagency Command Center (1986-1988), a joint undertaking between USFS and Cal Fire. As the lead telecommunications representative for the Tahoe NF, Dave imparted some excellent guidelines that I remember to this day. Here's one: "Be certain that what you are undertaking will comply with how things should work for the agency as a whole; how we should be doing business in Region 5; and that it will work well with our cooperators."

Bernie Weisgerber, Forester, firefighter, smokejumper, District Ranger, USFS:

I have lots of fond remembrances of Dave. I first jumped for him in 1965 when he became Redding Base Manager. I had jumped for three other base managers before Dave, but what he did for me affected the rest of my career. I graduated from forestry school mid-year and was working on the Shasta-Trinity NF and hoping to soon get a forester position. I was offered a job at Big Bar that spring before spring jumper refresher training. I figured I was walking in tall cotton. A little paperwork, a physical, and I was in.

The problem was that I was coming off some major medical problems and figured I couldn't pass the physical. I worried about this for days trying to figure what to do and had convinced myself the only option I had was to throw in the towel. One day I was visiting the loft when Dave saw me shuffling around and asked what the problem was. I started to tell him, and he said to come to his office. I told him my story. He listened intently, asked a couple of questions, then leaned back in his chair and said, "I don't see a problem." My thought was, "What the hell are you talking about?" He continued, "Take the damn physical and chances are the SOBs will never look at it any way." Then in a serious manner he said, "Look,

you are a 6th year jumper, and you didn't get here by accident, so never, never give up on yourself. I went on to have a 46-year career with the USFS as a forester and firefighter. I worked in three regions and was on fires from Mexico to above the Arctic Circle and from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans.

A humorous story about Dave involved him and six or so other jumpers out on the town in Redding drinking beer one evening. We were sitting in a round booth with Dave about dead center in the middle with jumpers on both sides so he couldn't get out. A long-haired hippy walked by and jumpers being jumpers, a comment came floating out that the fellow didn't appreciate. He turned around and came up to the table. One thing led to another, and finally Dave stands up best he can from the back of the table and looks the fellow right in the eye and says, "I've run ten miles to get in a fight with better men than you." The hippy just looks at Dave and walks off. Then Dave says, "And usually got my ass kicked when I got there." Dave was not only an outstanding scholar in the fire world but was also an outstanding, practical-minded forester. I was fortunate to work for Dave not only as a jumper but with and for him years afterwards. He was always only a phone call away for serious professional discussions. Dave was a great friend to many in all levels of the organization, a brilliant man that did his own thinking, and told it like he saw it.

This is Murry again going back to our rookie group on Squaw Ridge. When Twin Beech 74 Romeo flew out, they had come on a mission. Ernie Gentry was the pilot, and the cargo kicker was Rowdy James, the top boss at NCSC, (the Northern California Service Center). We had cut a helispot on the ridge. 74 Romeo roared over and out came a bundle of cargo. It oscillated a bit then drifted right over the spot and landed directly on the crossbar of the H we had laid out. Inside the bundle were two cases of beer wrapped in bubble wrap. That night we celebrated our last night on the ridge. Such was the magic of working for Dave.

As I said at the beginning of this piece, after knowing Dave for a week, I wanted to be him. It's clear from the comments above that many of us, took some of Dave with us in our careers. Dave Nelson had a good run and will be missed.

Phil Aune, Career Silva Culturalist and Forester, USFS:

My first experience with Dave was on a fire on the Sequoia NF in the Upper Kern River area in 1972. Dave was fire boss, and I was part of a firing team from the Six Rivers NF. We had ordered our firing supplies before we left, and they arrived in a truck with a huge sign that read, "Explosives." Dave heard about it and immediately parked the truck and left all the "Explosives" under lock and key. When we arrived at fire camp, he told us in no uncertain terms that we were sequestered in fire camp and that he had red-tagged our ex-

plosives. After cooling our heels for two days in camp, we finally landed an assignment as part of a mop-up crew.

Dave was more than an incredible fire fighter, he was also an excellent forester. After I arrived on the Tahoe, I found out Dave was the person responsible for the Mumbo Basin shelterwoods. The Tahoe NF was revising our Timber Management Plan and was anticipating expanding the use of shelterwood cuts in the red fir forest types. Dave always provided excellent advice on our red fir strategies based upon his earlier experiences on the Mt. Shasta District of the Shasta N.F.

NSA, NFFE, and Grassroots Promotes Benefits for Smokejumpers

by Bob Beckley (RAC '83), Ben Elkind (RDD '14), & Fred Cooper (NCSB '62)

The July issue *Smokejumper* magazine article by **Bob McKean** (MSO-67) provided an update on the Tim Hart Bill and the Infrastructure Act. Bob also presented eleven positions supported by the NSA for smokejumpers.

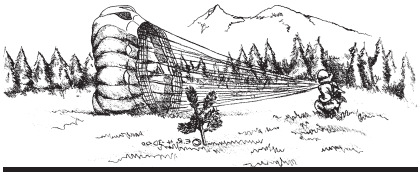
Over the past year, the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and the Grassroots Wildland Firefighter organization have been advocating for and meeting members of Congress, Executive Branch, and White House staff seeking improved working conditions for all wildland firefighters. The Federal Office of Workers' Compensation now recognizes that federal employees engaged in fire protection and suppression activities are at increased risk of certain cancers and heart and lung diseases. They have established a specially trained unit to process employee claims and will monitor ongoing research concerning firefighter illnesses and exposures.

Actions are being taken on provisions in the proposed Tim Hart Bill. A separate occupational category for wildland firefighters is being drafted by the Office of Personnel in cooperation with the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. It will hopefully be implemented by publication date of this article. This will permit the adjustment of salary rates commensurate with state, county, and

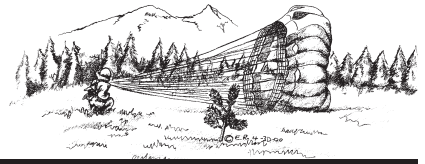
private industry wildland firefighter employers and provide for direct hire of wildland firefighters if there is a shortage of qualified applicants.

Ben Elkind, a current Redmond smokejumper, is a supporter of NFFE, Grassroots, and NSA. In NFFE meetings with Congressional leaders, Ben reiterated that the reforms in the proposed "Tim's Act" are revolutionary for those of us working in the federal government. Starting pay of \$20/hour, housing stipends for remote duty stations, mental health care, and childcare stipends are included in the benefits for many companies so their employees can focus on work and be more productive and stay in their positions. Ben's message to Congressional leaders is that as wildfires continue to intensify and fire seasons are longer, investing in a workforce that can help prevent and mitigate catastrophic wildfires is critical.

Last March, Beckley, a National Vice President for NFFE, represented all smokejumpers in presenting White House staff a Missoula smokejumper crew patch. The President sent a letter to Bob, saying in part: "With your strong leadership and our continued partnership, I look forward to improving the livelihoods of our federal firefighters and all of our federal employees across the country. Sincerely, /s/ Joe Biden"



Notes from the Ranks



Pat McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

July 2022

“TWO JUMPERS, READY and tight? Hook up! Did you see the streamers? See the spot? We are flying a standard pattern, into the wind. Jump spot elevation is 6,900 feet.

“Watch out for the sunbathers, barbecues, and rafts on the jump spot. Land between the hot springs and the river. Other hazards are the full kegs of cold beer, and it looks like the entire Swedish ski team just showed up. We are at 3,000 feet. Are you armed? I’ll put you in the door on final.”

I wake up from yet another dehydrated daydream. Yep, still in Cedar City, back sweat staining the concrete on the four-square court. The nose bag of a cargo chute pillow stained with head sweat. Other salty rings on the canvas showing where other bros have sweated into it over more years than I’ve been alive.

When was this thing rigged? 2013. Not bad, still fresh; some of the ones we found in Silver

City were from the 1980s.

Paycheck stipends hit our accounts this week. **Tim Hart** (GAC-16) died a little over a year ago and his bill is still in congressional limbo. In the interim, the measures taken by the land management agencies have turned into action rather than hearsay. For some, this is perfect timing. Kids on the way or house payments due or even just these gas prices and the cost of groceries. Now I feel older, seeing shadows of that version of me yelling at kids: “When I was your age, gas was under two bucks, daggunnit!”

A whole host of rookies and snookies are up in Alaska right now, getting that age-old, serene, unfiltered, smokejumper experience. The two Dash-8s up there are delivering 12 smokejumpers at a time and a whole great gob of pumps and hose to fires all over the state. I can’t wait to run the numbers on how jumper efficiency/use has changed with the new airframe. Good deals—or **real deals**—all around!

By the time this article is published, one of those Dash-8s will be down in the Lower 48, and we’ll see how it changes perception of jumper use-case when most of a hotshot crew worth of jumpers comes out of a plane onto a fire just a few hours old. Yeah, there’s no per diem if you’re a Boise jumper in Boise, but when you have a big old hammer that can hit nails

anywhere on the West Coast—well, there may be **lots of nails**.

The stipend actually pays out strangely. Since the Tim Hart Act hasn’t changed our actual base pay, we see the pay adjustment as a line item “retention incentive.” Parts of it, overtime off our adjusted base pay, etc., comes through as a “cash award.” This makes firefighting this summer feel a bit more **mercenary**. I like this. Remember, the Great Basin Smokejumpers have a pirate flag as our logo—cash for fires—dead out! Sky God Air Pirates, Flying the Seven C’s—Cracking Canopies, Chainsaw Crushing, Contain and Control, Cash Money.

A U.S. representative called this line of work “unskilled labor.” It sort of feels good that after each fire when we stomp out for those types of people, we get a bigger cash award. I’ll take unskilled. I’ll take a lot if it means jumping from a plane to attack a fire I knew nothing about mere hours earlier.

Cash money aside, I have to push back against some of the narrative on aggressive initial attack, seemingly at all costs. I trust every spotter I jump with, and if one told me the country was too steep or too rough for jumping, I would be more than happy to not jump it. I don’t think it’s worth it.

I appreciate that every work environment I’ve been in as a hotshot or smokejumper has

been one where I've always had the option to turn down a risky action (jump). I would not work for those supervisors if it wasn't that way. I like my pelvis intact and saving some scrub brush and timber somewhere, or even someone's second home, just doesn't make that risk equation worth it for me.

My actions don't have to correct policy failures. I love trees—they're hilarious. Some of them are good friends, and I go out of my way to visit them annually, usually during hunting season in Montana. However, they have their time just as I have mine. Someday your time runs out, and they'll be gone, probably long after I am. If it's the other way around, I'll still visit them because **that's what friends are for.**

I might've missed the golden age of smokejumping. A quick survey of the last few editions of *Smokejumper* and it's easy to see that when the times got tough and the country called, the same men (today, there are more women) I call my bros stepped up and went on to do great things, unrealized acts of courage, until decades of sleuthing later turned them up, or perhaps they survived and enjoyed careers as titans of industry or agency.

But I think the golden age is always about fifty years behind us. Today's jumpers confront fires **far different**, fuels marinated in a bath of changed climate conditions, fires that even for the best computer models behave **unpredictably**. The military seems to always fight the next war like the last war.

We're fighting the last war now; we have just started to see the effectiveness of nascent guerilla tactics, the preemptive strikes in our wilderness campaigns.

There are growing pains. The old generals don't understand that the new lieutenants are just trying to not get killed but also get the job done right.

I appreciate that every work environment I've been in as a hotshot or smokejumper has been one where I've always had the option to turn down a risky action (jump).

Some first-year firefighters this year haven't known a day on fire where drones weren't used by firefighters themselves to find hot spots they could extinguish before the day's critical fire weather conditions occurred.

There's nothing more empowering than a day with a saw or an ax in the woods. I don't know if the rewind or fast-forward button is more appropriate right now. I wish I had the courage or position to help make that decision, but I'm secretly much happier chain-sawing junipers apart in some godforsaken desert somewhere.

Coming in on final on a ram-air parachute jump, the smokejumper has this concept called the "sight picture" of the jumpspot. Defined in rookie training and fine-tuned throughout the jumper's career, "sight picture" becomes an intuitive flow of mind perception, hands and parachute brake setting, and information from the jump spot hazards, wind, and how the air "feels."

Watching the older guys,

the smokejumper stops reacting mentally rather than habitually to the sight picture. You'll probably either understand instantly what I mean, because you've done it yourself, or you won't understand at all.

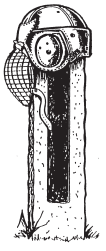
What's the sight picture of the smokejumper ethic? Good deals. Hard work. Customer

service. Competency. With customer service comes coalition building and adapting to needs.

Check out the core competencies listed for the senior executive service of our government: leading change, leading people, results driven, business acumen, and building coalitions.

This is the framework of a highly reliable operation and leadership structure. This is how smokejumping survives; if we don't build that customer base, we don't get ordered. All the other stuff—resource typing, response capacity—all that lies under the further bureaucratic layer at the agency level. But you don't think about that when you're under a parachute; you're back to the real sight picture—a fire jump and the privilege to work hard and also disconnect from it all.

Perhaps I'm just dehydrated as I write this. Maybe I should go check my gear once more. Nope, there's the spotter: suit up, fire call! Nevada. Desert. Hmmmm—what about that river bend jump spot again?



Off The List

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

Chuck Sheley
10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95926

William Joseph “Bill” Robertson (Missoula '57)

Bill, 86, died July 6, 2022, at his home in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, January 12, 1936. Bill began his undergraduate studies at the University of South Dakota (USD) and transferred to Carroll College in Helena, Montana, where he graduated in 1960. Bill started his firefighting as a lookout before his rookie year at Missoula in 1957. He jumped at Missoula that season, Grangeville 1959-61, and Fairbanks 1962, 65-69. When Bill started his work in Fairbanks, he enrolled in the University of Alaska as a graduate student in parasite physiology but started fulltime work with the BLM in 1965. He was one of the four “engineer jumpers” who parachuted out of helicopters to set survey marks in remote areas of Alaska.

By 1967, Bill was Chief of Fire Support, and in 1972, he became BLM Chief of Public Affairs until his retirement in 1994. He made 192 jumps without injury during his smokejumper career. Three days after he retired, Bill took the position of President of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce where he worked until 1998.

Walter L. “Ozzie” Bender (Missoula '47)

Ozzie, 95, died June 29, 2022, in Tacoma, Washington. He was born November 12, 1926, at the family home in Oak Park, Illinois. Ozzie graduated from Oak Park-River Forest H.S. and entered the University of Michigan before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1944. He trained in B-29s and was assigned as a flight engineer on B-26 aircraft in the European Theater of WWII. After the end of the war, Ozzie stayed in the Air Force Reserve and retired as a Major in 1986. He returned to the Univ. of Michigan and earned his degree in Forestry in 1949 while jumping at Missoula during the 1947-48 seasons. While

employed by the Ahonen Lumber Company, he earned a master’s in Forestry Management in 1950.

Ozzie worked as a forester in Liberia, Haiti, and as a forestry advisor for the U.S. State Dept. to the government of Columbia. He continued to work in Columbia until 1961 when he joined the Weyerhaeuser Company in Tacoma to oversee their operations in Mexico, Central America, Japan, and South Africa. In 1976 he was loaned to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization working in Italy, France, Germany, and Tunisia. In 1985 Ozzie established his own consulting business working with Forest Industries worldwide. He retired from his forty-six year career in 1996. Over that period, he worked in 57 countries. Ozzie enjoyed running and ran the Sound-To-Narrows 10K race for many years.

LaMonte B. “Chris” Christensen (Idaho City '55)

Chris died June 8, 2022, in Silver City, N.M. He was born October 18, 1929, in Downey, Idaho, where he was raised and graduated from high school. After graduating from high school, he joined the Army and was stationed in Austria. Chris earned a degree in Finance from Idaho State University after leaving the Army. He jumped at Idaho City 1955-60. Chris began his career with the USFS but transferred to the Indian Health Service in 1963 where he worked until retirement in 1985.

Robert J. “Rob” Morrow (McCall '89)

Rob, 70, died June 7, 2022, in McCall, Idaho, from complications of cholangiocarcinoma, a cancer. He was born January 13, 1952, in Inglewood, California, and grew up in California, Germany, and Florida as his father was a test pilot for the USAF. Rob graduated from San Diego

State University with a degree in Marine Biology and worked in Hawaii and American Samoa before earning a degree in Forestry from Oregon State University. He then began a 30-year career in wildland fire. He jumped at McCall 1989-2005 before working as Assistant FMO for the McCall Ranger District until his recent retirement. Rob married fellow smokejumper Karen Dorris (GAC-89) in 1993, and they became the first married couple to jump a fire on the Payette NF in 1995.

Rob excelled in outdoor sports, mountain biking, surfing, rock climbing, and skate skiing. He would continue to bicycle long distances to and from his cancer treatments at the Mayo Clinic. "He truly loved and valued the 'magic of life,' recognizing the contradiction of living a full life while also accepting its uncertainties." Rob's favorite quote was, "What cannot be remedied must be endured."

Fred H. Donner (Missoula '59)

Fred died April 30, 2022. Originally a prize-winning 4-H Club forester, after one year at the NY State College of Forestry in 1955 he did spruce budworm damage surveys for the Forest Insect Lab in Montana. In 1956 he was a BLM fire guard on the Fairbanks District. In 1957 he was a Del Rosa Hotshot on the San Bernardino NF. In 1958 he broke a bone on the sixth practice jump and rookied again in 1959 making five fire jumps. In 1965 he flew aerial observer on the St. Joe NF.

Fred served in Vietnam in the Air Force, with Air America, and a church group. He was a Foreign Service officer in Manila and Washington, DC with two degrees in East Asian studies and retired as a S.E. Asia intelligence analyst from the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Fred wrote around 20 articles for *Smokejumper* and was the key link in finding the long-lost gravesite of Pfc. Malvin L. Brown, the first smokejumper to die on duty, as well as in formulating the NSA Caterpillar Club.

In 2005, 2006, and 2007 he and his older neighbor were Senior Crosscut Champions at Old Logging Day on the Fourth of July at McGrath, MN, his proudest achievement.

Douglas Ellis "Digger" Daniels

(Missoula '61)

Doug died May 27, 2022. He was born March 31, 1943, in Missoula where he grew up and graduated from high school. Digger graduated from Montana State, where he was on a wrestling scholarship, with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1967. After graduation he was employed by the Washington Highway Dept. 1967-69. He returned to a job in Montana at Great Falls and Kalispell from 1969 to 1982. Doug jumped at Missoula 1961-63 and at Grangeville 1964. He jumped in Alaska, Montana, Idaho, and down to Cave Junction, Oregon where he said the trees were so tall, they never had enough letdown rope. Doug was an NSA Life Member.

Digger had been a part of the NSA Trail Crew for 20 years and done projects in Idaho and Utah. While still in Kalispell, he started a new life partnership with Marlene Phillips. Doug and Marlene also started Montmaps, a landowner reference map and later developed large Montana state maps for classroom use. Doug and Marlene became very close with the Pass Creek Community. Doug helped with the design and engineered whatever was needed with the building of the Pass Creek Community Center.

F. Steven "Steve" Culbertson

(North Cascades '63)

Steve died May 31, 2022, in Colbert, Washington. He was born August 2, 1943, and grew up in small towns in Washington State and graduated from Endicott H.S. in 1961 where he played on the football, basketball, and baseball teams. After graduation Steve rookied at NCSB where he jumped 1963-65. "This was an organization he was proud to have been a part of, and a piece of his life he often talked about, sharing stories of his adventures with his grandchildren."

In 1977 he married the love of his life, Sharon Larson, in Seattle, WA, blending two beautiful families together. In 1984 he moved his family to Billings, MT, and lived and thrived there for 32 years. Steve had a successful career in the employee benefits industry, eventually authoring many of the testing requirements still in use today for new professionals.

When Steve retired, in the summer of 2015 he

and Sharon moved to the Spokane area to be near family and re-established themselves on a picture perfect 10 acres. When he wasn't on the golf course, you would find him getting back to his forest service roots with a chainsaw, chopping and clearing trees on their property.

Steve also loved to coach soccer and coached different ages of youth soccer most of his adult life, including a State Championship in Montana, as well as coaching his youngest grandchild's team.

Lyle Quinn Grenager (Missoula '48)

Lyle, 93, of Huson, Montana, died April 5, 2022. He was born February 9, 1929, in Williston, ND, and grew up in Missoula. Lyle jumped at Missoula 1948-51, 58, and 1961.

In a 2004 interview, Lyle recalled smokejumper adventures and friends.

He said he just missed being assigned to the Mann Gulch Fire because he was returning from an assignment in Republic, Wash., and missed that flight by half a day.

"Because the smokejumpers represented the most advanced parachute technology in the world at that time, with elite men like **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) and **Frank Derry** (MSO-40) pushing the state of the art with their innovations, the CIA turned to the smokejumpers for help with a secret mission after the war," Lyle recalled. He was one of five or six men from Missoula recruited to serve his country.

"We can't tell you where you're going, but this will take the place of your required military service," he was told by the recruiter. Lyle, who was in the Naval Air Corps ROTC at the time, accepted the assignment. He soon found himself in Taiwan, giving parachuting training to units that served the nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek. The smokejumpers also trained the units in survival techniques to prepare for dropping behind enemy lines on the mainland. Among the other men with him in Taiwan, he recalled **Jack Wall** (MSO-48), **Herman Ball** (MSO-50), and **Wally Dobbins** (MSO-47).

Lyle played softball into his '80s and won many events in the Senior Olympics including horse-shoes, basketball, and sprints. He spent his later days building a home on the Clark Fork River with his wife, Louise.

John F. Eaton (McCall '68)

John, 78, died March 5, 2022, in Kemmerer, Wyoming. He was born January 19, 1944, in Dillon, Montana. John worked for the railroad 1978-2006 when he retired. He also worked as a teacher and a ranch hand but "his most enjoyable job was being a smokejumper." John jumped at McCall 1968-74 and 1978. He served in the Army with the rank of Captain.

He earned his bachelor's from Western Montana College and attended the Montana School of Mines.

Ray Hoffman (Redmond '67)

Ray, 86, of Prineville, Oregon, died December 29, 2021. He jumped at Redmond 1967-69. Ray was a lineman for the power company for 30 years and is survived by his wife, Sharon.

Dennis Wayne "Denny" Lewis (North Cascades '68)

Denny, 73, died December 17, 2021, after fighting ALS. He was born September 24, 1948, in Winthrop, Washington, where he graduated from high school in 1966. As many of the Winthrop graduates, he jumped at NCSB where he rookied in 1968 and jumped there until 1973. He then jumped at La Grande 1974-82. He attended Western Washington State College during the off-season. Denny became the operations and training foreman at La Grande for all nine years that the base was operational.

After La Grande closed, he started a 30-year career with UPS. He was always an active athlete. He worked as a volunteer ski patroller, was a mountain biker, road cyclist and enjoyed salmon fishing.

Mark R. Corbet (La Grande '74)

Mark died November 6, 2021. He was born on April 18, 1951. Growing up on farms and ranches near Burns, Oregon, he graduated from Burns Union High School in 1969. To help pay for his education, he worked on farms and at a sawmill from 1969 through 1972. He attended the University of Oregon and graduated with a bachelor's in Environmental Studies in 1973.

Mark began his remarkable career in fire as a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) fire engine crew member. In 1973, he was a Forest Service

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Contributions since the previous publication of donors April 2022
 Total funds disbursed to Smokejumpers and families since 2004—\$279,200
 Mail your Good Samaritan Fund contributions to:
 Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico CA 95926

Helitack crewmember. He rookied as a smoke-jumper in 1974 and jumped through 2004 out of La Grande and Redmond, Oregon. He trained hundreds of rookie SJ's and retired in 2007, having 697 total jumps, of which 305 were fire jumps. He was very proud to have jumped in 16 states and 80 two-person fire jumps.

Mark is the author of the book entitled “Between the Dragon and His Wrath” published in 2017, a recollection of a career smokejumper. A good read, this novel provides a glimpse into the world of smokejumping

Melvin E. “Ernie” Walker (Redding '01)

Ernie, 58, died November 6, 2021, at the Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center after a yearlong battle with cancer. He was born February 20, 1963, in Albany, Georgia, and grew up in San Diego where he graduated from Hilltop H.S. Ernie then received his bachelor's in Natu-

ral Resources from Humboldt State University. He made his home in Teton Valley, Idaho. Ernie rookied at Redding in 2001 and jumped at West Yellowstone 2002-11, 13-17.

Lester H. “Les” Tschohl (Missoula '66)

Les died October 11, 2021, in San Diego, California. He was born March 25, 1945. Les grew up in the mountains east of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and worked for the USFS in 1963 as a fire patrolman. He heard about the smoke-jumpers from the Silver City smokejumper crew. Les rookied at Missoula and jumped there 1966-69. He was on the Silver City Crew 1967-69. Les retired from the USFS in 1995 after a 32-year career. One of his best memories was when he was FMO on the Sequoia NF ordering smokejumpers, an order that did not happen very much. Les was on Type I Teams as Ops Chief, Sir Ops Director, and Air Attack.

Edwin Del Mar “Del” Jaquish (Cave Junction '49)

Del, 91, died April 23, 2021. He was born May 18, 1929, in Fresno, California, graduating from Sanger High School in 1947. In the late 1950s, he moved to Idaho and was a smokejumper at Cave Junction, Oregon, in 1949 and 1951. He graduated from the University of Idaho in Forestry in 1953 and served in the Army 1953-55.

Del's 33-year career was with the USFS, serving primarily as a Public Information Officer. After serving as the District Ranger on the Palouse District, St. Joe NF in the early 1960s, he transferred to Missoula, Montana, as a Public Information Specialist in 1964. In 1969, he was assigned as the Public Information Officer for the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin. In 1972, he moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was assigned as the Assistant Regional Forester respon-

sible for Information Services for the 17 national forests in the Eastern Region of the Forest Service.

In 1985 his career with the USFS ended and Del moved to Post Falls, Idaho, where he worked as the City Forester and with the Community Forestry Program of the Idaho Dept. of Lands.

Richard E. Burns (Fairbanks '64)

Richard died May 20, 2020. He had lived in The Dalles, Oregon. He earned a bachelor's in General Studies from Southern Oregon University in 1967. He had an extensive and varied work history including work with the USFS/BLM, fireman for City of Ashland, and work in the Alaska oilfields 1975-91 when he retired. After retirement he continued to work in the oilfields as a consultant commuting between the lower forty-eight and Alaska. Richard jumped at Fairbanks in 1964.

Final Request

by “Swede” Troedsson (Missoula '59)

On August 3rd, 1959, eight of us jumped the Fawn Ridge Fire above the Salmon River. The next day, after declaring the small lighting-caused fire out, we hiked down to Lanz Bar and were transported upriver by jet boat to the Corn Creek boat ramp. We spent the night at the Salmon Ranger Station. The next morning, we boarded a Johnson Flying Service DC-3 at the Salmon Airport for the flight to Missoula.

On the flight to Missoula, the word was passed that two jumpers died the previous day in a fiery Ford Trimotor plane crash in Moose Creek. One of the jumpers was **Gary Williams** (MSO-59), a good buddy and college classmate of mine. Gary and I had trained together that year. The news brought tears to my eyes.

Shortly thereafter, Gary's fiancé came out to the Missoula Smokejumper Base to look me up. She wanted to know how Gary died. I took her by the hand and led her into an unoccupied room in the dorm and quietly closed the door. Struggling to keep my composure, I gently related the circumstances and cause of Gary's death.

When that gorgeous and devastated woman left, I wondered what the future held for her.

I found out later that Gary was sitting in the cabin under the aircraft wing. When the plane crashed, gasoline from the wing fuel tank poured over Gary and ignited. Gary, critically burned, dashed out of the plane and collapsed on the ground. Two jumpers, **Roland Pera** (MSO-56) and **Bob Reid** (MSO-57) had hiked into Moose Creek earlier that morning off a two-man fire and were waiting to be flown to Missoula. They witnessed the crash and ran over to **John Rolf** (MSO-57) and Gary, who were both badly burned, to render aid and comfort. Gary died about an hour after the crash. John, who was still lucid, knew that Roland had a beautiful singing voice and asked Roland to sing to him. It was John's final request. He died in Grangeville later that afternoon from his burns.

Eventually Gary's former fiancé married a college classmate and good friend of mine. I was elated. I had the pleasure of being invited to their fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration at the Chico Hot Springs Resort in Pray, MT.