



THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
APRIL 2023

SMOKEJUMPER

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Message from the President



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

PART OF THE mission of the National Smokejumper Association (NSA) is to preserve smokejumper history. One of the best ways this is accomplished is through written personal accounts of smokejumpers, pilots, and others who contribute to this magazine. And, because smokejumping was filled with numerous adventures in wild places, every smokejumper holds a piece of history. You are encouraged to write a short piece about one or more of your own experiences. By doing so, you will contribute to smokejumper history, and, if published in *Smokejumper*, it will be electronically stored for posterity at Eastern Washington University. This will allow others, including your children and theirs, to have access to your history as a smokejumper.

This issue of *Smokejumper* includes three such accounts. “The Best Summer Ever, Part

II,” is **Norm Pawlowski’s** (CJ-57) account of a two-manner out of Cave Junction in 1958. As a side note, following Norm’s six years of smoke-jumping, he earned his Ph.D. in physical organic chemistry which he employed as a university professor and later in private industry.

“The Rescue Jump for ‘Animal’ Ed Weissenback” (CJ-64), by **Bruce Jackson** (RAC-69) and **Bill Vaughn** (RAC-69), shares a daunting story of courage and skill by all involved. That is especially true of the nameless helicopter pilot written about in the story.

You are encouraged to write a short piece about one or more of your own experiences.

“Moose Creek 1959—Let’s Not Forget” is a brief article recounting the tragic crash of a Trimotor at Moose Creek in 1959 that killed **John Rolf** (MSO-57), **Gary Williams** (MSO-57), and **Alva Blackerby**, Nez Perce Forest Supervisor. The subsequent, “Letter to John Rolf,” written by Associate Life Member, **Bob Burns**, is a moving tribute that demonstrates the influence that John Rolf had beyond smokejumping. 🦋

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.*)

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

Get *Smokejumper* One Month Earlier

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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. 📧

1958: The Best Summer Ever

Part 2: Tanoak and the Old Glory Fire

by Norm Pawlowski (Cave Junction '57)

Most people think of Tanoak as a tree which can grow huge, to 130 feet tall, and is common to the mountains of the western parts of the Siskiyou and Klamath National Forests. But there is also a Dwarf Tanoak with similar leaves and bark, a shrub that grows abundantly in the same forests, often occurring in tracts that can cover hillsides. There is not much technical literature on Dwarf Tanoak, probably because some consider it worthless brush. Put me in that category.

When Cave Junction had visitors from other bases such as North Cascades and Missoula, they were confounded and complained about the Manzanita and Dwarf Tanoak in Southern Oregon and Northern California. Both pernicious species gave smokejumpers fits while building fireline. They are tough, springy and grow close to the ground, often on rocky ground where other species do not thrive well. I grew up in an area with lots of Manzanita with its smooth red bark, and I can deal with it, no problem. But I dreaded getting into Dwarf Tanoak.

Besides being tough and springy, Dwarf Tanoak has thick, brown, fuzzy dust (hairs) on the bottom of its leaves. Some sources say this dust includes Tanoak pollen, as the dust is heavier in June than in August. I did not know why this dust was there, but I loathed it. On packouts, when we would have to trudge through fields of Tanoak, I would look for a way around it, even if it meant considerably more distance, because that dust would get in your eyes, nose, and mouth. Worse, it would get on one's skin, arms, and face, and under one's shirt causing an irritating itch. Perspiration made the itching worse. Did I say I hated Tanoak brush?

August 24, 1958, my second season. Cave Junction was in another huge fire bust, when I returned from a fire in the wee hours of a Sunday morning. I learned that, while I was gone, base

manager **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46) had imported booster crews from North Cascades, Redding, and Missoula, but there was hardly anyone on the base. I was dead tired with little sleep the past few days. I was also plenty hungry, but the mess hall was closed. After taking care of my jump gear and a shower, I went directly to bed for some badly needed shuteye. It was slightly after 3 a.m.

At the crack of first light (which would be about 4:30 a.m.), I was awakened when base manager Jim Allen was across the hall waking up **Ralph Bryant** (CJ-57). Ralph responded in his usual slow drawl: "Didn't Jack (**Jack Harter**, CJ-51) tell you? All our jump gear burned up in the fire. I don't have a jumpsuit." Jim responded: "Oh, *expletive deleted*," and left. I was greatly relieved when Jim rushed out, rather than stepping across the hall and grabbing me with only an hour's sleep during the past 36 hours. I was bone tired.

On Sundays, the Cave Junction mess hall served breakfast at 10 a.m. Around 9:30 a.m., I dragged my dead-tired body into the mess hall. The talk of the morning was the Old Glory Fire, just north of the CJ base. The smoke could be seen from the airstrip. It was said that **Buster Moore** (RDD-57), who had trained with us at Cave Junction the year before, was on that fire with three other Redding jumpers. Whenever Buster was around, everyone would mention it as if Buster was some sort of celebrity. He was a celebrity as far as I was concerned, but I still have no idea why. Buster had called for more jumpers, and they dropped in four guys from Winthrop (North Cascades, today). I thought: "Oh, those poor guys. That's a terrible place for a fire."

I filled my plate with a wonderful breakfast, but before I could take a bite, the intercom blared loudly: "Two men on the Siskiyou, Wessell—Pawlowski." Minutes later we were airborne, flying

north in a Twin Beech. Man was I hungry, but the excitement eradicated my tiredness. At that time, I did not realize that for the rest of the day I would be remembering an inventory of the good items left on that breakfast plate.

As we flew north, I lost track of how many ridges we crossed, but they all looked similar and steep with Tanoak on the south side and timber on the north side. Then, **Al Boucher** (CJ-49) said: "There's the Old Glory Fire. Buster Moore's on that one." The fire was burning hot on the south side of the ridge and had grown to a couple acres. There were four parachutes spread over the Tanoak next to the fire. My thoughts were: "Oh, those poor guys. That fire doesn't have far to grow for them to lose their jump gear, and the day is heating up." I felt genuine empathy for them.

Relieved that it wasn't my fire, we optimistically proceeded north. The ridge north looked exactly like the ridge with the Old Glory Fire just over the ridge-crest, still in tall trees. It was immediately clear, "Al is going to drop us into that Tanoak, and if that fire gets to the ridge top and into the Tanoak, two guys won't be able to hold it. It will turn into an Old Glory Fire and our jump gear will get burned up, just like Ralph's." There was definitely an ambience of urgency.

We jumped in the tall timber on the north side of the ridge, and my attention was immediately riveted on a long track of blazing Tanoak leading up to the ridge top. Under the timber, the place was like a park. Except for this Tanoak hedge, everywhere else was slowly burning and did not need our immediate attention. But with this flaming Tanoak hedge, time was critical. But my jump partner, **Dick Wessell** (CJ-56), suddenly disappeared. "Where'd he go?"

I dropped my firepack, pulled out the Pulaski, ready to attack this blazing hedge of Tanoak. It was growing out of what appeared to be a rocky creek bottom. How can there be a creek bottom at the top of a ridge where there is no source of water and nowhere for water to be collected? I have run across this conundrum many times, never understanding how a drainage or creek bottom can materialize at a hilltop.

Branches of Tanoak were growing horizontally for a foot or two, laying across rocks and turning

upward into a hedge that was eight or nine feet high. One needs a sharp ax to cut it.

I was in a difficult situation. The further uphill one cuts a firebreak, the wider the hedge. If one builds a firebreak where it is narrow, one risks being overrun by fire. "Where's Wessell?"

I started chopping and pulling out long branches of Tanoak with my eyes watering and choking on smoke. I could only keep my eyes open wide enough to see where the Pulaski needed to hit. Over halfway through, I was pleased with the progress I was making.

Suddenly, I was getting lots of sharp stings. Something is all over my head and stinging the hell out of me. I ran out into the clearing where I could open my eyes, only to discover a swarm of yellow-striped, flying things swirling around my head. I took off full speed to outrun them. I yelled for Wessell. No response. "Where's Wessell?"

Circling back to my fireline, I discovered a giant paper wasp's nest hanging on the end of the branch that I had been chopping. "Where's Wessell?"

There was no other choice but to start a new fireline further uphill. The line I chose this time was the final choice. Eyes watering and nose irritated by smoke, it was a race against fire to get a line completed before smoke and flames became unendurable. I remembered that there was a wasp problem to worry about. I looked downhill and saw the giant paper wasp nest in flames. End of wasp problem. At that point, I also realized that the lower firebreak had significantly slowed the fire. "Where's Wessell?"

With a line completed through that Tanoak just in the nick of time, the fire burned itself out quickly. It was like someone had turned off a switch. Stepping back and contemplating, it was a relief to have finally won the race against fire. About that time, Wessell showed up, and in his typical, loud, bellowing voice that could be heard all the way back to the airstrip, he yelled, "Is that all the fireline you have built? What the hell have you been doing?"

There are few people on this earth who are as slow to anger as myself. I have become angered only a few times in my entire life. Having refereed basketball games for 25 years, and with all the nasty things coaches and fans say and do, not

once have I reacted with anger. At times I have been criticized for not issuing technical fouls, but a technical foul never helps the game, nor does anyone or anything any good. But on this day in 1958, I lost my cool and vociferously shouted back a string of four-letter words at Dick. Letting off this steam did not reduce my anger, not one bit.

Now, to be fair to Dick, I knew him better than anyone at the base. It was his style of humor that when someone screwed up something, he would boisterously and laughingly (in good humor) wail it like a bullhorn. That was typical Wessell, and he had provided me with a lot of laughing, even if I were the one to have screwed up. In his favor, Dick did not react to my anger. He remained calm, pleasant, and friendly. Nonetheless, I was angry on this day and stayed that way while we gathered up our jump gear. The fire had burned out so completely that there was no mopup.

In 1958, some of us still had canvas jumpsuits. With a main, reserve, harness, helmet, letdown rope, backboard, and seamless sack, a minimum pack weighed 80 pounds. Add to that tools and cargo chutes. These were not small, light packs. While putting my pack together, I was thinking, "I'm going to walk his ass off on the packout." We had several miles of packout ahead of us. Everyone with whom I had a fire, complained about my fast pace on packouts, and I had run circles around Wessell during training, so I had plenty of confidence that I could make him pay.

Then, all at once, I realized "Wessell's gone." He had picked up his pack and taken off without me, not saying so much as "Boo." I picked up my pack and raced downhill. The hill was so steep, it was all brakes and sliding downhill, digging big divots in the terra firma. Further downhill, to my surprise, there was a finger of the fire that had crept downhill 200 or 300 yards. Forest Service rules required the entire burn-area be completely enclosed with firebreak before leaving a burn. Alright, that explained where Wessell had been, but the fire had gone out on its own without reaching Dick's fireline. The fire may have been out even before he scraped the ground clean.

It was another half mile to the bottom canyon where I picked up a trail and proceeded east. I had

to run on that trail quite a ways to catch Wessell. When I caught up to him, he was laughing, adding to the insult of having been left behind. Now realize, Dick was over 6' tall, 3' broad, a bruiser football player, and well over the weight limit allowable for smokejumpers. Those big packs didn't slow him down at all, and there was no way he was going to let me pass. It was a foot race all the way. After a while I knew that I wasn't going to be able to get around him. I realized it was an esthetic, well-graded trail, beautiful forest, great weather, and we were having good, crazy fun racing down the trail with killer packs. My anger suddenly subsided.

I continued to contemplate that we were collecting 18 hours of overtime that day, and we would be back to the base and onto the jump list before many other jumpers get back. We could very well get another fire jump before this fire bust is over. With those pleasant, calming thoughts, I also came to the realization that I had turned 20-years-old a few days earlier. We had been so busy I had completely forgotten and had not given it a single thought. I loved this job so much, every minute of every day. We were back at the base that same evening just after midnight, well after the mess hall had closed. "Damn, I'm still hungry."

This was my one and only fire jump with Dick Wessell, although we worked together at Cave Junction for six years. Later years, every time that I would see Dick at a retirement party or a reunion, he would bring up this fire adventure and laugh at me, which caused me to write this story about 20 years ago. But a restore command overwrote my personal files and everything was lost. It's taken me this long to write it again. I'm sorry to say, Richard Wessell is no longer with us, and I won't be here much longer either.

Norm jumped at CJ 1957-61 and 1964. He earned his Ph.D. in Physical-Organic Chemistry from Oregon State University. He was an instructor at the University of Michigan, Professor at Illinois State University and Oregon State University, and Chemist and Regulatory Manager for Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis, Oregon. In retirement, he is a Christmas Tree Farmer and a longtime Basketball Official and Evaluator/Trainer of Basketball Officials. (Ed.) 🦋

Defending the Tribe

by Conor Hogan (North Cascades '02)

Spring. A season announced by the throttled honk of geese flying north and wrinkled morels nosing up through the mud. By the crashing syllables of fresh-melt streams and pollen's allergic nip in the air. By the quick rinse of cloudbursts. And, at every smokejumper base across the country, a season announced by the exhausted groans of rookie candidates, followed by the frustrated excoriations of their trainers.

As we watch candidates sprint past the loft and listen to them sound off pull-ups, we recall our own rookie experience. We swap stories about *our* lead trainers, look back at pictures of our ripped-up hands or trench-rotted feet, and show each other the nickel-sized scars flanking our tailbones. We shake our heads and mutter: "Thank God we don't have to do *that* again." In this season of regeneration and new life, rookie training is another form of birth: bloody, sweaty, and painful.

In 2021, I drove from NCSB to Redding for a joint training between the two bases. Like every base, Redding has cultivated their own methods for testing rookies based on the specific traits of their jump country. In California, these traits include poison oak, heat, and trees. Redding candidates will spend days covered in oak-rash and drenched in sweat, humping their way up some of the biggest trees on the planet, while trainers 100 feet below shout: "Hurry up!"

Missoula has the 24-Hour Line Dig. North Cascades has the Box of Fun. Grangeville has the Prairie Run. We've all heard about the various rites of initiation jumpers have invented. However, no matter the base, a candidate can expect a few universals: a vertiginous learning curve, the omnipresent threat of failure, and an impatient, aggressive training cadre. After getting shouted at yet again for taking too long, a thought inevitably arises in a rookie's mind: Is all this hostility necessary?

It's a fair question. There's no subsection in the Ram-Air Training Guide that states: *Trainers must treat all rookies with contempt, constantly ques-*

tion their commitment, and punish any error with calisthenics. Yet it is taken as a given that rookie training will be brutal: mentally, physically, and emotionally. Why?

The standard reasoning is this: First, smoke-jumping is a demanding job, and the program must be certain that every rookie can shoulder the workload an eight-manner in the Salmon River Breaks will require. Second, flying a parachute into mountainous terrain is stressful, and the trainers' severity pressure-tests each candidate's stress response. If you can recite your jump count 11 miles into a run while the rest of your RBs struggle to hold a plank, you will always be able to recite your jump count. If a trainer makes your class do 94 pushups when you forget to disconnect your RSL, the next time you enter your key point, you will remember to pop your snap shackle. Or so the theory goes.

However, it becomes clear which candidates are objectively fit enough after the first few sessions of PT. Beyond that, workouts test a candidate's mental fortitude. But if the exclusive aim of rookie training is to teach neophytes how to fly a Ram-Air parachute, then trainers hollering, "Are you kidding? Keep your back straight!" is not a self-evidently optimal instructional technique.

First, the stress of flying a parachute is not the same as the stress of being screamed at. Environmental risk factors activate a different psychological response than adverse group dynamics. Plenty of rock climbers would fall if someone started berating them. Most F1 drivers would be more likely to crash if every time they pulled over, their pit crew screamed about all their mistakes. The *interpersonal* anxiety generated during training has likely washed a few candidates who would have otherwise made fine smokejumpers.

Furthermore, plenty of evidence suggests a negative correlation between anxiety and comprehension. Dr. Judy Willis writes in her article *The Neuroscience Behind Stress and Learning*:

“The neuro-scientific research about learning has revealed the negative impact of stress and anxiety and the qualitative improvement of the brain circuitry involved in memory and executive function that accompanies positive motivation and engagement.” If the sole value of rookie training is producing as many competent parachutists as possible, it might be worth reevaluating the tradition of trainers acting like drill sergeants.

However, that is *not* the sole value of rookie training. Particularly in our strange, uncertain age, with its attendant crises of war, disaffection, and environmental devastation, smokejumper rookie training serves as a singular model for promoting human flourishing in the 21st century. It offers a glimpse of how we might thrive, rather than simply survive.

We are obsessed with the narrative of the battlefield as the birthplace of heroes. Our oldest stories, like *The Iliad*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *David and Goliath*, all tell of men winning glory after slaying their people’s enemies. Films like *American Sniper*, *Lone Survivor*, and *Top Gun: Maverick* dominate box offices. Combat is broadly understood as the apotheosis of masculinity. Chris Hedges writes in his book *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*: “Many young men, schooled in the notion that war is the ultimate definition of manhood [and] that they can discover their worth as human beings in battle, willingly join the great enterprise.”

But if conflicts ever depended on individual strength or courage, those days are gone. Now, battles are determined by the sheer weight of machinery. Sebastian Junger writes in *War*: “The idea that there are rules in warfare and that combatants kill each other according to basic concepts of fairness probably ended for good with the machine gun.” Inventions like tanks, Tomahawk missiles, and Reaper drones drained the melodrama warfare might have contained back in the days of horse-mounted cavalry and swordfights. America’s 21st century military exploits can be distilled to Junger’s description of soldiers launching \$80,000 Javelin rounds at Afghans a half-mile away: artillery “fired by a guy who doesn’t make that in a year at a guy who doesn’t make that in a lifetime.” Yet despite the mechanized brutality of modern combat, some still view committing violence on

behalf of the state as the highest manifestation of bravery.

I am writing this during a two-week stay as a human rights observer in Acteal, a village in Mexico’s Lacandon jungle. The community just commemorated the anniversary of a massacre committed here in 1997, when members of a government-sponsored paramilitary unit gunned down 45 people praying for peace in the region. After slaughtering the prayer group, the soldiers then eviscerated four pregnant women. This atrocity is much more emblematic of modern combat than Tom Cruise barrel-rolling F-18s over snow-capped mountains. Yet even as I type these words, two young boys who grew up in Acteal are pointing pistol-shaped sticks at each other and shouting: *Boom!*

Given the megatonnage of modern weaponry, any world where humans continue to fight *en masse* makes our collective suicide overwhelmingly likely. But for all its horror, warfare is often addictive. Relationships forged in battle can make civilian friendships seem like cheap facsimiles. Having an enemy shoot at you tends to infuse life with a *prima facie* sense of purpose: Don’t get shot. Junger observes: “Perfectly sane, good men have been drawn back to combat over and over again, and anyone interested in the idea of world peace would do well to know what they’re looking for. Not killing...but the other side of the equation: protecting. The defense of the tribe is an insanely compelling idea, and once you’ve been exposed to it, there’s almost nothing you’d rather do.”

Revering those who “defend the tribe” is a social universal, and rightly so. We should celebrate those who protect others. But unless we graduate beyond our current, impoverished notions of “defend” and “tribe,” the human experiment will end in agony. To relinquish all that gore and adrenaline and fraternity, we must replace war with a new tradition. Cristina Garcia writes in her book *Grieving*: “Only when societies can invent something more exciting, riskier, more adventurous, more revolutionary, will we be able to say, truthfully, that we are against war.”

This, then, is the great challenge of our age: to create a narrative more thrilling than bloodshed. America’s rising rates of anxiety, opioid abuse, and

extremism suggest we want a story more compelling than the pursuit of incremental raises. Ivy League students hurling bricks through storefronts during protests and Q-Anon adherents trampling Capitol police officers to death demonstrate how, bereft of some purpose, people will invent their own dramas of righteous struggle, no matter how preposterous.

Yet even as we invent increasingly asinine permutations of us-versus-them, our real enemies are committing atrocities. These enemies kill the innocent, then leave their bodies in plain sight: bloated corpses floating through Houston floodwaters, toddlers crushed to death by mudslides in Santa Barbara, grandparents burned alive in Oregon. The carbon dioxide cooking our air, the methane strangling our sky: while we contemplate waging civil war over who can use which bathroom, these molecules are planning genocides.

Most scientists predict an average global warming of between two and three degrees Celsius by 2100. David Wallace-Wells writes in *The Uninhabitable Earth*, that at two degrees, “cities now home to millions, across India and the Middle East, would become so hot that stepping outside in summer would be a lethal risk, and wildfires already terrifying anyone living in the American West would burn at least four times as much land.” Three degrees means widespread drought and food insecurity, and in the United States, living with “sixteen times as much devastation from fire as we are today.” The coming decades are going to be full of natural catastrophes the likes of which we’ve never seen. Our current emissions course guarantees that life everywhere will get much, much harder.

ROOKIE TRAINING IS FULL of tasks that at first, seem impossible. Whether it’s suiting up in two minutes, or completing some heinous PT hike, or landing on a mountaintop surrounded by cliffs, every day, a candidate must ignore some initial flicker of hopelessness. They must master breaking assignments down into their component parts and focusing only on the task at hand. They must become comfortable with physical failure. They must learn from their mistakes, without letting their mistakes cripple them. They must

continue to perform, deep into exhaustion.

Most comprehensively difficult apprenticeships involve violence. If someone wants to discover the boundaries of their mental and physical capabilities, and is willing to kill on behalf of the government, options abound: Delta Force, Marine MARSOCs, the LAPD Academy. However, if a young person wants to explore the depths of their resolve, but does not want to shoot other human beings, their choices are few and far between. This is a problem.

It’s a problem because confrontation with one’s bodily limits fosters a mental fortitude that the rote memorization of information does not. As temperatures around the world climb, we must encourage traditions that promote mental fortitude, because our species’ continued success is far from guaranteed. Cultures everywhere developed rites of passage to test their youths’ physical resolve not just because life once demanded a higher level of aerobic fitness, but because physical resolve fosters a general sense of competence. Mircea Eliade notes in his book *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*: “...one of the characteristics of the modern world is the disappearance of any meaningful rites of initiation. Of primary importance in traditional societies, in the modern Western world, significant initiation is practically nonexistent.”

From Masai circumcision ceremonies to Aboriginal boras to the Spartan agoge, these rituals taught young people their own strength and shared certain characteristics: prolonged discomfort, dramatized disdain from the society’s elder members, and finally, acceptance into the tribe. The self-esteem a rookie feels at graduation is commensurate with the suffering they have endured. All the runs, all the sit-ups, and all the yelling combine to deepen the sense of achievement.

But the trainer’s harshness serves a deeper purpose than simply augmenting a rookie’s pride or testing how each candidate handles fatigue. It creates a sense of veneration, as the training cadre come to represent the smokejumper program generally. The candidates, as they try to prove themselves worthy of admittance, develop a deferential loyalty to the broader organization. Those purgatorial six weeks reinforce the idea that membership is a privilege, not a right.

Simultaneously, candidates feel respected by the effort being demanded of them. Although it seems anathema in our modern culture, being told to climb big trees after a long run, or hike for miles with 90 pounds, or dig line for 24 hours straight is a form of recognition. The underlying message is: *You are tougher than you think*. The work ethic that defines the jump program is so rare, precisely for this reason: People expend the greatest effort when they respect, and feel respected by, the organization of which they form a part of. If a community demands nothing of its participants, it will receive nothing in return.

Our national conversation is obsessed with what America owes its people, while any discussion about what a citizen owes their nation has all but evaporated. Rather than appreciate the institutions that allow such an improbable level of comfort, many Americans compare our country to some imagined utopia, and deem it irredeemably corrupt. Rather than try to improve on the accomplishments of our ancestors, we focus only on their failings. We have been taught to look for ways we have been wronged, rather than understand ourselves as the sort of people who can succeed in trying circumstances.

In 2018, I received a Fulbright grant to teach in Mexico. The program's weeklong orientation consisted of presentations on Mexican cuisine, discussions about cultural sensitivity, and more than a few trigger warnings. After five days of slideshows, we all left for our respective assignments. Most in my cohort were recent college graduates with scant teaching experience. Many felt overwhelmed and staged a protest at our mid-year reunion, decrying what they perceived as a lack of programmatic support. They felt exploited by their schools, slighted by other teachers, and disrespected by their students.

When I stood for the first time in front of 40 rambunctious Mexican middle schoolers, I also felt a twist of panic. It wasn't the PowerPoint on how to identify a microaggression presented during the previous week's orientation that calmed me down. It was the mindfulness techniques that my crew supervisor and former Missoula smokejumper **Carrie Johnson** (MSO-07) had drilled into us during workouts the summer before.

It is a bitter historical irony that, at a moment

when the world is feeling the first paroxysms of the greatest crisis our species has ever faced, we have stripped away the customs that once encouraged resilience in our youth. California wildfires, Southeastern hurricanes, Midwestern blizzards: recent natural disasters are nothing compared to the chaos 2050 has in store. It's difficult to overstate the damage global warming will wreak, and the human strength that will be required to mitigate that damage. Yet a philosophy of what psychologist Jonathan Haidt calls "vindictive protectiveness" inculcated an idea in Millennials: "Life is dangerous, but adults will do everything in their power to protect you from harm."

Now that Millennials *are* the adults, we appear cowed by the dysfunction facing us (perhaps this is why we keep electing members of the Silent Generation to power: Better to live under a gerontocracy than assume responsibility). Take climate change: Millennials have mastered the art of performative ecological conscientiousness, but in the realpolitik of effecting meaningful change, we have proven incompetent. We have been told that the difficulties we face are someone else's fault and someone else's responsibility, so we post a brief screed on social media and then go about our business.

Rookie training is defined by a sense of urgency. Candidates run everywhere, are terrified of being last, and are constantly told to "Hurry up!" My RBs and I were regularly admonished for dithering in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles. We were instructed to act decisively, even when a situation seemed hopeless, and chided for clinging to strategies that were no longer viable. If Redding's training philosophy had to be summed up into a few words, it would be: "Act, then react."

This attitude, of responding energetically even when success is uncertain, then reevaluating as a situation evolves, describes proper initial attack. A subalpine torches and throws embers a quarter mile upslope, a burning log rolls to the valley bottom and starts a spot fire, the wind increases by ten miles per hour. We don't give up when a wildfire complexifies. We come up with a new plan. A smokejumper's posture, of vigorous adaptability, must be exported into the broader population.

We are out of time regarding climate change. To avoid vast, grotesque, *unnecessary* suffering, we need to immediately take the kind of aggressive action that characterized America's 20th century war response. Saul Griffith, in his book *Electrify!*, writes that "the industrial mobilization required to hit the climate targets that our children deserve will require an effort similar to World War II's 'Arsenal of Democracy' in size, speed, and scope." Griffith discusses how unfeasible this "war-time mobilization" appears in our current culture. To take one example, switching to a solar-based power grid would require 15 million acres of solar panels: "more than two-thirds of all available roofs, roads, and parking spaces" in America.

But if we want a future with any biodiversity, fresh water, or clean air, we must snap out of our lethargic, aggrieved pessimism, and understand ourselves as a people who can grapple with genuine adversity. Some measure of failure is guaranteed in the climate problem; the earth has already warmed 1.1° C since 1880. Half that increase occurred in the last four decades.

However, this shouldn't be paralyzing. It should be motivating. Humans evolved solving problems, and solving problems is where we find meaning. And, for the first time in history, all human beings are on the same side: global warming is catastrophic for *everyone*. Disease, water shortages, climate refugees: Within all the calamities certain to unfold over the next decades, there will be manifold opportunities to demonstrate valiance, strength, and selflessness. Responding to climate change offers the opportunity to defend our tribe, without having to maim another. We should understand this as the fight of our generation, and prepare appropriately. We should all feel the buzz of a wartime recruit, the camaraderie of a people under siege.

That's why smokejumper rookie training is so vital, not just for the Forest Service, but for America, and the world in general. Yes, it trains a specific type of firefighter, but it is also one of the few programs cultivating the proper attitude for 21st century citizens. Wallace-Wells writes: "...the effect of wildfires on emissions is among the most feared climate feedback loops—that the world's forests, which have typically been carbon sinks,

would become carbon sources, unleashing all that stored gas." Around the world, "deforestation accounts for about 12 percent of carbon emissions, and forest fires produce as much as 25 percent."

Given just how difficult protecting our trees promises to be in the coming decades, a smokejumper training cadre's severity is not only justified, but imperative. Regardless of whether a hostile instructional environment is optimally conducive to teaching someone how to fly a parachute, the trainers' acerbity makes rookie training harder. Weathering this difficulty reinforces in a rookie's mind the knowledge that they can overcome real challenges. The Forest Service should zealously guard the instructional environment of its smokejumper bases, and the bases should serve as a model for any organization confronting the major problems of our time.

Smokejumpers tend to recall two things about their rookie experience. First is the excitement of those six weeks: not just the jumps, but the challenge of making it one day to the next. The condescending philosophy that people are weak and must be protected has become pervasive over the last several decades. To be in an environment where instructors brook no excuse and only your best is acceptable offers an increasingly rare thrill.

Second is a sense of awe at the progress crammed into a month and a half. For a novice to learn, in six weeks, how to land a Ram-Air parachute in a half-acre spot surrounded by timber is a remarkable feat. Perhaps more remarkable still is how many people manage it. Yes, half the candidates wash. But half the candidates *don't*. None of my RBs were freak athletes or savants. We were all relatively fit and intelligent, yes, but well within a standard deviation of the general public. The resolve demonstrated by every rookie class, the bravery it takes to shove out of an airplane for the first time, hints at a vast potential languishing within our population.

The climate crisis, instead of crippling us, could be what unleashes this potential. Smokejumper rookie training is a rite of passage for this new age, an example of how society should prepare for the carbon enemy at our doorstep. We are not a fragile species, despite what we have been told. We are innovators, warriors, survivors. And we are under attack. How *should* we be training? 🧑🏻‍🔧

Historical Preservation Two Approaches



— REGION 4 — SMOKEJUMPERS

www.r4jumpers.com

If you trained in Region 4—at McCall, Idaho City, or Boise (through 1979)—and you don't know about the website *r4jumpers.com*, you have much to experience.

The website developed with John Snedden(BOI-73) and the meticulous data extraction of Leo Cromwell (IDC-67) provides a wide range of varied data and pictorial history to chronical the “Who’s Who in Region 4 Smokejumping.”

Choose our base and all jumpers are named. Find your name among those jumpers and you can find your recorded Fire Jumps along with dates, fire names, locations, and other jumpers on that fire. In most cases you will also see a youthful picture of yourself. Or choose a Fire Year and you will likely find a Crew Picture for that year and along with all fires for that year, which are searchable.

Using other provided sources, and you can search and retrieve information across Jump years. This is an elegant site. We can thank Cromwell for the tireless effort as an historian and as a math teacher, who has pulled lost statistics from forgotten places and who has dredged yearly FS reports to keep this site current and fresh.

Recreate your own history from *r4umpers.com* and watch as the site continues to maintain a high standard of Smokejumping data.



EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY EWU DIGITAL COMMONS

www.dc.ewu.edu/smokejumpers

The National Smokejumper Association has collaborated with the Archives Library at the Eastern Washington University, creating a permanent repository for Smokejumper history, using the academic website Digital Commons. Digital Commons is a global showcase to feature institutional research and scholarship.

The NSA/EWU website, *dc.ewu.ed/smokejumpers*, is a vault into which our Smokejumper history can be placed and its content largely retrieved online. Content is curated for accuracy, quality, and condition.

Browse through the present offering for collections of photos (Crew pictures; photographic collections) publications (base histories, base reports, stories); a full collection of *Static Line* and *Smokejumper* magazine; videos and film on Smokejumping; Smokejumper biographies; and, more. Much of the content is retrievable to be printed or to be downloaded. Typically, many history repositories require a physical presence to examine their contents. The NSA/EWU website provides immediate retrieval of information and data, reproduceable and downloadable.

Submissions are welcomed from all Smokejumpers, their associates, and family members, especially photographs, individual histories, and documents. Hope is to continue to collect similar information and especially histories of each Smokejumper base beginning with the original experiments that sparked Smokejumping in 1939. Projects will be ongoing and new content will be added as it is properly collected and organized.

Landowners File Suits Against USFS— Chetco Bar Fire Oregon

Courtesy Bill Gabbert *Wildfire Today*

Two lawsuits have been filed in federal court for firing operations that burned private land during the Chetco Bar Fire that eventually burned more than 191,000 acres on land managed by the USFS and private landowners in Southwest Oregon.

The suit, under the Tucker Act for inverse condemnation, seeks compensation for “property taken” by the USFS in its use and management of the Chetco Bar Fire. It alleges that between August 17—20, 2017, the USFS conducted firing operations on their property “to achieve its natural resource management objections, and to otherwise manage its lands.”

“USFS employed planned ignitions in the form of large-scale backfires designed to artificially grow the naturally occurring wildfire to sizes much larger than if it had been left to burn naturally. The large-scale planned ignitions on the Chetco Bar Fire ignored political and property boundaries and used Plaintiffs’ nonfederal resources as backfire fuel, imposing the costs of the natural resource management objectives upon Plaintiffs.”

The Chetco Bar Fire started from a lightning strike during a storm June 24-25, 2017, and was first reported by an airline pilot 17 days later.

The attorney representing the landowners is **Quintin Rhoades** (MSO-89) and is not your typical barrister. He worked as a wildland firefighter for eight seasons and was a smokejumper at Missoula and West Yellowstone (1989-94). In 2012, he represented owners of a Montana ranch who won a \$750,000 judgement against the state of Montana when firefighters on the Ryan Gulch Fire employed firing operations which burned 900 acres of the ranch’s land.

Additional Notes From Editor, *Smokejumper* magazine

Quentin was among the jumpers on the South

Canyon Fire in 1994 on which 14 firefighters were killed, including smokejumpers **Roger Roth** (MYC-92), **Jim Thrash** (MYC-81) and **Don Mackey** (MSO-87). I’m going to take the liberty to go off subject and expand on this fire. Let’s look at the fire Quentin was involved in during the 1994 seasons. It is an historic event.

From the NSA website under “Smokejumpers Killed in the Line of Duty,” I wrote over 80 pages with all the historical information that I could find on these men. Take the time to read this document.

I was surprised to find out that I had a nephew of Jim Thrash in one of my P.E. classes at Chico Jr. H.S. Jim attended Pasadena City College, where he played baseball. He moved to Nampa, Idaho, where he taught social studies and Spanish while coaching the varsity baseball team at Middleton H.S. In 1983 Jim moved to New Meadows, Idaho, and established the Salmon Meadows Lodge-Warren Outfitters hunting guide business. Jim helped beat back congressional efforts to enact bills that trammled wilderness. He kept alive hope of serious legislation to do what’s right for wilderness and outfitters. “But underneath there was an unspoken bond: He didn’t intend to lose the battle. This is how the conservationists and outfitters knew Jim Thrash.”

Roger Roth was, as most smokejumpers are, an amazing individual with an extensive background. He was a private helicopter pilot and a master mechanic. He enjoyed parachuting, the outdoors, and helping people. Smokejumping allowed him to do all those things. He was loved intensely by his parents and family. Roger always found time to make it home and spend quality time with his family. He understood that time and friendship were the most important gifts one can give in life.

From one of his fellow jumpers at McCall: “He was a master mechanic and soon after his arrival

in McCall, he became the base mechanic. After work or on days off, if one were looking for Roger, all one had to do was go out to the parking lot and look for a pair of legs sticking out from under someone's car. People would find him there, up to his elbows in grease and enjoying every minute of it."

Don Mackey was a "smokejumpers' smoke-jumper." At the age of 34, he had a reputation in the Bitterroot Valley and beyond as a hunter and teller of firefighter tales.

"The Twin Otter rolled down the runway at

5:20 p.m., July 5. On the radio, spotter **Sean Cross** (FBX-83) talked to retardant pilot Randy Sullivan, who was flying back from Storm King. He warned Cross that he had seen no place clear to drop jumpers. Mackay hollered to the others that the fire was in steep terrain. 'Steep? We want steep! Give us steep terrain!' the shouts came back. The hot current of an adrenaline rush pumped through their veins."

Wow, I really went off on a tangent, but you readers need to read smokejumper history. Jump steep terrain? 🧑‍🚒

Recollections Of My Rookie Year

by **Mark Johnson** (Missoula '69)

"How'd you get into that?" I'm often asked when describing my smokejumper experience. As in, "What kind of a crazy person are you?" I explain that growing up as I did in NW Montana and working for the Forest Service, it is understandable. In the Forest Service, smokejumpers are Montana legend.

I worked seasonally for the USFS on district crews from 1965-68. My first summer out of high school, I worked on a trail construction crew on the Condon Ranger District, Flathead N.F. (There I would meet future Missoula '69ers **Bill Yount** and **Dave Dayton**.) For the next three summers, I worked on the Glacier View District, Flathead N.F., mostly doing timber stand improvement, a.k.a. thinning. (There on the Big Creek Hotshots, I would meet future Missoula '69ers **Robin Hamilton**, **Luke Lemke**, and **Ed Nellist**.) But regardless of your assigned job, when working for the Forest Service you eventually find yourself fighting fire. All seasonal employees were required to attend a week-long "fire school," where we were instructed in basic firefighting skills, including using a map and compass. The summer of '67 was a bad fire year in Region One, so I spent over half of the summer on fires. One day in mid-July while working with the thinning crew, the district fire control officer drove to the jobsite and instructed us to drive to the workstation, pick up fire packs,

and head to a fire burning on Skookaleel Creek. With fire packs and a map in hand, we drove as close as we could, then started hiking cross country to the fire. It was a hot day. We were sweating as we hauled the fire packs uphill to the fire. Part way there we noticed a jump plane circling the fire. Ten smokejumpers jumped the fire. At the time I thought to myself, "That sure looks like an easier way of getting to a fire!" We shortly reached the fire and worked with the jumpers to get it under control. Once under control, they hiked out and we finished mopping up. I recalled being in awe of the jumpers on that fire. Little did I know that two years later I would be a rookie smokejumper!

In mid-June 1969, along with about 50 other candidates, I reported for training at the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula. First thing was the requisite physical fitness test: mile run, pushups, pullups, sit ups. Four weeks of intense training followed. The training was roughly divided into three parts. The first week was spent at a camp in the hills west of Missoula. Emphasis was on physical conditioning: lots of running, pushups, and climbing ropes. We reviewed firefighting skills using Pulaskis, shovels and cross-cut saws. We were also trained to use climbing spurs to climb trees – a skill that would be important later in the event of retrieving parachutes after

landing in trees during parachute jumps.

The second part of training back at the Aerial Fire Depot was referred to as “The Units.” This was geared toward training in skills having to do with parachuting. In squads of about 10 men, we’d rotate around five units: the “shock tower” – simulating exiting an aircraft, the “A-frame” – simulating landings and learning to do PLF’s (parachute landing falls), “Letdowns” – learning how to rappel to the ground after hanging up in a tree, “Obstacle course” – along with pushups and pullups for conditioning, and “Mock-ups” – learning jumper procedures in and around the airplanes. Pretty intense! Extra pushups were administered when you’d screw up. Putting on and taking off your jumpsuit and harness at every unit repeatedly until you could do it in your sleep!

After “The Units” came the phase of training we all anticipated: seven actual parachute jumps! I can still recall the nervous anticipation of climbing into the DC-3 for that first jump. When the time came to jump, because of all the training we’d received, it seemed automatic: stand in the door, eyes on the horizon, at the slap on the leg thrust out, shout “one-one thousand, two-one thousand, three one thousand ...” Strong tug as the chute opened. Look up to check the canopy. Wow! What a feeling! After the roar of the airplane and slipstream, how amazingly still it was on the descent.

The seventh jump, July 11, was more like an actual fire jump. Sixteen of us – a standard Doug load – parachuted into the forest. Then we packed out. That meant each man packing all his jump gear, main and reserve parachutes into a large duffel called a Smitty bag, strapping it to a pack frame and hiking out cross-country to a road. I remember stopping at a bar on the drive back to Missoula for a beer. How triumphant we felt to have completed rookie training!

Back at the base we all gathered in the auditorium and were given our smokejumper wings. How proud we were! We were young then, and smokejumpers! Who could know what adventures awaited in the months and years ahead! Our names were added to the jump list. We were ready to go.

The fire season in R-1 got off to a slow start.

For most of July and into August fire activity for me and many of my fellow Missoula jumpers was limited to monitoring a controlled burn at a place called Neuman Ridge on the Lolo Forest west of Missoula. Not fun! My first actual fire jump was a 65-man fire in the Salmon N.F., July 30. My last fire jump of the season was a two-man fire on the St. Joe N.F., Sept. 11. The details of most of my seven fire jumps in 1969 have faded in my memory. Two jumps are memorable.

On Aug 20 I jumped an 8-man fire, Summit Lake, in the Mission Mountains on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The request was for four jumpers, with an additional four riding along as “kickers.” I was in the 2nd four. It was a short flight in the Twin Otter to the fire. The fire was burning next to a high mountain lake. The first four men jumped. Then the cargo was dropped. Flying at tree-top level for the cargo drop in turbulent mountain air, the Otter bucking and rolling, I got air sick. I grabbed a barf bag and did my business. Then we got the signal from the ground that they wanted the four kickers. I remember sitting in the door, barf bag in hand, and at the last moment handing the bag to the spotter, buttoning up the face mask, and bailing out. Never so glad to be out of a plane! The release point for the jump was right over the lake, and for most of the descent I remained over the lake. Only the last few hundred feet did I veer to an opening near the lake.

There were some intense, hot, smoky efforts getting the fire lined, but we soon had it under control. Because we were near the lake our squad leader **Eldon Streich**, (MSO-66) ordered a pump to be air dropped, which greatly helped in the mop up. As we were wrapping things up, Eldon ordered fellow ’69er **Larry Colvin** and me to go retrieve our jump gear. That meant shaking out our parachute, folding the canopy, chaining the lines, and putting our jump gear in our Smitty bags. Somehow, we heard “retrieve everyone’s gear” so Larry and I proceeded to do that. When we reported back to the fire, Eldon was a little hot we’d taken so long. But he calmed down when we told him we’d gathered everyone’s gear. Once the fire was out and cold, we hiked out to the road and caught a ride back to Missoula.

The other memorable jump my rookie year

was a three-man fire, Sept. 10, in the Fremont N.F. in R-6. I don't recall if we jumped out of Missoula or were on a booster to either Grangeville or LaGrande. My fellow jumpers were **Barry Hicks** (MSO-64) and **Ted Putnam** (MSO-66). Barry broke his leg on the jump. Shortly after jumping, a district ground crew showed up. We called for a litter to transport Barry to the road. I don't recall whether the litter was airdropped or whether a ground crew hauled it in. I do recall the effort it took to carry Barry – who was a big man – in the litter cross country to the road!

Within a week of that fire, I terminated for the summer and started grad school at the University of Montana. I returned to smokejumping out of

Missoula the next four summers. I would say, as many have said, smokejumping was my best job ever. Certainly, the most exhilarating! 🔦

Mark earned a bachelor's from Rocky Mountain College in 1969 and followed with a master's in Biological Sciences from the University of Montana. Mark taught at the secondary level for ten years teaching chemistry, earth science, and biology and coaching football at the junior and senior high school levels. Mark then worked 30 years for, The Navigators, a non-denominational Christian ministry. That work involved mentoring young professionals in integrating faith, life, and work. He is currently retired, living in Highlands Ranch, Colorado.

Cinnamon Marked The Time

by **Karl Brauneis** (Missoula '77)

I had a favorite horse in the U.S. Forest Service. His papers and brand said he belonged to the government, but he was my horse – Cinnamon. He was a strawberry roan-colored Missouri Fox Trotter – a mix of Thoroughbred and Tennessee Walker. He stood about 17 hands. He helped mark the changes in my life and the land.

I was young and he was even younger. We rode the “Horse Forest” of 50 percent wilderness and about 40 percent backcountry. It was horse country, but times were changing and soon it would change the both of us – much faster than either of us would have liked.

We were up on Indian Ridge, and I was looking at the range utilization and thinking of a prescribed burn. This is the day we saw our first all-terrain vehicle (ATV). The “outfit” was driving all over the place, and we had off-road travel regulations to enforce.

In the old days, every forest ranger was a firefighter and performed both law-enforcement and fire duties as the basic building blocks of conservation. So, I turned Cinnamon, and we took off after the mechanical monstrosity. He saw us coming and simply drove away.

I knew that life would never be the same and

that we might soon have a real law-enforcement problem on our hands. We both got a little older that day. I wanted to stop the clock, but it never did, and in defiance to my own character, only accelerated at a faster pace. And the horse and I simply slowed down.

When Cinnamon got too old to ride, he started stumbling a lot, and the wilderness rangers then used him as a pack horse. So, the last time out, I helped pack out a volunteer trail crew camp.

I was leading Cinnamon while riding a horse named Friendly. We came to a bog with no way around. Friendly and I sank in deep, and I rolled off while Friendly made his way out. I was about waist-deep in muck, and I turned to glance directly up at Cinnamon. He was standing over me, looking down with an expression of calm that said: *It's okay, Karl. You go ahead and get yourself out. I'll wait till you're safe and then I'll plow on through behind you. We've done this before. It'll be okay.* And it was.

That was my last time out with Cinnamon. He died later that winter. The Christian theologian C.S. Lewis argues that some animals have souls. I take his words to imply those animals that work

with man in the stewardship of His creation. If so, I hope there is room for a Forest Service horse and a couple of mules.

This might sound odd, but sometimes I think of putting my arms around Cinnamon's neck after saddling him up and just smelling all of his horse in my nostrils and feel the nudge he would give back – like back in the good old days when the horse was king on the Shoshone.

I cried when Cinnamon died – both for the horse and me. Animals mark the time in our lives. When I came to Lander, I was the only forester. I was called the district forester or assistant district ranger. I had responsibility for timber, fire, range, wildlife, minerals, and lands special uses. I loved the job.

About the time Cinnamon died they zoned us, and I became the zone fire-management officer. It was okay, but I always liked being a generalist ranger. Cinnamon marked that time.

When I retired under Civil Service Firefighter, the Washington office folks said, "You know, Karl,

you were never a secondary firefighter. You were primary your entire career."

I said, "Well, I didn't drive around with the slip-on pumper in the back of my truck for nothing."

The regional office called and said, "You are the only forester who still writes violation notices." I said, "Yes, I still keep my citation book in my pack or saddle bags like they told us to do."

I suppose those days are long gone and past. I was damned poor at stopping time.

Dogs are truly man's best friend, but there is one horse I count as equal. Here we are in 1991, before the Pioneer Days Parade in Lander, Wyo. I could ride Cinnamon down Main Street and into a bar, if I so desired, and order drinks or stand him calm in front of a grizzly bear. And he was a looker. Tall and lean, he was straight out of a Charles Schreyvogel painting of the frontier army.

I miss the smell of horse. So, until we meet again, it's "Whisky for the Men and Beer for the Horses." 🍷



HISTORY PRESERVATION



1945 Letter Home From A CPS Smokejumper

Editor's note: The following letter home is from smokejumper Allen J. "Hoot" Moyer (MSO-43), one of the Civilian Public Service jumpers. Allen jumped during 1943-45. He was a Mennonite who was born, grew up, and lived in Deer Creek, Okla. Allen intended to go to college after the war, but his father was disabled in a farming accident and Allen had to take over the farm. He died Dec. 20, 1990.

Dear Folks,

I guess I'd better write a letter to you pretty soon or you will think I've disappeared. I am now at a station called Spotted Bear. It is 40 miles north of Big Prairie, down river. Two of us have been here for about ten days now. Have had no bad lightning storms the past two weeks and

some places have had some rain. On July 31 one of the boys and I went out on patrol. We were to leave the airport at 6:30 so we ate a breakfast at six.

When we arrived at the airport, we found our plane had left at 5:30 for Big Prairie to bring in an injured man. He had hit a tree the day before that had collapsed his chute and let fall about 40 feet. He had two badly sprained ankles and a chipped vertebra. The doctor said that it was nothing serious. The plane finally got in and we took off at 8:20. At 10:00 we set down at Big Prairie and visited there about an hour. Then we took off again and flew toward Helena and patrolled the Gates of the Mountains area north of Helena. At about 1:30 the pilot told me to reach under the seat and switch the gas over to the right, wing tank as the other was nearly empty. Just as I reached the handle the motor

died. It started again as soon as the other gas tank was opened. We landed at Helena airport and got some gas at about two. Then we headed back over the continental area.

After about thirty minutes we spotted a smoke. We must have flown over it in the morning but it didn't show up then. We put on our chutes and were just ready to jump when the pilot called our attention to a man coming down in a parachute just above the fire. Then we saw the other patrol plane above us. It had evidently spotted the fire earlier and was flying down the river to gain altitude when we came up. It is sort of a letdown to be all ready and keyed up to jump and then see someone else cheat you out of it.

We started back to Missoula then but hadn't gone very far before we spotted our second fire. We circled low to see if any one was on it and it was smoking up pretty good. No one was there so we jumped it and it was shortly after three. At 3:30 we were at the fire and it was really hot but hadn't spread over much area. When we jumped, we had seen a road just about a mile from the fire. The fire was not in the patrol area, and we expected a ground crew in soon and we just jumped to keep the fire from spreading any farther.

The district men got to the fire at about 4:30 and we were surely glad to see some help because we were having trouble holding it down. Also, we hadn't had a thing to eat since that early six o'clock breakfast and were really hungry. By 5:30 we had it cool enough, by throwing dirt on it, so that we could eat something. We were taken off the fire the next morning and we left the dirty work to the district men, mopping up the fire. The fire was on the Seeley Lake district so we went to the ranger station and waited there until they got two other jumpers from the other end of the district. We took it easy after our 12:30 dinner and slept for a few hours and then went swimming until supper time. The ranger then took us to Missoula that night.

One of the boys was seriously hurt. He broke his leg about six inches from the hip. Also had two broken bones in his left foot. They jumped five men in to give him first aid and carry him out. One of them took a hypo and morphine. It

took them 13 hours to get him the first two miles. They radioed in for more help. It took them five hours to get him the next four miles so you can see that the first men were pretty well fagged out. When they got to the end of the first six miles, eight men jumped plus a Negro paratrooper doctor and his aide. The doctor gave some penicillin and some sulfa drug of some sort soon after he arrived as the boy had a temperature of 105. I haven't heard yet how the operation went but they decided to wait until last Monday and get a specialist from Butte.

I heard over the radio that a paratrooper was killed jumping on a fire in Oregon and it said that this was the first casualty since Smoke Jumping had begun. Still don't know whether it was a Negro or a CPS man. You may have heard about it by now.

The last I heard the fires had burned 150,000 acres of timber in Oregon. Those fires were started by Jap bombs. So far none of the fires in this area have been started by bombs that I know of. If they were, no jumpers have been called on them. Two weeks ago there were supposed to be 30 or so over us then. I don't know where they came down.

(Contrary to the rumors, the Japanese balloon-bomb program did not start any fires. Ed.)

So far, the men who have been injured have been new men and youngsters. Us old men like me are just too tough to get banged up. So far, I've made 22 jumps.

Well, I guess the war will be over long before this letter reaches you. I'm even hoping to get out before my four years are up, maybe by the first of Feb. I'm probably too optimistic. I can't think of much more to write so I guess I'll stop. The last letter I got from you was dated the 18th of July, I think. Haven't had any mail in here at all. Thunder storm predicted tonight and tomorrow so I may be out of here soon. Two weeks ago, men would just get in from a fire and then go out again as quick as their equipment was ready. Nearly as many men have jumped on fires this year as did in the previous two years. However, fire season should be over in another month. Nights are already getting cold here. Allen 🔑

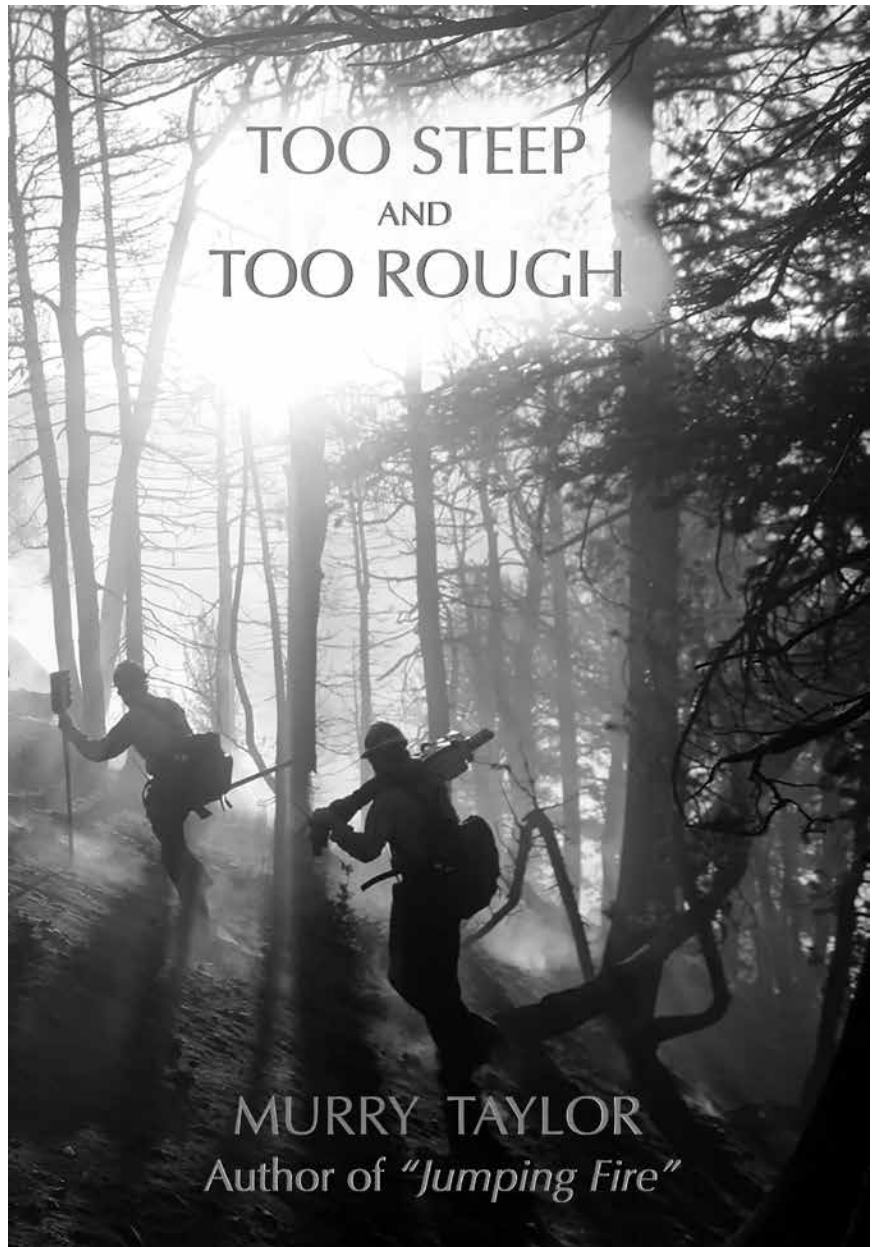
TOO STEEP/TOO ROUGH

A NEW BOOK

by **Murry Taylor** (Redding '65)

After I wrote the first 100 pages of *Too Steep and Too Rough*, it sat untouched for two years. I had concluded that fire management issues were too complex and too political to be addressed in a novel—that it might do more harm than good. So, I gave it up. The reasons I returned to it in January of 2022 are simple: My abiding concern for the forests of our public lands, and my deep respect for wildland firefighters. Then came the summers of 2020 and 2021. Decades of forest plantations, several hundred thousand acres of prime timber, critical watersheds, small towns, and communities were burned. Lives and livelihoods were lost. I don't doubt the good intentions of the U.S. Forest Service, but some of those fires were so poorly managed that I knew I had to finish my book.

For 33 seasons I worked with cadres of dedicated wildland firefighters on the Sierra, Klamath, and San Bernardino National Forests, and then for twenty-seven years as a smokejumper for both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. I retired in 2000. That same year my memoir, *Jumping Fire*, was published, and fireline personnel began contacting me with their stories. They came from



smokejumpers, hotshots, lead plane pilots, air attack supervisors, and ranger district fire management officers. Many were not happy with the way fires were being fought on public lands. When I mentioned I might write a book about it,

several mid-level fire officials told me, “You’ll be wasting your time. There’s no way you can change the way things are done now.” Still, the stories kept coming. And so now I offer *Too Steep and Too Rough*. Available on Amazon. 🔑



ODDS AND ENDS

Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59) CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS to **Ernie Hartley** (MSO-62), **Jim Swartley** (MYC-63), **Bob Gara** (MYC-51), **Les Bagby** (RDD-66), **John Scott** (GAC-63), **Roland Trenouth** (MSO-61), **Cliff Hamilton** (CJ-62), **Orrin Pilkey** (MSO-53), and **Bert Mitman** (RAC-70) who just became our latest Life Members.

Bob Bartlett (Associate) and **Bill Moody** (NCSB-57) are inviting you to an event at NCSB, May 19-20. Bob and Bill have planned a two-day social gathering that includes a half-day visit to **NCSB** on Friday and a chance to meet some of this year's rookie class. On Saturday tour the smokejumper/555th Triple Nickle displays and hear interesting smokejumper presentations at the **Methow Valley Community Center in Twisp**. There will be plenty of free time for folks to reconnect with jumper buddies, tour the displays, listen to the presentations, and just relax in the beautiful Methow Valley. **No registra-**



tion cost or official business!

Schedule: **Friday, May 19**—Tour of NCSB 1:00—4:00 pm (meet at the base). **Saturday May 20th**: Methow Valley Community Center 201 State Rte. 20, Twisp.

Time: Exhibits open for self-tours 10:00-Noon and again at 2:00.

Presentations by Bill Moody—*The Smoke Jumping Experiment*, Bob Bartlett—*Jumping into Fire: WWII Black Paratroopers/Smokejumpers in the PNW*, and recently retired NCSB Base Manager **Daren Belsby** (NCSB-86)—*Today's Smokejumper Program*.

Chris Schow (MYC-88): "Just received the magazine. The article by Mike Nelson on **Neil Satterwhite** (MYC-65) caught my attention immediately. My dad went to high school with Neil, and I grew up with Neil as the definition of toughness. Neil inspired me to become a jumper. My dad is pleased that Neil is remembered and held in high esteem." 🙏

Al Dunton 2022 Smokejumper Leadership Awards

The Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award was established in 2011 to recognize exceptional leadership contributions from the ranks of active smokejumpers in the USFS and the BLM. The selection committee is proud to announce selections for the 2022 Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award:

Sam Bullington (MSO-11) was selected from the USFS for leadership demonstrated in a variety of roles including lead rookie trainer, Incident Commander, duty officer, and project work lead. He consistently represents the smokejumper program in a professional manner while leading by example and treating others with dignity and respect. His ability to identify desired end states, while choosing practical and successful avenues to achieve them, was noted as exceptional.

Brandon Kobayashi (FBX-05) was selected from the BLM based on strong performance in both training and fire leadership roles. His adaptive and flexible leadership in training resulted in strong organizational and individual success while meeting challenges associated with the COVID pandemic. He has consistently demonstrated sustained high performance in a wide variety of fire leadership roles ranging from IA to work on IMTs. His calmness under pressure, strong work ethic, and constant work to improve was noted in all roles.

Congratulations to Sam Bullington and Brandon Kobayashi for their strong work. Their actions reflected positively on the interagency smokejumper program and their respective agencies. 🙏

NEW LIFE MEMBERS SINCE APRIL 2022

444.....	SAMUELS	ALLAN	IDAHO CITY	1956
445.....	FRIEDMAN	SIMON	NO. CASCADES.....	2000
446.....	RUSH	JIM	MCCALL	1965
447.....	FORD	BRUCE	MISSOULA	1975
448.....	ANDERS	CARLENE	NO. CASCADES.....	1986
449.....	SANDERS	BRADFORD	MCCALL	1988
450.....	DUFFEY	BILL	MISSOULA	1971
451.....	JACKSON	BRUCE	REDMOND	1969
452.....	BELSBY	DAREN	NO. CASCADES.....	1986
453.....	YOST	NATHAN	IDAHO CITY	1954
454.....	DUFFEY	MARK	WEST YELLOWSTONE ..	1998
455.....	VANDERHOOF	TOM	ASSOCIATE.....	
456.....	BURNS	BOB	ASSOCIATE.....	
457.....	HARTLEY	ERNIE	MISSOULA	1962
458.....	SWARTLEY.....	JAMES	MCCALL	1963
459.....	GARA	BOB	MCCALL	1951
460.....	BAGBY	LES	REDDING	1966
461.....	SCOTT	JOHN	GRANGEVILLE.....	1963
462.....	TRENOUTH	ROLAND	MISSOULA	1961
463.....	HAMILTON.....	CLIFF	CAVE JUNCTION	1962
464.....	PILKEY	ORRIN	MISSOULA	1953
465.....	MITMAN	BERT	REDMOND	1970



Jerry Spence (RDD-94) moves on from Base Manager to Air Ops, Oct. 2022. (Courtesy A. Thorne).

INPUT FROM JUMPER WHO LIVES OUTSIDE THE CITY

*In my “Sounding Off from the Editor” part of this issue, I have tried to show the effect of the current USFS “Managed Fire” policy on those who live in rural areas. Those of you who live in cities are not greatly affected by the total destruction that hits the ranchers and farmers in the rural, forested areas of the western states. In communicating back and forth with **Bruce Jackson** (RAC-69), I received his comments which I will print below. This is valuable feedback from another NSA member who lives in a rural area in Washington state.*

From Bruce: “We have a small 125-acre ranch up in the remote northeast corner of WA, a couple of horses, some cattle, hay fields, timber stands, and a creek that runs through it. We are next to the national forest and are situated about 10 miles from the Canadian border with LOTS of room for riding the horses, hunting, hiking, winter recreation, etc. Plenty of work with the hay fields, keeping the 25-cord woodshed topped up, maintaining our ‘Forest Reserve’ status with the tax man, and tending to the livestock.”

*Bruce and **Bill Vaughn** (RAC-69) teamed up on one of the feature articles in this issue: *The Rescue Jump for “Animal” Ed Weissenback*. A must-read article.*

Bruce: Like you, I have watched the rapid changes that have overtaken our culture, the ever increasing bloat, mismanagement and policies of a huge centralized government that discards what works in favor of what doesn't.

Living in the remote area that we do, I've watched the devastation of the “managed fire” policies (an euphemism for “Let it Burn”), and toured the huge fire camps that quickly assembled. Legions of well-equipped firefighters are being kept in camp or posted leisurely late in the morning at the rear or on the cool flanks of the fire. All personnel pulled off the lines at dusk. Backfires started literally miles from the flanks. Incident teams cycled in and out on a three-day schedule, each taking at least three days for their “assessments” while only flanking and “monitoring” the rapidly growing blaze. PIO's

out of DC quacking the narrative of “safety,” exulting “No structures were lost today” while converting to square miles the hundreds of thousands of acres and habitat consumed so the number is less appalling to the unknowing public. Senior forest service administrators flown in from the east coast or other areas devoid of wildfire, that wouldn't know the head of a Pulaski from the handle. Enormous, contracted resources of dozers and water tankers staged in strategic areas day after day, never being employed, while running their high-cost fee meters at high speed. Food vendors, showers, tent city mess halls set up, sani-can providers galore, LOTS of air ops with choppers and retardant planes all buzzing about, putting on a wonderful show—and my list could go on and on, Chuck.

But like you, I recognize that initial attack with smokejumpers is not only NOT wanted, it is intentionally suppressed and avoided! Why? Because it would stifle the money pump that large fires have come to provide. The devastation, the loss of habitat, wildlife, timber sales, residences and lives be damned. The money pump prevails and is clearly the highest priority. Obviously, smokejumpers need to be incrementally phased out as the impediment they are to such policies. No doubt SAFETY will be the clarion call that swings that ax. The cult of “risk elimination” vs our reality of “risk management” has prevailed. As negative as I may sound, these are but the reflections of a skeptical, old homicide detective that knows deception where truth is being so fervently claimed. In most investigations that are seeking facts and truth, just follow the money!

Bruce served on the Tacoma, Washington, Police Force 1972-2001. He was promoted to Detective in 1975 and served as a Senior Homicide Detective for 22 years. His honors and awards in the law enforcement community are too extensive to list here. Bruce is a Life Member of the NSA and jumped at Redmond 1969-72. He and his wife, Kristen, currently live in rural Curlew, Washington. 🦋

Moose Creek 1959—Let's Not Forget

by Bob Burns (Associate)

*Sixty-three years after the tragic crash at the Moose Creek Airstrip August 4, 1959, Bob Burns, a close friend of John Rolf, writes this heartfelt letter. **This is a lesson in recording "Smokejumper History."** The crash occurred on landing when the Trimotor overshot the runway and crashed into fuel barrels at the end of the runway. Smokejumpers **Gary Williams** (GAC-59) and **John Rolf** (MSO-57) were killed. Nez Perce Forest Supervisor Alva Blackerby died later. Smokejumper **Ron Stoleson** (MSO-56) survived the crash. Blackerby had taken the co-pilot seat putting Stoleson in the back of the plane. After the crash, fire exploded through the airplane. Stoleson dove out the back door. Williams, who had been sitting under the gas tank, was burned extensively.*

"They weren't dead at the time," Stoleson said. Some of the rescuers talked to the injured men and Williams asked one of the smokejumpers (already at Moose Creek) to sing him a song. Then he died. Rolf and Blackerby were taken to hospitals where they died a short time later. The pilot was also badly burned but survived for several years.

This article is an example of why we record Smokejumper history. I did not know Bob Burns until he contacted me earlier this year. Here is an example of how a smokejumper is remembered beyond his time as a smokejumper and friend. Thank you, Bob Burns! (Ed.)

Letter To John A. Rolf (Missoula '57)

July 21, 1933–Aug. 4, 1959

by **Bob Burns** (Associate Life Member)

John, I did not know that I wanted to be a smokejumper until you became my freshman dorm counselor in the fall of 1957, and that we were brother Biology majors.

Although you were one year ahead of me as a student, you were six years older. Those early years gave you a large head start in life's experiences and personal maturity—in the Navy right out of high school, then two years as a student at Paul Smith's College studying biology and forestry.

In short order I also learned about this thing called "smokejumping" and what "MSO-57"

meant. It didn't take long living under your firm but fair natural leadership that many of us considered ourselves aboard your ship. We called you "Captain John."

We learned a lot about you and your summer job by listening to you narrate and explain your collection of 2x2 slides to us. These included shots of your U.S. destroyer missing a bow after a collision with a battleship on "lights out" maneuvers in the north Atlantic, those jumpsuits with the wire facemasks and large rope pockets on the legs, and the shots of wildlife taken on your jumps.

Several of us initially were confused by the shot of the grouse sitting only a few feet away on the same tree limb you were sitting on, until you confessed to one of the many hazards of being a smokejumper.

Because my hobbies were hunting, fishing, hiking and photography, you quickly became my Daniel Boone, my Lewis and Clark, my Jeremiah Johnson, my John Colter, etc. I wanted to be with you no matter what you were doing.

We talked about hitchhiking together—you to jump for the summer 1958 fire season and me to learn how to fight forest fires as the first step toward training to be a smokejumper. As part of my dream, you gave me a magazine from which one could order some smokejumping apparel—oh, those boots!

My future wife put an end to my "go west with John" dream. So, I did the next best, manly, outdoorsy thing to try to keep even with what you were doing in Montana and Idaho that summer. I searched for and found a job in the outdoors, too. I became a gypsy moth trapper for the U.S. Department of Agriculture—so at least we were both working in the outdoors for the U.S. Government. However, I decided I could do my job without wearing those expensive smokejumper boots.

In my mind we were doing somewhat the same thing, what with the outdoor dangers we both would be facing that summer—you are working

in wilderness areas and me in farmers' woodlots.

I found ways to at least mentally keep up with what you were doing by finding similarities in our different tasks:

We both motored to work—You in a Ford Trimotor plane, me in a six-cylinder Plymouth sedan, but at least it did have wings on the rear fenders.

You jumped out of your vehicle and hit the ground. I jumped out of my vehicle and hit the ground, too.

Assuming that you probably landed in at least one tree and had to free yourself, I too was in a dangerous situation when I misjudged the height of a barbed wire fence and had to carefully figure out how to safely free the “start-a-family equipment.”

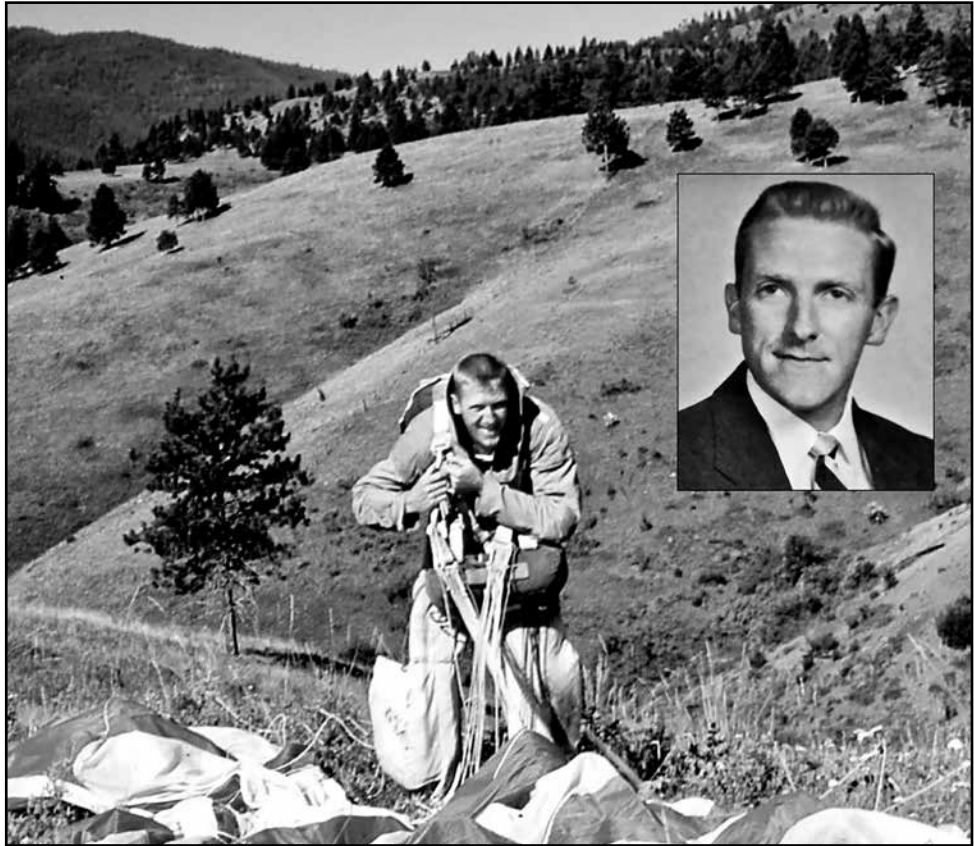
You probably got scratched and bled on several occasions. I suffered similar bloody injuries while picking wild blackberries off those aggressive, thorn-loaded plants.

While you may have had a semi-dangerous encounter with a black bear, I had a similar episode while going under the bottom strand of a barbed wire fence and came face to face with a medium-sized garter snake.

We both walked back out after working on our respective tasks—you walked tens of miles to a pickup point, I walked tens of yards to the Plymouth.

At the end of our respective workdays, we were both exhausted, especially me with about 20 traps to check per day, one every half mile. The worst of it all, for me, was that almost daily I had to expend extra energy by stopping by some of the trout waters in the Catskill Mountains to perform strenuous wading and casting for a few hours at the end of a workday.

When you returned for your junior year, you continued your remarkable academic career.



John Rolf (Courtesy B. Burns)

Sometime in your junior year, you met the co-pilot for the rest of your life. She was a perfect fit for you, and everyone could see that. We were happy for both of you. Then came the discussion about getting married during your senior year or after graduation. We talked about your senior year, marriage, and maybe graduate school. In those conversations, you made it clear that you wanted one more season of smokejumping—the summer of 1959. Because of her love for you, she let you go. A bunch of us watched you go skipping away to again dance with fire. Your last dance was at Moose Creek, Idaho.

John, a man of your construct, caliber and compassion should not be forgotten. Not to worry. You have parachuted into and have been hiking around inside my heart since 1957. I know the same is true for many of your college friends and is especially true for your smoke-jumper buddies.

God only knows how many other lives you permanently influenced in your short physical life, but the impact on us continues to be a long-lasting spiritual gift. On these hikes of yours in all these hearts over all these years, the most signifi-

cant thing that you marked your path with was a special blend of friendship and love that only you possess and give.

JOHN A. ROLF

Hartwick student and USFS smokejumper, John was a biology major, member, and President of Beta Beta Beta (an honorary biology society), Senior class Vice President, member of the Circle K Club, a freshman dorm counselor, member of the Student Senate, film club, and TKE fraternity. He was one of only four Hartwick students elected to “Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges” in 1958. Students receiving this recognition were elected based on “academic performance, extracurricular activities, citizenship, service to the school, and promise of future usefulness.” Before attending Hartwick, John studied biology and forestry at Paul Smith’s College, and before that he served a tour of duty in the US Navy.

John learned to be a firefighter for the USFS in the summer of 1956 fighting fires in Oregon. In the summer of 1957, he completed the training for and became a member of an elite group of firefighters known as smokejumpers. These men and women are flown to very remote areas where a lightning strike has started a forest fire. They parachute into the forest near the fire, receive an air drop of supplies, and work until the fire is extinguished. Then they walk out to the nearest pickup point which can be 25+ miles of trail-less forest.

John spent three college summers (1957-59) working as a smokejumper in remote mountainous areas of western Montana and eastern Idaho. John did not get the opportunity to attend his senior year at Hartwick because he was killed in the line of duty on August 4, 1959, at Moose Creek, ID, a few days after his 26th birthday and a few weeks before what would have been the start of his senior year. John was not married, had no children or siblings.

The original memorial award was established by Hartwick’s Circle K Club and given once to a Hartwick student in 1964. The original award recognized a rising male senior who has given “unselfish service to college and community.” In 2022 the John A. Rolf Memorial was repurposed to the planting of a tree on campus with an accom-

panying plaque—a fitting memorial to a student of forestry and biology and a man who saved thousands of trees as a smokejumper. As a student at Hartwick and as a smokejumper, he touched numerous young lives with his kindness, support, firm but fair leadership, patriotism, and pleasant personality.

If John was leading a project, you just wanted to join his team and work with him. A man like John Rolf should never be forgotten. John, most probably, is Hartwick’s only smokejumper. This memorial is sponsored by members of the National Smokejumpers Association and friend Bob Burns Hartwick ’61, Distinguished Alumnus ’88. A photo book about John and smokejumping is in the library. 📖

Bob Burns received his BA in biology from Hartwick College in 1961, a MS in zoology from the University of Maine, in 1963 and a Ph.D. in 1967 from the Department of Anatomy, Tulane University School of Medicine, where he was trained to be a teacher of anatomy for freshman medical students. He completed a National Institutes of Health Postdoctoral Fellowship in cancer research in the Department of Pathology, George Washington University, 1967-1968, and joined the Department of Anatomy, College of Medicine, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in July 1968. There he taught all aspects of human anatomy to beginning medical students for 50 years.

Helping with Our History and Getting Paid

The NSA History Preservation Project needs assistance. And we will pay you for your help.

We, at spurts, have need for data management and data entry skills. If you, a family member, or a close associated have time to devoted to organizing the data and information that we have, NSA will provide \$20 per/hour.

Do you have basic computer skills? Do you have a basic knowledge of database (Excel or Numbers) entry? Knowledge of Google Sheets? These simple data entry skills will help to update our backlog of information that supports the NSA-EWU academic website that features Smokejumper history: <https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumpers/>

If you can help, reference this inquiry, and contact Stan Collins at nationalsmokejumpers@gmail.com.

Save Our National Forests With Shaded Fuel Breaks

by Bill Smith (Associate)

With a bipartisan effort, Californians can stop the environmental devastation from forest fires while reversing climate change. This effort would rely on applying “known” science to how we manage OUR National Forests.

“We the people” are the largest landowner in California. Our national forests include 20 million acres and 58 percent of the State’s forests. Our forests are choked with dry fuel which has been growing by six-tenths of 1 percent per year since the 1980s.

Compounding our fuel issue is our dry Mediterranean climate. The droughts, windstorms, and dry lightning that are integral parts of our Mediterranean climate frequently set the table for catastrophic wildfires. We can’t change our Mediterranean climate, but we *can* starve wildfires of fuel.

We could starve the wildfires of fuel by harvesting forest fuels – i.e., harvesting trees and brush that wildfires feed on. It’s that simple. We could also build houses with the harvested fuel.

Harvesting could be accomplished with what foresters call “shaded fuel breaks” (SFBs). These are areas of widely spaced trees kept free of brush and dead tree limbs, much like how the Native Americans managed the forest. Maintaining SFBs relatively free of brush and dead limbs would provide a break in forest fuels, stopping wildfires from advancing.

A patchwork of 20-acre SFBs could be spread across the flatter ground on our national forests. Each SFB could be harvested and replanted once every 150 years while being maintained brush and litter free in the interim. Each SFB would not be harvested until the one beside it becomes a fully functioning SFB.

The steeper ground on our national forests could be managed for wildlife, which would reinvade the SFBs after harvest. As an example, to get the forest fuels under control, we might annually install 5,000

acres of SFBs within the Plumas National Forest’s 1,146,000 acres.

SFBs would supply a continuous flow of wood products from our forests: every mountain community could have a sawmill and electric cogeneration plant. With the continuous supply of wood, new products could be developed to replace those made from oil, millions would be saved fighting fires, wood prices would plummet, and the air would be cleaner. The sale of harvested wood would pay for everything – no taxpayer dollars needed.

An additional plus to SFBs is their ability to reverse “climate change.” Forest fuels actually contain a large amount of carbon, the result of trees absorbing carbon dioxide from the air. Trees split the absorbed carbon dioxide molecule, storing the carbon as wood, and releasing the clean oxygen.

If the stored carbon held within this forest fuel burns or rots, it reverts to carbon dioxide, which again dirties the air. But by harvesting the stored carbon – which makes it unavailable to the next wildfire – climate change is actually reversed.

Two federal laws are standing in our way: the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, passed during the “Protect the Environment Movement” of the 1970s. These two laws are mostly to blame for the massive fuel buildup in our national forests.

The ESA and the NEPA were both well-intentioned but since the 1990s have been used by “anti-harvest” groups to dilute and stop practically every harvest project on our national forests. These are the same laws that stop the harvest of trees killed in wildfires.

Don’t be misled. It’s not the lack of “natural fire” that has allowed the catastrophic buildup of fuels in our national forests but the ESA and NEPA which have been used to stop the harvest.

The Forest Service manages our national forests for us and receives its marching orders from Congress; the politicians fund what they, their donors,

and, hopefully, their constituents, want. The congressional direction to the USFS would have to change, dramatically. It will take pressure from “we the people” to convince Congress to abolish the ESA and NEPA, which have been weaponized and used to ignore the science and impede harvest.

We need to get the politicians’ attention; it has been done before. The “no-harvest” crowd did it in the 1990s, pressuring Congress to change the Forest Service from a tree-management agency to a “spotted owl management agency.” It was again these

same antiquated laws of the 1970s and the move to turn our national forests into old-growth wildlife sanctuaries, while ignoring the science, that have caused our forests and the owls to go up in smoke.

We only have two choices: harvest or continue to watch our national forests burn. 🔦

Bill Smith has a Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Management, and is a licensed professional forester who retired from the Plumas National Forest after 33 years of service. Bill resides in Chico, Calif.

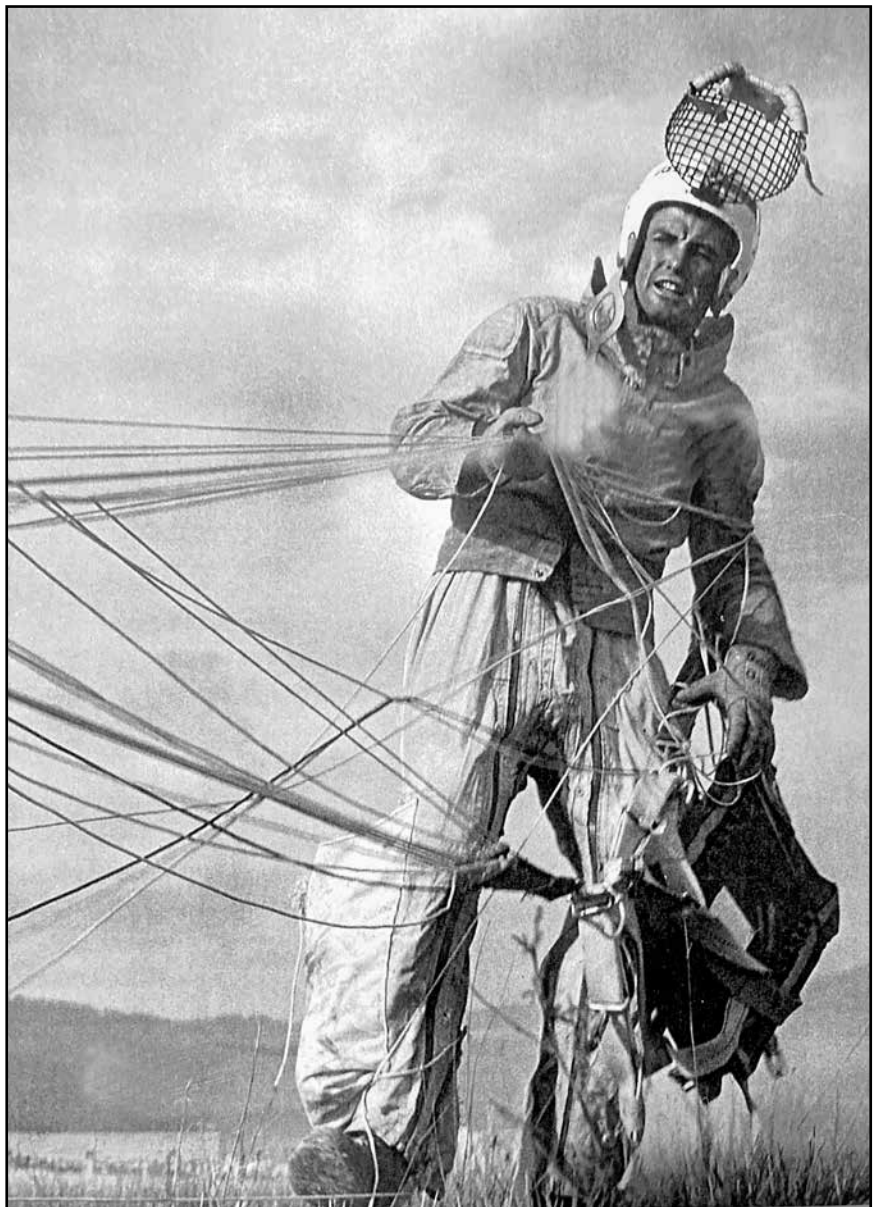
George Ostrom (Missoula '50)—A Little Bit of History from 1954

It was September 22, 1954, at the Missoula, Montana, smokejumper base when Dwight D. Eisenhower and several other dignitaries came to dedicate the new Aerial Fire Depot. At that time, it was the largest gathering of its sort in Montana history with around 30,000 people.

Several jumpers were going to jump, but the weather turned windy, and they decided to go with just one—G. George Ostrom, then a 26-year-old instructor at the base.

He landed perfectly in the target circle and was invited to sit on the dais with the president and other government representatives. One of them worked for Montana Senator Lee Metcalf, and the conversation George had with him that day led to George being hired by Metcalf (a few years after this event) as an aide to go to Washington, D.C. and help him write the Wilderness Bill.

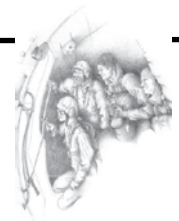
George, now 94, could undoubtedly add some detail to the story. He’s still alive and kickin’ in Kalispell, Montana. 🔦



George Ostrom 1954 (Courtesy Heidi Duncan)



Touching All Bases



2022 Global Smokejumper Report

by Patrick McGunagle
(West Yellowstone '19)

The 2022 fire season is in the past. This article's compilation of smokejumper actions around the planet for the last year tickles the numbers part of my brain! I'm happy to include Canadian and Russian numbers in this year's report. Perhaps some international dialogue can show how jumper programs evolve in a warming world. I think it's tough to have a bad day in the woods with a chainsaw and being equally humbled and empowered by the land does a world of good to quell the finicky, anxious aspects of our human nature when we've been around people for too long and trees, not long enough. Walking up to a jumper campfire anywhere on the planet probably sounds about the same: sporadic laughter and dull murmur across a muted landscape under brilliant night sky.

As random as a lightning-struck juniper appears in desolate Nevada, as incalculable as the Jump List may be, fate chooses our seasons. Perhaps a contact in the Russian SJ program put it poetically the best: "We appreciate people who work for the benefit of nature. I'll be glad if fate brings us together and we can get to know you. Good luck!" I feel that way about any new jump partner I haven't yet shared a fire with.

With that and being one of the few jumpers that didn't make it to Alaska last summer, I wanted to see just how slow the Lower 48 year was and just how busy AK was compared to average. Let's go!

Alaska leads the season for everybody. I'll start with them. FBX jumped 87 fires with 777 personnel supported by 93 paracargo missions and



437,564 pounds of cargo. The 67 Alaska jumpers were augmented by 242 boosters from the Lower 48 throughout the season. While only about 75% as busy as the banner 2019 year, Alaska had several notable jumps this year. Eight bros jumped at Sand Point on the Aleutian chain, making this the furthest south fire jump in Alaska smokejumper history. Another epic deal for very karmically attuned bros: six individuals jumped Round Island, a walrus sanctuary also on the Aleutian chain. I can only imagine what that spotter briefing was like: "Don't

go between the adults and the calves, hazards include tusks and that big one who looks like he's rutting, don't go in the water, are you ready and tight? No, I don't know how tasty they are, hook up!"

The Dash-8 delivers 12 jumpers per mission; this bump is notable in the jump data. BLM staffed over 100 more jumpers on fires than the FS yet had 25 fewer fires total. It wasn't a long Lower 48 fire season, so we didn't get to see much of the Dash-8 bumping numbers up in the Great Basin this fall. A busy Basin year after a normal AK year could really show that aircraft's merits. I had several buddies text me about the most glorious and comfortable detection flights around the entire interior of AK with the Dash (pressurized cabin and long range) last summer. Eventually the rains started, and right about that time, later than normal, the Lower 48 season kicked off.

Forest Service jumpers staffed 175 fires with 964 jumpers in 2022. The BLM staffed 150 fires with 1,062 jumpers. Thus, 325 fires were jumped last year by smokejumpers in the US. There were 16 "pounder" fires from FS bases and 32 for the BLM. There were 5,218 practice jumps by FS and 1,979 by the BLM for a total of 9,223 total jumps in 2022.

It looked like it was going to be an early year. Redding refreshed several jumpers, including some from R-1, in late February. Mother Nature had other ideas, and by the fall most bases reported about 60% to 80% of the average for days on fire, fires jumped, and ground action fires. This fits the national trend: when adjusting out Alaska's acreage, the Lower 48 fire activity was about 90% of average. The nation never hit Planning Level 5 this year. Add in all the other resources that aren't obligated to fires and you have more patrols, more eyeballs in the woods, and less need to order smokejumpers because very few districts were stretched thin this season. Luckily for jumpers that didn't wear an AK or RAC shirt this year, the single resource season was fruitful.

The Great Basin Smokejumpers staffed 63 fires with 285 jumpers out of Ely, NV, Cedar City, UT, Grand Junction, CO, Provo, UT, Burns, OR, and Boise, ID. A slow year in the Basin!

Region One had an average season with a slow start. Missoula jumped 31 fires total for 907 days on fire. MSO leads the board with 660 days on Rx Fire, 1907 shifts on single resource, and 129 single resource requests filled. A lot of fire people interacted with a Missoula smokejumper somewhere this season. WYS jumped eight fires and GAC jumped 18. GAC jumpers had a hero jump and, as the first jump of the year, these four bros armed with flappers caught a 1,000-acre fire and were back to the base that night. Sometimes all you need is four GAC bros.

It was a banner year at RAC. Redmond jumped 59 fires with 294 bros and about 150% of average for the year in terms of jumps, fires, and days on fire. RAC is developing a low-cost, disposable cargo delivery system with the goal of making paracargo ordering a less scary process for non-aviation fire resources. Most of the system is disposable gear which reduces the need for a paracargo-familiar person to receive the mission. Essentially, just the chute and main ring assembly are returned to the jump base, and everything else can be hacked apart by hungry hotshots.

McCall jumped 32 fires—165 jumpers. Redding jumped 16 fires—75 jumpers and received 39 boosters. Most of these boosters went north to Alaska. North Cascades jumped 11 fires—103 jumpers. Note that many of these FS jumpers

spent a good portion of their season getting jumps up in the land of the midnight sun.

Single resource continues to be a huge element of the average smokejumper's season, not to mention intrinsic pay and promotion potential that comes with new qualifications. In a year of low overtime hours and few jumps, single resource assignments are the way a smokejumper pays the bills all winter, gets fire experience on complex team incidents, and represents the smokejumper base in the campaign world of wildfire. USFS jumpers completed 298 single resource assignments for 4,426 days and BLM jumpers completed 93 for 1,225 days. Additionally, the USFS sent folks to the southeast for 1,551 shifts on Rx fire. I find it interesting that many bases report on how many RXB2 (burn boss) qualified jumpers are on roster, on equal footing with how many DIVS/TFLD/ICT3 are offered. It's an evolving workforce!

The United States SMKJ Program has shrunk to 395 total jumpers as people retire or move into other parts of the fire world. The FS is now 96% complete in transitioning to Ram-Air from round parachutes: only 11 rounds remain in the system. There are 127 BLM and 268 FS jumpers. Thirty-four FS rookies and 14 BLM rookies joined the ranks this year. Large rookie classes are planned at many bases next year.

Paracargo is not as large a mission in the Lower 48. However, RAC, MYC, and MSO supported over 15 PC request missions each throughout the summer. MYC conducted drops for nearly 30,000 pounds of cargo and fresh food to remote fires and crews.

Just across the Bering Strait, Russian Smokejumpers continue their mission of point protection, full suppression, village jumping, and militia rallying to fight forest fires. The Russian Federal Forest Protection office doubled funding for the program this year and the program grew to 129% of average. The total aerial forces for 2022's fire season included 6,000 certified aerial firefighters of which 850 have had smokejumper training. These 850 smokejumper-qualified personnel attacked 7,446 fires, and at least 1,135 of these fires were jumped. Remember, Russian smokejumpers are also trained in heli-rappel, so it is difficult to ascertain which fires were jumped

versus rappelled. I still look for the “total 2022 fire jumps” number and will update as I continue my correspondence (and learn more Russian language!).

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Russia had a slower fire season with 12,528 wildfires burning 3.5M hectares, which is about 40% of average for number of fires and 30% of average area burned. About 93% of wildfires were lightning starts. Russian fire statistics primarily report on area burned and percentage of fires contained within the first 24-hours of detection. By these metrics the Russian jumpers had a very successful season with a 79% success rate on initial attack containment. About 80% of all fire activity was in the Siberian and Far East sectors. The Russian model of smokejumping has been changed since 2007 to reduce the number of firefighters spread out across a region. Instead, they employ detection flights and strategic reinforcement of firefighters rather than total firefighting response. For instance, the Yakutia region quadrupled the hours of detection flights and doubled its firefighting forces. These efforts reduced the total hectares burned by over 92% even in an above average fire year for that region.

International news aside, Russian jumpers have had their federal funding doubled due to recent Russian “Forest Preservation and Protection” mandates. This includes increased funding for aircraft, maintenance, and increasing personnel numbers. From what I understand, Russia uses a “spoke and hub” model for forces allocation like BLM operations in the US. Russia sent 214 boosts totaling 5,404 aviation personnel to regions across 11 time zones to support fire activity in 2022. This is over twice as much “boosting” activity as in 2021 and

shows the national mandate on forest preservation and putting fires out within the first 24 hours. At the summer peak of fire, about 3,000 aviation firefighters were simultaneously in the woods on fires in Russia, including about all Russian smokejumpers. I imagine that for a few days last summer, there were over 1,000 smokejumpers on fires on Planet Earth.

Note that the Russian aerial firefighting resources total budget for 2022 was increased to over double the average to \$215M for 12,528 fires and 8.65 million acres of land burned. This is for both training operations and suppression efforts. In the US, the Hermit’s Peak/Calf Canyon wildfire (escaped prescribed fire) total suppression cost on 314,000 acres was \$292M.

I pause to think of the hilarity that there is a higher likelihood that Russian smokejumpers on a Far East District fire jump were closer to some of my Boise bros on an Alaska fire than I was to any smokejumper in Alaska while I worked an Arizona fire jump last summer.

Up in British Columbia, Canadian jumpers continued to use a DC-3 out of the Fort St John base, staffing the aircraft from a pool of 45 jumpers. In the west, 21 jumpers staffed a Twin Otter in Omineca. The fire year in Canada included 73 fire jumps and 293 missions flown. All smokejumpers in Canada jump round FS-14 parachutes.

Hiring has been completed for next year’s rookie classes. I imagine how many gyms are full of these smokejumper candidates every day this winter. Folks coming with years of dreams and positive recommendations, whiling away at rowing machines and squat racks for a chance to jump any of these fires. Just, please God, let me find it in myself to make it through rookie training. It’s a cliché, but it’s an honor and a privilege to be any part of these reports. The motivation of these new jumpers and the leadership they’ve provided offers the opportunities for the jumper program to evolve. It continues to deepen the meaning and expectation that other fire personnel will have when they see that grimy “smokejumper” shirt on some derelict jumpers getting picked up off the side of a road in the middle of nowhere for a fire no one’s ever heard about because it’s dead out. Bro, come on, rig up. Let’s get on another one. 🧑‍🚒

The Rescue Jump for “Animal” Ed Weissenback

by **Bruce Jackson** (Redmond '69) and **Bill Vaughn** (Redmond '69)

(Bruce Jackson) The 1970 season at the Redmond Air Center (RAC) got off to a running start the first week of June with the arrival of an early fire bust. Bill Vaughn and I were rookies the previous summer with “Animal” **Ed Weissenback** (CJ-64) and **Dave Laws** (RAC-66) as our trainers. Even though both men were opposites in many ways, they were a match made in heaven in terms of their motivational styles that propelled us through the grueling physical demands of our training. That was combined with their attention to detail teaching us all the complex skills we would be required to perform as smokejumpers.

Ed was very muscular and blocky in build with a thick neck, legs, and arms. He was the embodiment of the proverbial “Brick Outhouse” and had the booming voice and larger than life personality to match his intimidating physique. His method of encouragement was modeled after a Marine DI on steroids. We would be regaled with thunderous “You Pus-s-s-sies” if we slowed our pace running, especially in the heat of the day while encased in our jump gear. Failure to make at least a genuine effort during PT to achieve one more pullup, another pushup, or backward head touch on the ground at the torture rack would bring even greater volume and more such “encouragement” from Animal Ed. It was only later, after proving our abilities as jumpers and working on the fireline that we got to see the genuinely caring side of Ed’s character, which he concealed during rookie training with a hard-shell exterior enhanced by his very forceful leadership style. What green rookie wouldn’t be a bit intimidated by this powerful figure of a REAL smokejumper who kept a “pet” rattlesnake in a terrarium in his barracks room?

In sharp contrast to Ed, Dave Laws was soft spoken, when he did choose to speak, which was infrequently. He was short and slight of build but possessed a core of sprung steel. It was jaw dropping to see Dave knock out 20 one-armed pullups or lead

the crew on a fast-paced run without breaking a sweat, while smoking cigarettes! He was affable and pleasant in his training style yet got the high level of performance that he expected and required. My first fire jump was with Dave on a two-man lightning strike on the Klamath NF. I learned a lot from him that was not covered in rookie training.

Of the seventeen jumps made that summer of '69, several of them were with Bill Vaughn and Ed Weissenback. By chance we frequently ended up in close order on the jump list. Bill and I became good friends and have remained so ever since. He was attending the U of Idaho and I was just eight miles west in Washington attending WSU. We were both so jazzed by our first year as smokejumpers that we just couldn’t wait to get back to RAC in 1970. We pleaded with our respective Department Chairmen to take our finals early allowing us to arrive back at the Redmond Air Center by Monday, the first day of June 1970.

*(Bill Vaughn) Having finished finals early, I was able to get to RAC the first week in June. The season was already starting with a couple of fires jumped. We did our refresher training on Monday and got our first practice jump the next day. Jumper requests were waiting after our second jump on Wednesday. We loaded up in the Twin Beech with **Hal Weismann** (NCSB-47) as spotter and headed for the Umpqua NF.*

Ed Weissenback was first on the list, followed by Dan Dunnigan, Bruce Jackson, and me. We remembered Ed especially well, and fondly, as he and Dave Laws were our trainers the previous summer. Ed set a great example of fitness for us to follow, and we did. On the way to the Umpqua, Ed was really excited to get the first fire under our belt. We arrived over the Malt Creek Fire and Hal threw the streamers and got us all set up for single stick jumps. Ed was first out (with the radio), followed by Dan, Bruce, and me. We did not get any communication from Ed during that time and Dan laid out a six with streamers indicating a back injury.

I remember Hal pointing out a bright green spot in the jump area and stating, "Avoid that. That's brush covering the rocks underneath. Find a good tree." Somehow, I managed to get safely all the way to the ground.

(Bf) According to our old FS pocket notebooks, our first refresher training jump was made out on Tuesday June 2nd. **Wayne Linville** (RAC-68) and **Jim Hawes** (RAC-66) had jumped a fire on the Umpqua that same day. Our refresher training was then accelerated due to a lightning storm, increasing the need for rapid initial attack. This was our very purpose as smokejumpers. **John Twiss** and **Pat McCauley** were dropped early on the morning followed by **Bob Collins** and **Dave Brown**.

The demand to get more jumpers on fires pushed our refresher training jump up to 0600 the morning of June 3. We were then hustled back to the base and rushed into the Ready Room to gear up and re-board 141Z to reinforce the Malt Creek #21 Fire on the notorious Umpqua NF.

Circling the fire revealed no break in the canopy of tall, old growth timber. The objective was to "bag" a tree and repel to the ground safely. Ed went out the door first with the radio. Dan Dunnigan followed on the next pass and shortly afterward put out ground streamers indicating a back injury. Hal handed me the medical kit containing ampoules of the synthetic narcotic Demerol to control severe pain. His instructions were concise: "Bag a tree and get an injury assessment on Ed."

While descending I spotted the tree and draped my FS-5A squarely over the top of it. As my momentum and weight settled heavily into the harness, I felt confident I'd be held securely aloft and could perform a long, but routine letdown. Suddenly, the sound of a gunshot above me coincided with my downward lurch as the top broke away and I began to fall through limbs. Grasping at any branch that might check my fall, I got knocked about bouncing down through the gauntlet of branches. After an eternity, I felt a blow in my left arm pit that took my breath away. I clamped down on it as hard as I could. It was a large limb that was one of the lowest on the trunk of that tall Douglas fir. It would have been a long fall into the rocks below if that limb had been missed. Fortunately, all the debris from the broken top got tangled in my canopy and became fouled on other branches above, which prevented it

from pulling me off that limb.

(BV) *In that era, there were onboard kits that included Demerol that Hal sent down with Bruce. I administered some of that to Ed as he was in a lot of pain.*

(BJ) As I was tying off my letdown rope to the limb, Bill ran over and hollered that he needed the medical kit for Ed who was seriously injured and in a lot of pain. I unclipped the medical kit and dropped it down to Bill. He told me to hurry up to assist him with Ed who was laying a short distance away on the rocky hillside. I repelled to the ground and hustled over to join Bill. He was talking calmly to Ed and reassuring him that he would be OK, while at the same time attempting to get Ed to lay still and settle down on the rock-strewn hillside.

The first sight I had of Ed was momentarily shocking due to the nature of the visible injuries he had sustained and the great agony he was in. He was groaning in pain and piteously rolling around on the padded jumpsuit that Bill had placed under him to treat for shock. Here was this very powerful man that we had all considered impervious to hurt or wounds suffering greatly from multiple injuries, his back being the most agonizing. He had broken out of the tall tree he had bagged and went crashing down through the limbs and fell into the rocks. His helmet had been torn off taking the tooth guard with it, and he had a deep laceration of the tongue that made his efforts to speak a guttural jumble. The evident pain of Ed's combined injuries involving his neck, back, ankle and face was agonizing. We were also concerned there may be internal injuries.

Bill had already administered one ampoule of Demerol, and we discussed the necessity of another dose. Since it had been ten minutes since the first dose was given, we decided to monitor its benefit at the fifteen-minute mark. If Ed was still in intense pain, Bill would give him another dose. Seeing no relief at the fifteen-minute mark, Bill administered the second dose. Within minutes Ed's agitation and painful vocalizations began to subside. We continued to treat for shock and tried to keep his neck and back supported and immobilized.

Bill stayed in communication with Hal Weinmann with the radio Ed had jumped with. Hal had continued to orbit the scene and directed Bob Collins and Dave Wood to hike over to our location from their sector of the fire to assist. No additional

jumps were considered given the dangerous nature of those brittle fir trees. Dan Dunnigan left Bill and me to care for Ed while he connected with Collins and Wood to work the fire.

As we continued efforts to stabilize Ed, the Twin Beech with Hal had to return to base. He was replaced with the 167Z Twin Beech with **Tony Percival** handling all the air net traffic. Tony was communicating with our base at RAC and with Region 6 HQ in Portland.

No doubt the airwaves were burning up as the top decision makers at RAC and Region 6 were considering all the possible options to further assist Ed and get him evacuated. The location was too remote to attempt hiking in a doctor with additional personnel. Any attempt to stretch Ed out overland would have been excessively time consuming and have risked further injury in the steep and rugged terrain. The decision was made to cut out a helispot and chopper Ed to a hospital ER.

The challenge of clearing a helispot was complicated not only by the difficult terrain but also by the density of that stand of old growth fir. Nevertheless, Ed's injuries and time demanded that extraordinary effort. It had to be accomplished by us at the site. The most likely helispot was selected on the ridge above where Ed lay injured. As multiple chainsaws lit up, it created a chorus that was punctuated by the thunderous crash of thousands of board feet of timber hitting the ground. It was utterly exhausting work conducted at a demanding pace.

To maintain the rapid tempo of the work, a rotation evolved where highly motivated men pull together in a coordinated team effort. When necessary, those working the saws would rotate down to the fireline or trade off with another sawyer and pull limbs while clearing the helispot. Bill continued to be the primary caregiver and monitor for Ed while I joined the work crew.

Hours passed, sweat poured out of laboring bodies as water poured in. The sun continued unabated on its trajectory, reaching for its summer solstice just a few weeks away, totally unconcerned with our puny human drama unfolding below. But we were very aware of its timeline and were pushed harder as it began its descent toward the West.

Preparations and provisions for Ed's evacuation had also been in progress. A stokes litter was dropped in and staged close to Ed. Bill continued

to work the radio and kept the overhead briefed on Ed's condition and progress of work on the helispot. As the day advanced, a greater sense of urgency engulfed all of us. A USFS Bell 47 chopper was standing by and would enter orbit as soon as it was called for. The circle of timber was sized to accommodate the Bell 47 with some additional diameter to allow for clearance of the rotors.

Finally, the rough work on the helispot was deemed sufficient to get the chopper in and Ed out. Yet that determination had to be balanced against the onrushing sundown and the chest-deep jumble of tree trunks, limbs and stumps that would need to serve as the landing platform for the helicopter.

Bill and I got Ed gently into the Stokes litter. The litter had been padded with the discarded jumpsuit and Ed was fully covered in a blanket. The litter was hoisted high enough to get over the rocks and brush on the climb up to the ridge to the helispot. We took a position on the downhill of the "platform" and the Bell 47 was called in. It arrived over the hole in the canopy in a matter of minutes. Yet our concern grew as the navigational lights continued to brighten in the advancing dusk while the pilot jockeyed his craft to and fro while considering his best option for a descent. He climbed back above the ridge and reported that the clearance was not sufficient for his craft at that altitude, and it was too risky to attempt a landing, especially in the failing light. He was apologetic but forced to abort the mission for safety reasons.

All of us were stunned into disbelieving silence as the staccato of his rotors diminished into the distance. Our attention then focused back on Ed who was still noticeably in pain despite the sedation. Of greatest concern was the possibility of internal injuries that would continue to advance through the night now that his evacuation to a medical facility could not be accomplished.

At that moment the air net crackled back to life and a smooth southern drawl came on, "I've been listening to the problem y'all have with your injured buddy. I'm in the area flying a contract Evergreen Hiller 1100 and will give the evac a try if you get me clearance from the bosses." Tony Percival, still orbiting in the Twin Beech replied, "Stand by."

Silence on the radio measured in seconds, but it seemed like hours. Then Tony replied to the Evergreen pilot, "You've got a verbal clearance to at-

tempt the evacuation and are now on contract with us.”

We could hear the deeper “wop” of the Hiller rotors roaring in from the east. Bill and I were concerned that the hole into our helispot was not large enough for the larger Hiller 1100 but decided the pilot would make that call once he saw what he had to work with. As the Evergreen chopper hovered above our spot, the red and green navigational lights seemed excessively bright in the darkening sky. We held our breath as the pilot performed a slow 180-degree pivot while hovering just above the treetops.

Without further hesitation, the pilot began his descent. He held his craft rock steady with no side to side or fore to aft slip as he carefully lowered into the hole. The combination of prop wash and the ends of his rotors clicking off the tips of limbs showered debris down on us. We covered Ed’s head and face and held our position, wondering how this pilot was ever going to land his craft on the shaky platform that had been hastily constructed.

The pilot’s distinctive drawl came over the speaker. He calmly directed us to just hold our location until he got stopped in a hover over the platform as he would not try to support his craft on it. Bill noticed that the pilot deftly placed his starboard side runner on a stump and then held his craft perfectly level while telling us that we could now get the Stokes litter with Ed secured to his port side runner. We lifted the litter and scrambled over the mass of limbs and logs to get Ed placed on the runner and lashed down. We hollered to Ed that he was in good hands, that he was headed to the hospital and was going to be OK. We then backed down and away from the runner and gave thumbs up to the pilot. The pilot told us over his outside speaker that he would be taking Ed into the hospital in Roseburg.

Then, with the same confident control he had just demonstrated in his descent, the pilot gently eased that 1100 straight up and out of that tight hole. Once clear of the treetops, he then stood that Hiller on its nose facing downhill and gave it full throttle.

We all stood transfixed by what had just occurred. Not only did an unexpected voice come over the air at just the critical moment providing hope, but that remarkable feat of flying by a

courageous and talented pilot converted that slim hope into reality. We were all spent, physically and emotionally. The highest priority had been completed. But the fire still needed tending to. We were smokejumpers and there were no others.

After Ed’s evacuation Wood, Dunnigan and Vaughn were released from the fire to return to RAC. Jackson and Collins were left in charge of the fire. We improved the line and worked through the night cooling the snag and hot spots. At daybreak on June 4, we continued to cool the snag, worked some mop up and improved the platform at the helispot. We were released from the fire at 1330 and picked up by a FS helicopter to return to RAC.

(BV) Turns out Ed had cracked a neck vertebra, damaged his back, in addition to his ankle and tongue injuries, along with a few other contusions. Most of us figured he’d be out for at least the summer. Animal Ed had other ideas. He always kept himself in superb condition and had worked through his rehab and joined the light-duty paraloft crew in about six weeks.

(BJ) Once released from the fire, we managed to convince the FS pilot that we were “required” to stop at the hospital in Roseburg and get an update on Ed’s condition. We landed at the hospital and saw the Evergreen Hiller 1100 parked on their ER pad. As we got out of our chopper, we saw a very tall, lanky guy with a crunched-up, straw cowboy hat exit the ER doors and walk toward us with a big grin on his face. With his charming drawl, he asked, “Are you the idiots who don’t mind falling out of trees and busting yourselves up on the rocks while jumping into forest fires?” We replied that he must be the idiot Redneck pilot who thought he could get a too-large chopper into too-small hole in a forest, in the dark, to rescue our buddy! We laughed while we embraced him and thanked him for such a heroic work of airmanship. He just “Aw shucked” the compliment by stating that he had plenty of Huey’s shot out from under him in Vietnam, so going into a spot where he wasn’t drawing fire was “a piece of cake.” He then told us that Ed had the benefit of first-rate Doctors working on him. He was going to live, but it would probably be awhile before he would be up and walking around. We thanked him again, shook his hand and, if we got his name, it has been lost in the fifty-two years since it was given to us.

Our FS pilot was getting antsy and had kept

his rotors turning, having said he could give us only a few minutes. We jumped back in, and he lifted off quickly, arriving back at RAC on June 4th at 1545 hours. We were back in the Ready Room 15 minutes later and suited up to jump another fire. Jackson, Collins, Dunnigan, Vaughn, Linville, Hawes, Wood, and Twiss departed in the two Twin Beech's for the Deschutes NF where we jumped the Squaw Creek Bench Fire at 1630. We worked that fire vigorously through the night of Friday, June 5. We were then released from the fire at 0630 and shuttled back to RAC arriving at 0755. By 0815 we were placed off duty to clean up, get some sleep, grab a hot meal, and directed to be back on duty at 1300 hours.

It had been an exceptionally full four days for all of us and was a dramatic start for a fire season that would be one of the most active on record. Despite the demanding schedule that summer, we thought often of "Animal" Ed and wondered when he would show up barking his good-natured insults.

(BV) I won't forget Ed; he set such an example of fitness and leadership for the rest of us.

(Both Jack and Bill) We recently had the opportunity to interview Ed's wife, Karen Weissenback Moen, to get more details on the aftermath of Ed's injuries and recovery. Karen had been notified on the afternoon of the jump that Ed was seriously injured, and every effort was being made to evacuate him before dark. When told later that Ed had been taken by helicopter to the hospital in Roseburg, Karen scrambled to borrow a car to get there from their home in Ashland. Arriving the next day, she was apprehensive on entering Ed's hospital room after seeing the statue of the Virgin Mary covered in a black veil with her head hung. Ed was heavily sedated with pain medications but broke the tension by chuckling when he saw Karen and managed to tell her to look at his tongue. She was appalled at seeing how mangled and swollen his tongue was with the front half nearly severed, hanging by a mere flap of skin. Karen asked the doctor when they were going to perform surgery to save his tongue and was told that it was unnecessary as the tongue is one of the most rapid healing tissues in the body and would repair the deep laceration within a few weeks. Unfortunately, that was not the case with Ed's spinal injuries that caused him a great deal of pain

and mobility impairment. He chose to deal with that by letting his body heal at home through rest, diet, and the use of pain meds.

Karen said that Ed didn't complain at all about his injuries, but he did complain frequently about missing an active fire season that would have allowed him a lot of fire jumps and overtime! Within several weeks Ed was up and had contacted our RAC base manager, **Jim Allen** (NCSB-46), who gave his OK to return to work in a "light duty" capacity in the paraloft.

Of greater concern for Ed was his employment status with Air America. He had been on furlough but was contacted early in July and notified that they wanted him to return to duty in SE Asia as soon as possible. Knowing that he could not pass the physical or perform the work as a "kicker" in his current condition, he asked Jim Allen for a letter to Air America explaining that he was deemed an "essential employee" to the overall smokejumping operation at RAC and could not be released from duty during a critical fire season. The letter concluded by stating that Ed could go by September 15. Ed had picked that date out of thin air to be rehabilitated enough to handle the work for Air America. Of course, Jim Allen supported Ed completely and signed off on the letter which was accepted by Air America, thus reserving Ed's position with them.

Ed continued to work partial and some full shifts in the paraloft but would return home completely spent and lay down to relieve his back pain. Yet every day he would push through the pain and work diligently at recovering his mobility and strength. When Air America required a physical exam later in August, Ed chose the doctor in Bend that treated injured smokejumpers at RAC. Karen recalled that Ed gritted his teeth going into the exam and returned to the car afterward hunched over in substantial pain. He told her to drive home very slowly and make sure to avoid any bumps. He had been able to perform the requirements of the physical exam well enough to be approved, but at the expense of several days of suffering.

As Ed had promised in his letter they were packed up by September 15 and headed back to Laos where he would continue his work with Air America. Karen emphasized that the doctors had stressed how critical Ed's physical conditioning

and strength were in moderating the severity of his injuries. That, combined with his dedication to the painful rehab at home, allowed him to recover more quickly. She praised the high standard of fitness required by smokejumpers as being instrumental in Ed's recovery.

Please refer to Karen's article "**The Homecoming**" in the April 2022 edition of *Smokejumper*. It provides details on Ed's death in December 1971 while working for Air America and the subsequent search and recovery of his remains in Laos many years later. 🔑

Catastrophic Fire Awareness, Prevention, Response, Suppression And Recovery

by **Court Boice** (Curry County—Oregon—Commissioner)

Oregon is the timber capital of the world. It is a proud heritage. Wisdom, however, is often difficult to find in the modern era of our Forest and Natural Resource management.

The Beaver State is renowned for its natural landscape beauty. People from around the globe visit here to enjoy the magnificent forests that we're so blessed to call our home. Ignoring imperative maintenance of these pristine lands has brought gargantuan carnage from massive mega-forest fires. While we still have considerable unaltered landscape, it will take decades to restore that which has burned.

We must return to that wisdom in how we protect and manage our God-given most special watersheds. Southwest Oregon and Northern California arguably possess the most splendid, rugged, wild, pristine forests and rivers on the entire North American continent.

Do we Oregonians learn from our mistakes on forest management? Sadly, I think not. In Curry County as just one example, one would think six major mega-forest fires, four identified as catastrophic, burned one million acres in the last 36 years.

Curry County covers more than a million acres, so there have been burns and reburns. Sadly, our forests have suffered these calamitous events over the last three generations. When the smoke clears, what remains is abject devastation beyond pale.

The 3½ decades of costs just for fighting these fires is a staggering \$330 million in my county alone. Allow that number to sink in. It is not pocket change. I wonder how Curry County could have benefited with just a sliver of that cost dedicated to

forest floor fuels abatement.

That third of a billion in taxpayer dollars does not consider the costs for our number one concern—public safety. Then add the colossal losses in terms of economic, cultural, water quality, health, wildlife and unique Southern Oregon and Northern California habitat!

Ladder fuels removal cuts back on natural forest overgrowth and blocks and establishes a safe barrier between the fire and volatile kindling. Our foresters should be removing this dry brush regularly to prevent the seventh next Curry nuclear fire.

I'm completely convinced that we must put local people back to work, boots on the ground, to vigorously and properly remove the grass and brush starting on each side of our backcountry roads.

We should never forget that humans are not the only victims of these catastrophes. Let's protect our precious wildlife and these watershed lands where they make their homes. Deer, elk, bear, countless mammals, reptiles, and bird species cannot escape the wrath of a 2,200-degree, wind-driven forest fire. Most Oregonians are clear-thinking, common-sense folks who don't agree with the "let it burn" policy.

Finally, allow me to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of Rogue River-Siskiyou N.F. Supervisor **Merv George**. He gets it. His dedication, experience, and talents are contributing to protecting our special natural resources—the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and great forests. He knows how to manage.

History is the best teacher. Let's exercise some of that tried-and-true wisdom and manage our forests again. 🔑



SOUNDING OFF from the Editor



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

IN AN ARTICLE in this issue, the Chetco Bar Fire is back in the news due to a lawsuit brought against the USFS by private landowners in Southern Oregon. It is interesting from a couple points of view.

The Chetco Bar Fire has been one of my key points in going after our current wildfire “let-burn” strategy. Having jumped the Siskiyou N.F. eight seasons, we always had a sense of value in saving the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area and the Siskiyou N.F. We were off the ground in ten minutes after a fire request and had pride in putting out a fire and making it a single page report.

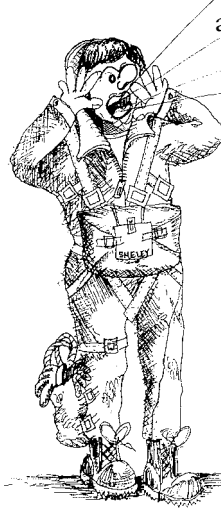
I covered the Chetco Bar Fire in the October 2018 issue of *Smokejumper*. Even after 17 days, it still would have been a four-man fire from the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. Problem: The Siskiyou

Smokejumper Base was closed after the 1981 season to save money. Since then, the Siskiyou N.F. has burned with fires that have totaled close to, or over, a BILLION dollars.

I have a different view than that of the USFS on our current wildfire “let-burn” policy. I do not think that we can burn our way back to the 10th century. We are a different country than we were in the years of the Native Americans. Will the USFS figure this out at some point?

Also very important is the fact that the landowners are being represented by attorney **Quintin Rhoades** (MSO-89) who was among the jumpers on the South Canyon Fire in 1994. Quintin’s views on fighting wildfire are certainly different from the current “too steep, too rough” statements put out by personnel on many wildfires. He allowed me to publish the following email:

Quintin Rhoades (MSO-89): “I’ve been burned over in a fire shelter, and I’ve assisted in recovering the charred remains of friends and acquaintances with whom I’d had lunch just a little earlier in that day. I’m at least as sensitive



about safety as any overhead safety officer, if not more so.

“That said: If you don’t want to put firefighters in harm’s way, tell them to just stay in the firehouse. These fires would be smaller if USFS and its drip torching, Veri pistol-packing, flame-throwing, dragon egg dropping ‘Type I Teams’ did not exist. Just let it burn, and you will put fewer people at risk. Fewer folks would be in the zone of danger if USFS fire managers never showed up with their insistence on putting their own fire on the ground. That’s point number 1.

“Number 2: The Tamarack Fire, when it was discovered, could have been put out with two sticks of smokejumpers on the first day—one stick to put out the fire, one stick to make camp. Instead, thousands of firefighters and civilians were put at risk by using the fire for ‘resource management’ purposes. Another prime but more tragic example: Lolo Peak Fire, which killed a Hotshot. Had USFS put smokejumpers on it when it was found (they had a jump ship hovering over it on day one), the lad who died might still be alive today. So, can we please quit lying to ourselves about safety? **If you lie to yourself, you’d lie to anyone.**”

In a following email from **Murry Taylor** (RDD-65): “Quentin, I remember you. We jumped a bit together. I also know of your story there at Storm King. I’m glad you’re doing what you are to help fix the problem with the FS and its ridiculous ‘Too Steep and Too Rough’ excuse for not going after some fires. You hit the nail on the head pointing out a couple fires, especially the Lolo Fire, where the jumpers were refused, and thousands of acres burned, and a Hotshot died.

“Just the other day I heard from ex-jumper **Bob Jost** (RAC-76). Here’s what Bob wrote on a jumper webpage: ‘Murry, I enjoyed reading your recent novel and had no clue that the story would play out on the Ross Fork Fire

only a week later. Six BLM jumpers initial attacked it, but were told it was too steep, too rough and to back off. Two weeks later it blew up to 38,000 acres and 18 million dollars. There’s a lot more to the story and a good summary in the Idaho Mountain Express of 10/28/22.

“So many stories like this. The ‘Too Steep and Too Rough’ mantra was used in the fires in New Mexico this year when the excuse for not putting crews in the western part of the Pecos Wilderness was that the country was too steep and too rough.

“At any rate, I’m going to pump my new book a bit here: *Too Steep and Too Rough* goes right to the heart of what troubles the FS these days. Sad to say, the book is only for sale

on amazon. Lots of positive response so far and a few reviews up on Amazon.

“The Rogue River/Siskiyou N.F. FMO called me the other day. So far this year, 71 fires and 19 acres burned. If you add the 120 fires from 2020 and 2021 to the 71 of this year, that’s 191 fires and about 70 acres burned. The RR-Siskiyou is doing it by prepositioning jumpers and rappellers, using night shifts, and letting the people in the field make the calls, then backing them up. The example is there. The Klamath seems to be catching on. Thanks, Quentin, and all the rest here for what you’re doing. This must be corrected. As **Michael Rains** (Assoc.) has said, ‘It could be the most important environmental issue of our time.’” 🔦



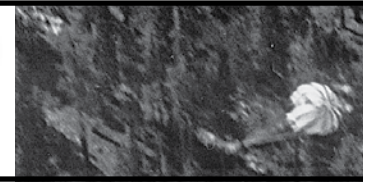
Redding end of year gathering put on by 2022 Rookies.

Older guys: L-R: Mark Youmans (RDD-81), Dan Emry (BOI-78), Charlie Caldwell (RDD-65), Andy Thorne (RDD-82), Steve Meyer (MYC-73), Dorsey Lightner (RDD-89), Jerry Spence (RDD-94), Dick Linebarger (RDD-74), Ralph Ryan (RDD-77), Doug Sheehy (father—Luke Sheehy RDD-09). (Courtesy A. Thorne)



THE JUMP LIST

The Men of 1957



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 currently.

Douglas M. Bird

(McCall '57)

Doug was born September 2, 1938, in Salina, Utah. "I was raised in Salina and Ephraim, Utah, and went to school in Casper, Wyoming. I always say I grew up in McCall, Idaho. McCall is where I learned how to work, when and how to play, how to be a team member and a team leader. The smokejumpers taught me how to be an ethical, capable, and contributing adult. I graduated from Natrona County High School in 1956. Ran track and wrestled in high school.

"I graduated from Utah State University with a bachelor's in Forestry in 1960 and got a master's in 1961. Received another MS from Univ. of California, Berkeley, with an emphasis in wildland fire management in 1967."

Doug had an extensive career with the USFS: "After getting the Ranger's job, which is the second-best job after smokejumper in the Forest

Service, I spent the next 20 years moving around the US. I went to California to do some fire ecology research, Job Corps Center Director in New Mexico, Chief's office in D.C., Branch Chief in the RO in Missoula, Deputy Supervisor on the Lolo NF, National Fire Suppression Staff at BIFC (now NIFC), Forest Supervisor on the Wayne-Hoosier NF and then my dream job—Regional Director of Aviation and Fire Management for the Intermountain Region in Ogden, Utah. I was one of the so called 'Fire Gods' in the Forest Service. I even had authority over the McCall jumper base. Wow! I spent the last 10 years of my FS career as the Director of Aviation and Fire Management and then retired from the FS in 1990."

Jon B. Bledsoe

(Missoula '57)

Jon was born December 8, 1937, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and grew up in Lawton and graduated from high school in 1955. He furthered his education at the University of Oklahoma (1955-57) and earned a degree in Forest Management from the University of Idaho in 1960. Jon jumped at Missoula 1957-59.

He then started a 34-year career with the USFS: Dispatcher at the Moose Creek

RS 1960, Forester Nez Perce NF 1960-64, Resource Assn't. Nez Perce 1964-68, Supervisory Forester Bitterroot NF 1968-71, District Ranger Idaho Panhandle NR 1971-74, District Ranger Clearwater NF 1974-93 (retired).

Michael J. "Mike" Byrne (Cave Junction '57)

Mike was born August 19, 1937, in Longview, Washington, grew up in Shelton, Washington, and graduated from St. Martins H.S. in Olympia in 1955. He earned his bachelor's from St. Martins College in 1959 and returned in 1960 to earn his teaching certificate. Mike jumped at Cave Junction 1957-59. He taught math and science at North Thurston School District in Olympia 1961-68 and coached football and wrestling. In 1969 Mike moved back to Shelton, obtained a contractor's license, and built residential homes, small commercial buildings, and did remodeling work. He owned and operated a lumber yard in addition to his construction company.

Mike was elected to the Shelton City Council where he served 1971-79. In 1984 he was hired by Mason County as Director of General Services and retired in 2002. Mike was appointed as Commissioner of Finance (2007-08) and elected as Finance Commissioner

2008-11. He is still living in Shelton (2022). "I have enjoyed cruising Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands in our restored 35-ft wooden cruiser."

Edmund E. Bloedel Jr.

(Missoula '57)

Ed was born September 7, 1935, in Janesville, Wisconsin, where he grew up and graduated from high school in 1953. He received a bachelor's degree in Forestry/Range Management from the University of Montana in 1958 and did graduate work at Montana and Utah State University.

Ed started his work career as a Lookout on the Flathead N.F. in 1956 and rookied at Missoula in 1957 where he jumped for one season. His USFS career followed: 1958-59 Forester Beaverhead N.F., 1960-61 Assistant Ranger Beaverhead N.F., 1961 Assistant Ranger Madison RD Beaverhead N.F., 1962-66 District Ranger Custer N.F., 1966-70 District Ranger Gallatin N.F., 1970-72 Range Staff Officer R-1 Headquarters, 1972-80 Staff Officer Bitterroot N.F., 1980-83 Staff Officer R-8 Headquarters, 1983-87 Chief's Office D.C., 1987-91 Sawtooth N.F.

James L. "Jim" Cherry

(Missoula '57)

Jim was born in Waterloo, Iowa, on December 22, 1938. He grew up in Waterloo and graduated from East Waterloo High School in 1957.

In the summer of 1956 he drove to Headquarters, Idaho,

to work for Clearwater Timber Protective Association. He received his initial fire training there and manned two lookout towers (Brown's Creek and Shanghai). In 1957, following his high school graduation, he was accepted into the Missoula Smokejumpers, making seven practice jumps and seven fire jumps that season.

Jim attended Iowa State University and majored in Forest Management. He returned to jump in 1959 with two practice jumps and five fire jumps. He also took part in the experimental jumping from helicopters as they would pass low over ridgetops. That experiment was short lived. He graduated from ISU in 1961 with a B.S. in Forest Management.

In 1961 Jim went on to Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, to obtain a Master of Divinity degree in 1965. During his year of seminary internship, he developed a canoe camping ministry that took youth to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in N.E. Minnesota. Also, during his seminary years he was commissioned in the U.S. Army Chaplain program until 1970.

Jim moved to Minneapolis in 1965 to work with Plymouth Christian Youth Center, an inner-city ministry. He worked with youth from correctional facilities and with youth who needed adult mentors. In 1972 he shifted gears to become director of PCYC's Wilderness Canoe Base, a high-adventure camp-

ing ministry located adjacent to N.E. Minnesota's Boundary Waters.

In 1983 Jim accepted a call to serve a congregation in Iowa and, after several years, began to specialize serving a series of congregations as an interim pastor specialist. During this time, he also served another camp in central Iowa for a period of 6 years.

In a half-way move toward retirement in 1997, he took on serving as chaplain at a nursing home and served in a half-time position with the American Camp Association (ASCA) as Executive for the Great Rivers Section covering Iowa, Nebraska, and western Missouri. He also did work as a consultant, helping camps work toward full accreditation by the ACA.

Jim attended the first smokejumper reunion held in Missoula in 1984 and has been an active member of the NSA board of directors, serving as board president for six years. He was instrumental in establishing the NSA's Annual Fund, the Good Samaritan Fund and has chaired the Scholarship Committee. Jim has been an NSA Life Member since 2002. He has also taken part in many NSA Trail Projects in Montana, Idaho, Colorado, and Minnesota over the years. Jim and his wife, Judy, are retired and living in Waverly, Iowa.

Michael Travis "Mike"

Daly (Idaho City '57)

Mike was born February 18, 1939, in Twin Falls, Idaho, where he grew up and

graduated from high school in 1957. He attended the University of Idaho and Boise State University before graduating from Colorado State University in 1969 with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and the University of Washington School of Public Health in 1975 with a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology. Mike also served in the Idaho Air National Guard. He jumped at Idaho City 1957 and at McCall 1958-62.

Work Career:

Homedale, ID, Owyhee Veterinary Clinic Large Animal Vet 1969

Boise, ID, Bench Animal Hospital Small Animal Veterinarian 1970

Boise State Department of Health Epidemiologist 1970-71

Seattle Ballard Greenwood Hospital Assistant Veterinarian Small Animals

Spokane County Health Department Epidemiologist 1971-1972

Portland OR USDA Meat Inspection

Boise Alta Lipids Agricultural Pharmaceutical Manufacturer

Salem OR State Department of Agriculture Retired 2002

Jeffery R. "Jeff" Davis

(Missoula '57)

Jeff was born April 4, 1937, in Duluth, Minnesota, where he grew up and graduated from high school in 1955. He went to the Univ. Minnesota Duluth for a year before moving to Thompson Falls,

Montana, where he worked the 1956 season on a lookout. Jeff rookied at Missoula where he jumped 1957-66 and 1978. He was on the Silver City Crew for eight seasons. Jeff had to leave jumping in 1966 as he reached the age limit (at that time) of 40. He hired on at the Missoula Equipment Development Center (MEDC).

Jeff was able to keep jumping at MEDC until 1978 when he suffered a major back injury on a jump in Little Stoney Creek, Montana. He retired in 1983 and moved to Silver City. Jeff made a total of 180 USFS jumps, mostly fires as only two practice jumps were the norm at that time.

"The jumping years were by far my best years, and I wish I could go back." Jeff is an NSA Life Member and has written numerous articles for *Smokejumper* magazine.

Fred W. Ebel

(Missoula '57)

Fred was born on January 17, 1936, and raised on a dairy farm near Prior Lake, Minnesota. He graduated from Concordia Academy High School in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1954. Fred attended Concordia College one year (1954-1955) and transferred to Montana State University in Missoula where he graduated in forest management in 1959. He jumped the 1957 season at Missoula.

Fred joined the Navy in September 1959, received commission after attending OCS in Newport, RI, and

served as a line officer on three ships with a specialty in communications. He retired as a Captain in 1990 with a mix of active and reserve duty and received the Navy Commendation Medal in 1988.

Fred joined the Bureau of Land Management in 1963 as a forester. He worked for the Boise Cascade Corporation in 1966 as a logging supervisor and chief forester. He joined WTD Industries in 1987 in Spokane, Washington, before forming Ebel & Associates, a consulting company, in 1990 specializing in management, arbitration and acquisitions.

Fred retired in 2006 and lives in Post Falls, Idaho, and remains active managing timberland owned in Eastern Oregon. He married Nancy Brandt in 1960, and they have two daughters and four grandchildren. He is active in the Society of American Foresters and was elected President of the SAF in 2000.

Owen L. "Lee" Gossett

(Redding '57)

Lee was born January 18, 1939, in Simla, Colorado, and grew up in Central Point, Oregon, where he graduated from Crater HS in 1958. He attended Shasta Junior College and Southern Oregon University. Lee was in the Army, E-4, mechanic.

Work Career:

Smokejumper Redding 1957-58, Fairbanks 1960-61, 63 and Cave Junction 1962. Kicker for Air America, pilot for Air America, pilot for Continental Air Service, Laos,

1964-72. Crop duster, ski plane pilot, tourist airline pilot, New Zealand. Bush pilot, Alaska, smokejumper pilot, lead plane pilot, air tanker pilot, pilot for the Intelligence Community. Owned cattle and hay ranch owned rental property.

Retired 2004 and currently living in Central Point, Oregon. Still flying for pleasure to the Idaho wilderness in the summer months. Author of *Smokejumper to Global Pilot, a True Odyssey*. Member of the Oregon Aviation Hall of Honor, 2011.

Dennis Lee Gother

(Missoula '57)

"I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on July 30, 1937, and graduated from Custer HS in Milwaukee in 1955. I graduated from Valparaiso University in 1959. In the summer of 1956, I worked for the forest service out of St. Maries, Idaho and met Gary Lawley. In 1957-58, we both

jumped jumpers out of Missoula.

"In early fall of 1958, as I was about to enter graduate school, I was called home because of problems with my father's small, independent insurance agency. The president of the biggest company my father represented informed me that my father was deeply in debt, and unless I got into the business, he would be forced into bankruptcy. I thought I could settle things in a few years, and then I found out that in addition to the insurance company debt, my father, who had alcohol and drug problems, also owed nearly a quarter million dollars in federal and state back taxes. So, at age twenty-two, I suddenly had a family of five to provide for. It took me thirty years to clear all the debts.

"In 1988, I finally sold the insurance business and became the manager of a wildlife art gallery. While I was working at the gallery,

my wife, Nancy Mayer, was beginning her graduate studies in American Literature. After she graduated with a late-life Ph.D., she got a teaching job at Northwest Missouri State University, and we moved to Maryville Missouri, where we stayed for thirteen years. After Nancy retired, we built a home in the lake country of northern Wisconsin, where we continue to live our lucky lives.

"I do not remember most of the fires I was on, but I do remember the feeling of being in the door or the plane, prepared to jump, with roar of the motor and the smell of gasoline, being slapped on the back, and out I went. As soon as I felt the tug of the chute opening, everything was silent, everything was serene. I had left the world behind. I was in that state, it seemed, longer than the few minutes before I had to start looking for a place to land. This is what I miss the most." 🔦

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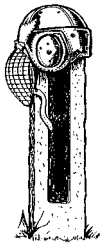
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Off The List

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

Cole L. MacPherson (Missoula '55)

Cole, 87, died December 26, 2022, in Lolo, Montana. Cole was best known for caring for patients as a dentist in Missoula from 1966 until 2012. Always willing to help a friend in pain or need, he often treated patients after regular business hours or on weekends. In 1950, Cole moved to Missoula from Wisconsin with his mother, Mabelle, and sister, Cloette. He graduated from Missoula County High School in 1953 and then attended the University of Montana (then Montana State University), graduating in 1957 with a degree in chemistry and wildlife. While attending the University of Montana, Cole served in the ROTC as distinguished graduate, swam on the UM swim team, and was a member of the Sigma Nu fraternity.

Cole was especially proud of his military service in the Air Force, where he served as an officer from 1957 to 1962. Cole was stationed at bases across the United States as a Commander of explosive ordnance, including nuclear weapons. After working for the USFS as a teenager (1952-1956), he joined the Smokejumpers (1957) where he was based in West Yellowstone and Missoula. He spent his summers training and fighting fires prior to and after his time in the Air Force. After serving his country in the Air Force, Cole attended Dental School at the University of Oregon in Portland. Cole and family lived in Portland from 1962-1966, returning to Missoula each summer for his smokejumper work. After graduation from Dental School in 1966, the MacPherson family settled in Missoula.

Outside of his career as a professional, Cole pursued the work and art of the Outdoorsman. He lived the devoted and enthusiastic life as a Montanan: hunter, woodsman, fisherman, trapper, horseman and mountain man. It has been said many times that Cole should have been

born in the previous century when Montana was even wilder than his era of the mid and late 1900s. Cole jumped at Missoula 1955, 62, 64-65, and at West Yellowstone 1956-57, and 1963. He was a Life Member of the NSA.

Harold William Flake (Idaho City '61)

Harold, 82, died December 23, 2022. He was born March 30, 1940, and grew up in Gooding, Idaho, where he graduated from Gooding H.S. Harold attended Idaho State College for two years before going to Utah State University where he graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees in Entomology. He worked for the USFS fighting fires while in high school and jumped at Idaho City during the 1961 season. Upon graduation from college, he worked for the USFS Research Station in Berkeley, California. Harold moved on with the Forest Service in Regions 1, 3, 4, and 8, retiring in 1994 after 35 years. He was active in the National Smokejumper Association and enjoyed reuniting with many of his smokejumper colleagues.

Lester Kenneth "Les" Rosenkrance (McCall '61)

Les died September 26, 2022. He was born March 5, 1941, in Pocatello, Idaho. Les graduated from the University of Idaho in 1969 with a degree in Range Management. His first job was with the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho Falls as a range conservationist. In the following years, he served in Anchorage and Tok, Alaska, Washington D.C., Safford and Phoenix, Arizona, and Boise, Idaho. At the time of his retirement in 2000, he was the BLM National Director of Fire and Aviation. Les jumped at McCall 1961-68.

Huntington Talbott Hatch (Missoula '53)

Hunt, 90, died December 7, 2022. He was born March 6, 1932, in Moscow, Idaho. He

graduated from high school in 1950 in the bottom quarter of his class. Hunt stated in his memoir, “after the fishing, hunting, and girl chasing, I didn’t have much time for studying.” He later graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in Forestry. In 1963 he joined the USAF where he flew jet fighters. After the service, Hunt began flying for Trans World Airlines for 28 years from 1964-92. He was also a commercial fisherman and a tree farmer. In 1995 he was the runner up for the National Tree Farmer of the Year. Hunt jumped at Missoula 1953-55.

Jack Lawrence Demmons (Missoula ’50)

Jack died September 18, 2022. He was born June 15, 1930, in West Riverside, Montana. His father came to Bonner, Montana, in the 1880s to work in the mill. Jack attended Bonner School, Missoula County H.S., and the University of Montana. He joined the Army in 1952 and was a member of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Jack was Superintendent of Bonner School District 1974-85 and started the Bonner School historic photo collection. He continued with this effort until 1985, collecting more than 1,600 photos from current and past residents.

Jack was a key part of the NSA’s early years working day after day at the NSA office in the Museum of Mountain Flying and publishing the quarterly issue of the “Static Line.” He was an important part of the development of the NSA in the early years.

David L. “Dave” Owen (Missoula ’51)

Dave, 92, died November 28, 2022. He was born March 18, 1930, in Madison, Wisconsin, where he grew up and graduated from high school. Dave spent a year in the Army and then moved to Montana where he earned his degree in Rangeland Management from the University of Montana. He jumped at Missoula 1951, 53, 54 and at Grangeville in 1952.

Following college, Dave began a career with the USFS working on several Ranger Districts in Idaho, and in 1958, started his first job as a District Ranger on Big Prairie Ranger District. He went on to serve as ranger at Ninemile Ranger District. At that time, he met a young biology teacher named Kay. They started their family at

Ninemile and continued to raise them while Dave worked at Superior and then Spotted Bear Ranger Districts.

Murray J. “Joe” Sterling (Missoula ’73)

Joe died November 12, 2022, from injuries suffered in a fall at his home in Billings, Montana. He was born in St. Ignatius, Montana, July 2, 1948, and grew up in Ronan, Montana. Joe graduated from University of Montana in 1975. Summers during college, he worked for the USFS on a lookout, was a Hotshot, and jumped at Missoula 1973-74. Later Joe worked for Montana Power at the Corette Plant in Billings where he lived in Billings since 1976.

He was a Special Forces Medic in The Army and Combat Medical Platoon Staff Sergeant 25th Infantry Division, Vietnam. Joe received Army Accommodation Medals for Meritorious Service and the Bronze Star. After an honorable discharge from the Army, he served 20 years in the Army Reserve and Montana National Guard.

Joe seemed to be happiest when he was helping others. Besides working at The Camp on The Boulder for several years, he was a ski and snowboard instructor at Eagle Mount. He was a mentor for Yellowstone County Veterans Treatment Court, and a Life Member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the National Rifle Association, and the National Smokejumper Association.

Ronald N. “Ron” Stickney (Missoula ’51)

Ron, 93, died October 20, 2022. He was born in Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho, where he grew up and graduated from high school. He attended Northern Idaho J.C. and then received his bachelor’s in Forestry from the University of Idaho. Ron spent a year in the Navy and jumped at Missoula 1951-53. Ron worked for the USFS in Kingston, Coeur d’ Alene, and Albuquerque. After retiring from the USFS, he worked as a partner in a land exchange company.

Gordon Leon Harris (Idaho City ’69)

Gordon, 73, died July 21, 2022. He was born March 10, 1949, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Gordon fell in love with the west and spent an abundance of time everywhere from Alaska to Arizona to Ha-

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waii while calling Idaho home for the last 38 years of his life. He retired from an impressive career in aviation wildland firefighting with the USFS in 2005. Then he spent his golden years of retirement traveling the country on his Harleys and restoring the 24 acres he lived on to its natural beauty.

Gordon jumped at Idaho City in 1969 and at Boise 1970, 72. He was a smokejumper and a smokejumper pilot.

Edward M Arnett (Missoula '45)

Ned, 99, died May 11, 2022. He was born September 25, 1922, in Philadelphia and was a Quaker. He was drafted into Civilian Public Service in 1944 and his occupation at the time was listed as "College Instructor." Ned had six practice jumps and was one of the higher men on the crew with seven fire jumps that season. In 2012, he

published a Memoir book: *A Different Kind of War Story: A Conscientious Objector in World War II.*

Ned earned his undergraduate and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and began teaching at the University of Pittsburgh in 1957. He joined the faculty at Duke University in 1980 and, three years later, was named a member of the National Academy of Sciences. At Duke, he was appointed the R.J. Reynolds Professor of Chemistry and retired in 1992.

Roger Newton (Cave Junction '51)

Roger died May 6, 2021. He grew up in Medford, OR, and graduated from Medford High School in June of 1944. He entered the Army Air Cadet program and went to Montana State University and then to the University of Utah. He was discharged from the Air Force in 1946.

Roger then entered the University of Oregon

and graduated in 1950 with a bachelor's degree. Two years later, he entered law school at Willamette University and graduated in 1955 with his law degree.

Roger practiced law in Reno, NV, from 1959—1992 before moving to Santa Barbara, CA, to be close to family. Roger jumped at Cave Junction 1951-58. 🕒

Not Forgotten

David John Liston (Fairbanks '98)

Dave, 28, died April 29, 2000, at Fort Wainwright near Fairbanks, Alaska, where he worked as a smokejumper for the Bureau of Land Management's Alaska Fire Service.

Dave was among a group of eight smokejumpers participating in mandatory pre-season recertification practice jumps. During his fifth refresher jump, Dave's parachute failed to open, and he plunged 3,000 feet to his death. Emergency medical care was immediately provided by other EMT trained smokejumpers to no avail. The subsequent investigation showed that his drogue parachute deployed but the main parachute did not. The reserve pilot-chute bridle and suspension lines entangled with the main drogue bridle preventing either parachute from deploying.

Dave was a veteran smokejumper with 64 previous jumps. Prior to that he began his fire service in Oregon in 1993 on the Deschutes NF and came to Alaska in 1995 to work on the Midnight Sun Hotshot crew. A champion wrestler in Oregon and son of a Forest Service lead plane pilot, Dave was born in Portland, Oregon, graduated from Gladstone High School, and had attended Clackamas Community College.

Recently married, Dave was survived by his wife, Kristin. Starting their lives together in Alaska, Dave and Kristin lived in a small cabin in the Rainbow Valley area outside of Anchorage and had recently purchased property in the North Pole/Fairbanks area. His fellow jumpers remember him for his free spirit, positive attitude, and always doing more than what was expected.

Arden L Davis Jr. (Fairbanks '64)

Arden died May 11, 1966, in Fairbanks, Alaska, the result of a practice jump accident.

Cecil Hicks (NCSB-62) recounted, "We were jumping three-man sticks on the University of Alaska Experimental Farm. It was the first practice jump for returning jumpers. I was the first man out, followed by Arden and **Jerry Fuller** (FBX-65). It was breezy. Jerry and I immediately turned into the wind and drifted backward into the trees. We wondered why Arden was running with the wind. He landed quite a distance from us. The rest of the load landed near the jump spot. We didn't see Arden but figured that he was having a problem untangling his parachute from the trees. After retrieving our chutes and returning to the jump spot we found that Arden wasn't there. **Tom Crane** (FBX-62), Jerry Fuller, **Neal Rylander** (MSO-61), and I took off at a dead run toward Arden's parachute. We found him hanging with a suspension line caught under his helmet, his Capewells popped. Apparently, he had failed to clear the suspension line and was strangled. His feet were about two feet off the ground." **Jerry Timmons** (MSO-62), retired Alaska Smokejumpers superintendent, noted, "Jumpers **Don Wahl** (MSO-63), **Roy Percival** (NCSB-57), and **Bob Webber** (MSO-62) tried to revive him, but to no avail."

Arden, a 2nd year smokejumper, was born in Sandpoint, ID, graduated from high school in Thompson Falls, MT, and received his Forestry degree from the University of Montana in 1965. He was survived by his wife, Karen, and two young daughters.

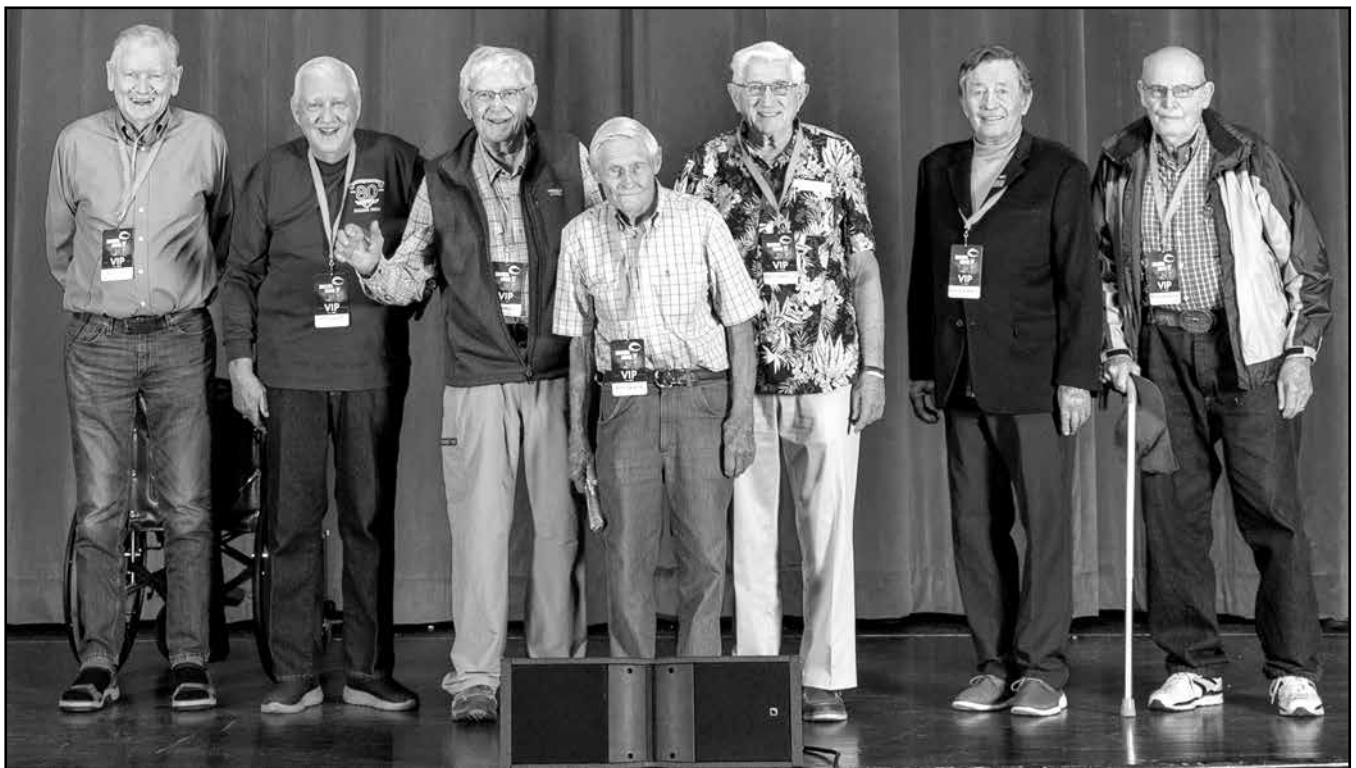
Tommy Roy Smith (Cave Junction '61)

Tommy died May 5, 1967, having drowned in the Illinois River while packing out from a remote helispot construction project in the Siskiyou NF, Oregon.

Tommy, **Rey Zander** (NCSB-56), and **Ron McMinimy** (RDD-65) had parachuted into the remote backcountry the previous day, part of a Siskiyou Base project to build helicopter landing areas. Having roughed out a helispot near Nome Peak, the three smokejumpers gathered their gear for the packout. The route chosen was to cross the Illinois River to the River Trail and then hike a few miles to a dirt road. Tommy, the first to cross the river, tied a rope around his waist and worked his way toward the other side. Rey and Ron held the other end of the rope, which was to be used to ferry their gear across in a rubber raft. The river, where Tommy chose to cross and then land, was calm but gained strength just a little further downstream. As Tommy neared the opposite bank the rope caught in the current and pulled him back into the river and faster moving water. Rey and Ron pulled in the slack from the

rope, hopeful it would keep him from drifting further downstream. Tommy then swung to the other side of the river, and Rey and Ron watched as he went under twice. Following Tommy downstream until they ran into a rock wall, they let go of the rope believing it was the only chance Tommy had of escaping the river. Tommy was swept rapidly down river, where the rope became entangled on rocks pulling him underwater and holding him there. A helicopter was called in to assist, but Rey and Ron were unable to retrieve Tommy's body. He was found May 13, having been washed about 700 yards further downstream.

Tommy, in his 6th smokejumping season, served in the US Army 1964-65. His family had moved from Texas to Grants Pass, OR, where Tommy graduated high school prior to attending Southern Oregon College. 🕯



Six smokejumpers who survived the Higgins Ridge wildfire in 1961 and the pilot who rescued them attended a special screening for an upcoming Montana PBS documentary retelling the story. The film produced by Breanna McCabe (Associate) debuted at the Wilma Theatre in Missoula Oct. 6, 2022.

L-R: John Holtet (MSO-61), Dale Graff (MSO-60), Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61), Rod Snider (NCSB-51), Bill Schroeder (MSO-61), Roy Korkalo (MSO-61) and Mark Greydanus (MSO-60) stand on stage at the Wilma Theater. The film also features interviews with Ross Parry (MSO-58), Don Gordon (MSO-59), James Van Vleck (MSO-61), Neil Walstad (MSO-61) and the late Wade Erwin (MSO-59) and Roger Siemens (MSO-59).

Remembering Dave Owen

by Jon Klingel (Cave Junction '65)

Dave Owen (MSO-51) was a tough, principled, thoughtful soft-spoken man. He was well respected and those who knew him valued what he had to say.

In 1961 a high school buddy and I hiked through the Bob Marshall Wilderness from the south to the north end. About ten days into the hike, we camped near the Big Prairie Ranger Station along the South Fork of the Flathead River. We were pretty meat hungry by then and were trying to catch fish with a couple flies given to us by some jumpers coming from a fire. We were standing in the ice-cold river, holding willow sticks for poles and not catching any fish, when a fellow showed up with his fishing gear. We talked a bit, then he went up the river fishing. Later, the guy came back with a nice string of trout, handed them to us and left. It was Dave Owen, the Big Prairie District Ranger.

After graduating from high school, I applied to the Forest Service at Big Prairie for a job and was hired as a trail crew member. Early in the season, a lightning storm came through and started a fire just across the runway from the station. When the new, young lookout called in saying there was a fire near the station, Dave questioned him to see how confident he was in his report. The lookout was adamant, and Dave finally acknowledged we did have a fire. Grabbing tools, Dave and several of us headed to the fire. The fire was small. As a kid new to forest fires on his first real job, I assumed it was a serious situation and was confused when Dave started building up the fire with dead branches. For him it was a training opportunity, and he proceeded to show us how to dig line and mop-up.

Another evening, the lookout called in a fire near his location. Several of us were told to saddle horses and head for the lookout, which was 15-20 miles from the Big Prairie Station. Dave wanted us to get to the fire before morning. It was a dark night with no moon. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face, and I just hoped my horse

would stay on the trail. We beat the jumpers to the fire before dawn.

One Sunday evening during supper at the station, a rookie kid from New York casually mentioned that there was a log across the trail a couple miles downstream. He had been out riding on his day off. Dave asked how big it was, and the kid indicated five or six inches in diameter. Dave asked if he had had an axe with him, and the kid said, "Yes." Then Dave calmly said, "You probably want to get down there and get that log out right after supper because there's a plane leaving here in the morning." This got my attention. The message was clear, "You don't leave a log on the trail if you can remove it, even if you have to get off your horse and it's your day off." To this day, 60 years later, I still can't ignore something on the trail. It's as if Dave is standing right there next to me. I still regret not going out that evening to help the guy.

I still regret not going out that evening to help the guy.

When the trail crews were camped out on the District, a packer would deliver fresh food about every 10 days. Sometimes District Ranger Dave would bring the food himself, but he didn't just drop the food and leave. He would stay for a couple days and work with the crew. He did his paperwork on the weekends and spent weekdays on the trails. He knew his District.

Dave had a sense of humor. Years later, when Dave was the District Ranger on the Ninemile District, I stopped by to say hello. On a Sunday morning, early, he commented that the Hotshot crew had been partying really hard the night before and probably weren't feeling very perky. With a smile on his face, Dave fired up a chainsaw just outside the open barracks window. 🔪

Dave passed away November 28, 2022. (Ed.)