

THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
APRIL 2004

SMOKEJUMPER



Inside This Issue:

Letters from a Hero	10
I Wish I Could Have Met Willi	16
Events Preceding Mann Gulch	23

CONTENTS

Message from the President	2
Jump to Utah	3
A Good Pilot Saves Thirty Lives	4
The First C-123 into Landing Site-36	5
Memories from the Start of	
Smokejumping	6
Milestones	7
Featured Life Member Ben Conner	8
Sounding Off from the Editor	9
Heads Up!!!!	9
Letters from a Hero	10
Indian Smokejumpers	13
On Final	13
Off the List	14
Do You Take This Jumper to Be ... ? I Do ..	15
2003 Fall Social at the Evergreen	
Museum	15
I Wish I Could Have Met Willi	16
Paddy Flats and a Cooling Swim	19
Odds and Ends	20
Postholes of Gold	21
Checking the Canopy	22
Can Someone Help?	22
Events Preceding Mann Gulch	23
The View from Outside the Fence	25
Items from the Fire Pack	27
Smokejumpers.com: NSA on the Web	28
Maryott Tribute	28
Blast from the Past	30
Crew Action July 2002	30
Touching All Bases	33



SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE No. 43, APRIL 2004
ISSN 1532-6160

Smokejumper is published quarterly by:
THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION
c/o 10 JUDY LANE
CHICO, CA 95928

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

NSA Web site: <http://www.smokejumpers.com>

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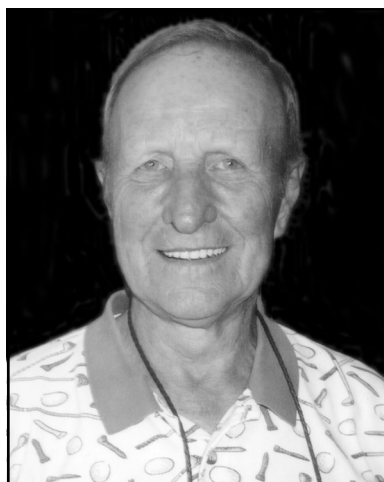
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Layout/Printing: *Larry S. Jackson, Heidelberg Graphics, www.HeidelbergGraphics.com*

Cover photo: *Willi Unsoeld and his daughter Devi. (Courtesy Jolene Unsoeld)*



Message from the President



by **Ron Stoleson**
(Missoula '56)
PRESIDENT

THE DAYS AND MONTHS are flying by and in a short while we'll be gathering in Missoula for the reunion. Hope you have sent in your registration. This is going to be a great event and will have to be special in order to match the one we had in Redding in 2000. I'm sure Chairmen Barry Hicks and Chuck Wildes are up to the task along with their many committee members. The rededication of the Aerial Fire Depot on Saturday will be taking place 50 years following its original dedication by President Eisenhower in September of 1954. I was in Missoula at the time having just started forestry school at Montana State University and the papers claimed the crowd that showed up was the largest ever assembled in Montana. Since then, other structures have been added to the complex including the Northern Forest Fire Research Laboratory and most recently the Missoula Technology Development Center. Evergreen Aviation has said they will have the Ford Tri-motor at the reunion and—who knows?—maybe even a 747 outfitted for dropping retardant.

On another subject, NSA

members in Colorado are forming their own chapter under the leadership of Bill Ruskin. He calls it a Beeraucracy because of their get-togethers but they also have lined up some trail work in Colorado that they will be pursuing as a group this fall. Nice going Bill! Fred Donner has been considering doing the same for the D.C. metropolitan area. Anything that gets our members together on a more regular basis than our big reunions is a plus.

Hope you read Jon McBride's "Trail Maintenance Special Report 2003" that you should have received over the holidays. What a great job in explaining the program and its accomplishments. It also captures in pictures and words the enjoyment shared among the participants while out in the woods together. If you haven't participated, better give it a try, but be careful—it can be habit forming.

We continue to receive more life memberships and are inching closer to the 200 we would like to achieve. If you can, please consider becoming a lifer and do it before the reunion. By joining the more than 120 lifers we already have, you will be assuring a solid financial foundation for NSA to use in preserving the history of smokejumping and in carrying out its other programs to benefit jumpers. And, don't forget, you'll receive a nifty cap and plaque commemorating your membership.

See you in Missoula. 🍄

Did You Lose Your Rookie Jump Pin?

Here's a chance to get it replaced. Order item # 132 on the merchandise order form. Each pin is \$10.00.

Jump to Utah

by Jerry Dixon (McCall '71)

June 29, 1974, 0500. "There is fire on the horizon, we jump at dawn." I am trying to rouse the new "Ned" class of 1974. Del Catlin has just told us there will be a fire call to Utah, and we need to get the new guys ready. Lynn Flock (MYC '69), Mike Cook (MYC '68) and myself have been trying to rouse them, but it is difficult after their Ned party of the night before. Rick Blanton in particular is having trouble as he keeps saying, "Oh no, please not today, I just got here."

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

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

"Rick, when you drop your date off at 0400 you don't get much sleep, let's go."

Twelve of us load on the first DC-3 at the McCall airport for the long flight to Utah. It will be the second fire jump to Utah and only four days after smokejumpers from six bases jumped a fire in the Uintahs. Whitey Heichmeister, our pilot, says, "I'll fly low and you can keep the door off. It is warm enough, with the air circulating it will help them wake up."

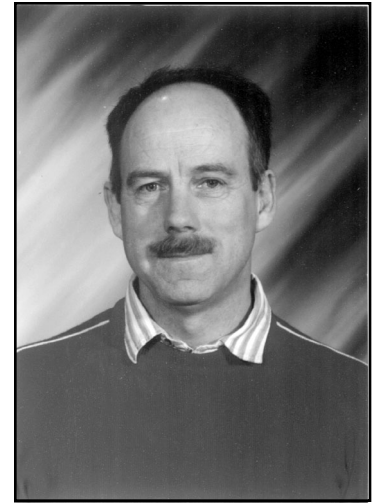
Fortunately I got to sleep earlier so I can sit near the door as we fly over southern Idaho and northern Utah. As a fifth generation Utahn, it means a lot to be returning to the state in a jump ship where my ancestors settled in 1860 and the farmhouse is still in my family. We land in Salt Lake City to refuel, and I call my sister to wish her happy birthday.

Then we board two personnel from the Utah Division of Lands. As this is the second Utah jump ever and the first on non-Forest Service lands, they want to see how we operate. Years later I met one of these men and commented that in my jumper experience I had never seen a non-jumper "observer" on a jump ship.

We flew southeast and crossed the Wasatch just south of Lone Peak and Bald Mountain above Alta. This vista is strikingly familiar to me and seeing it from the open door of a DC-3 jump ship is thrilling. I grew up skiing Alta, skied for the Alta ski team and trained for University of Utah ski team there. Just east of Alta we started suiting up.

The "One Eye Fire" was in the White River country of eastern Utah. It was actually on a native reservation, land managed by the state of Utah. It was burning in steep canyons so we picked out a jump spot on top. It was great to be making the first fire jump with the class of '74 as we had been some of their trainers. The air was calm and the jumping fine. Sometime during the second week, most of the McCall trainers had gone to Silver City. Flock, Cook, myself and others taught climbing, gear retrieval and made the first jumps with the Neds. So making the first fire was special because this class was the first in memory to have no one wash out, and many would go on to storied careers in fire.

We landed amid the sagebrush on the ridge and were securing our gear when word came from non-jumper overhead



Jerry Dixon. (NSA file)

that we could leave it on the mountain as it would “be watched.” We dropped down into the canyon and began to fight fire aggressively, providing for safety first. The fire was burning in evergreens, and rocks were rolling when it went through. Scott “Mouse” Warner was injured when a hot stone hit him on the hand. I lead a group of rookies across a gully. In a recent e-mail, **Frenchy Martisheng** (BOI ’74) remembers, “Dixon led us across this chute with rocks rolling in it. We were looking at him thinking, ‘What is with this guy?’”

Sometime during the day we got a radio message: “Your gear is on fire.” We sent some young bucks up the fire line, but it was too late. Many of the crew lost chutes, jumpsuits and much personal gear, including cameras. For 27 years, blame has been tossed about, but there is no doubt in my mind that if the jumpers had made the decision of where to place the gear, it would not have been engulfed in flames.

We stopped the fire in its tracks, of course. The class of ’74 was a joy to work with—young and near the wild heart of life. Typical rookie jumpers, Blanton, Anderson, Golik, Koncynski,

Martisheng, they were terrific. **Don Ranstrom** (MSO ’67) had a never-ending supply of jokes to keep us amused. Lynn Flock and I sat on a mountain prior to demob and wondered how many years we would continue to jump. Now he flies lead planes and jump ships, and I teach gifted students in Alaska.

Recently I have gotten to revisit the One Eye fire many times as “**Big D**” **Dennis Golik** and I have had an e-mail war over the year, the month, the day and whether it was the first jump to Utah. Dennis was in the class of ’74. I have been flamed by e-mail from almost every base that made the Squaw Basin jump a few days earlier, “We were there first and Dixon wasn’t,” or “Sure as *%#@!+^ wasn’t Lightnin’ Dixon!!!” Now tell me, is there someone out there who jumped Utah before ’74? Let me know, as I have been severely pummeled by my jump buddies for deluding myself over the years that I was on the first load to the first fire jump ever in my native Utah. 🦉

Jerry currently teaches gifted students in Seward, Alaska. He can be reached at: js2dixon@hotmail.com

A Good Pilot Saves Thirty Lives

by Earl Schmidt (Missoula ’43)

It was the spring of 1944 during refresher training that I met Captain Richard Ogg. I had just completed a jump and noticed two couples standing and observing the action. One of them identified himself as Capt. Ogg, a Pan



Earl Schmidt 1943 (NSA file)

American Airlines pilot with several thousand hours of flying experience.

During our conversation he mentioned, “I’ve carried a parachute for hundreds of hours, but hope I never have to use one.” We parted and I never saw him again.

However, in 1956 when looking through a *Colliers* magazine, I was surprised to see nine pages devoted to Capt. Ogg and one of his flights. He was flying from Hawaii to San Francisco in a Boeing Stratocruiser when one of the engines went out of control and had to be shut down. The plane had to be ditched in the Pacific.

Contact was made with the U.S. Coast Guard weather ship *Ponchartrain* that, fortunately, was in the area. The cutter laid down an oil slick to reduce the ocean swells, but the tail section broke off during the landing. The plane was evacuated in three minutes with no major injuries or loss of life. Everyone had breakfast on the *Ponchartrain*.

After nearly 60 years I remember Capt. Ogg and how he was able to respond when the chips were down. I would consider a parachute jump routine compared to the situation he faced 12 years after our meeting. I wish we could meet again so that I could personally commend him for his courage and skill that saved the lives of those 30 passengers. 🦉

Earl was one of the few CPS-103 jumpers to jump all three years of the program (1943–45). He currently lives in Biglerville, Penn.

The First C-123 into Landing Site-36

by Charley Moseley (Cave Junction '62)

Landing Site-36 (LS-36) was located some 40–50 miles north of the PDJ (Plaine de Jarres) across a little river from the village of Na Khang. Na Khang was the hub of our war efforts north of the PDJ. It was a real “melting pot” bringing together our various partners such as Vang Pao and his Hmong, Kong Le and the neutralists and the USAF and their big and bigger search and rescue choppers to hopefully retrieve some of our lost T-28 pilots.

Simply by chance, LS-36 provided many of my “firsts” in Laos. My first Caribou landing, first time to see a Jolly Green chopper and Puff (C-47 with Gatling guns), first meeting with Edgar “Pop” Buell and Tony Poe—two full-bore people with a job to do. There was a bad first when a young Laotian woman ran right into the almost invisible prop of a Pilatus Porter.

The landing strip at 36 was a little short but fine for our Caribous. The pilot would ease over the top of a limestone karst mountain, flutter down the steep slope with full flaps, give a little jolt of power to clear that last irrigation ditch and then slap both props into reverse. All this while hoping that no people or water buffalo had wandered onto the runway since our overflight five minutes ago. Heck, Joe Hazen, Ray Salucci, Jack Houston, Rick Byrne, et al. did it nearly every day.

During the dry season of '65–'66, Tony Poe and associates decided they needed C-123 flights into LS-36 and they proceeded to elongate the strip. The finished product looked good from 8,000 feet. Bob Hunt was given the honor of making the first landing and I was assigned as the “kicker.” We made the long flight to LS-36 empty and there was more than a little apprehension on board. Bob was normally a talker but not that day. He was one of our best C-123 pilots and a true professional.

We arrived over the strip, made the normal flyover and wallowed over that last karst mountain. There were no seats or belts for the kickers, so I stood right behind Bob to enjoy the event. The adrenaline rush and brassy taste reminded me of the feeling before the high hurdle finals at Madison Square Garden in 1963.

The 123s don't land slow and the red clay strip is rushing toward us. We hurtle over the leading edge and flare out waiting—waiting—waiting for our wheels to touch. No luck! Full power! Go 'round! Time to go home? No, Bob is a pilot's pilot and we try it again and again. Our nerves are shot before Bob declares “Nobody can land a 123 on that strip.”

Chief pilot Fred Walker was waiting for us on the ramp when we arrived back at Vientiane. “Refuel her—we're going back.” Fred looked irritated as he took Bob for a walk as they had a heated discussion. I didn't know Fred at all and

didn't cotton to the idea of trying that landing with an angry pilot. Fred took the left seat and Bob the right. Our co-pilot looked relieved to grab his gear and sit this one out.

Our flight back to 36 went much faster. Beautiful country. Fred and Bob didn't talk at all. I'm standing right behind them as they stayed in their individual worlds. We come straight in and low over 36, take the mandatory look at the runway and go right by the book. Fred cuts the power as we come in over the mountain and we begin our controlled fall out of the sky with one big difference. There was no plan or thought of a go around! He knew the length of the runway (2,265' x 130'), the requirements of the 123 and trusted the numbers. Fred greased the touchdown in the first couple hundred feet, reversed the props and when the dust settled we still had plenty of runway left. Impressive! No gloating, nothing said, just a message delivered from a fine pilot, teacher and supervisor.

Bob was his normal “pedal to the metal” mouth the next morning as we flew north. The new co-pilot cleverly opened the mike to all aircraft and bases in Southeast Asia as Bob rambled on about “that crazy Fred Walker.” The other pilots didn't say much until Bob wound down but then the needles homed in. Bob appeared close to shock that his co-pilot would do that to him and didn't say much for the rest of the day. But you couldn't keep a good man down. Bob was one fine man in my book. Just not quite as good a pilot as Fred Walker—and that's still OK. 🍄



Bob Watson and Joe Conde landing at LS-20A. (Courtesy Johnny Kirkley)

Memories from the Start of Smokejumping

by Bob Scott (Associate)

Bob Scott lived on a ranch just south of the Intercity Airport where the NCSB smokejumper base is located. During the summers, starting in 1940, he worked as a firefighter and a lookout fireman. He spent three years as a flight instructor in the Army Air Corps during WWII. After graduating from Eastern Washington College, Bob taught science at the junior high school level retiring in 1984 after teaching 37 years at the same school.

The piece below is from his "Recollections" and personal memories that he has been writing for his nieces. It is an explanation given to Bob in 1940 by District Ranger Frank Burge.

Frank Burge, district ranger, came up to inspect the station and we had a good time recounting experiences, mostly his. He started in the early 1920s when he was the only forest officer in the northwest part of the state, from the Cascades to the Okanogan Valley. In 1926 and 1929, there were two large fires that burned hundreds of thousands of acres. There were no fire crews and he had to depend on volunteers. Most of the fires burned until fall rains or winter snows put them out. He also explained how he had observed the state Game Department dropping fish from planes and he thought that it might be a good way to supply fire crews. He had met the Derry brothers, professional parachute jumpers, and the Forest Service gave them a contract to develop means to drop firemen safely to fires. As a result, the forest service aerial project was started at Winthrop. The Derry brothers set up a parachute shop in a warehouse at the ranger station. They designed and built jump suits to protect smokejumpers when landing in brushy country and parachutes that descended more slowly and were steerable. There was a class of firefighters in training for jumping on fires conducted at the Intercity Airport south of Winthrop. Frank may have been an old timer in the service, but he had forward-looking ideas. He said to me, "Bob, someday they will find a way of bombing fires with water from the air." I'm sorry to say that I thought that was pretty farfetched. I envisioned actual "bombs" filled with water, not the present system of containers or tanks that could drop water.

Barry George (NCSB '73), former smokejumper, who is now fire assistant at Winthrop Ranger Station, sent the following information to me:

The Aerial Experimental Project was moved from California to the North Pacific Region (Region 6) area during the summer of 1939. It was at this time that the decision was made to discontinue bombing tests, and at the recommendation of David P. Godwin, assistant chief of fire control in Washington, D.C., the unexpended balance of experimental funds was authorized for carrying on parachute jumping experiments.

The Forest Service prepared a contract, which provided for parachutes, protective clothing, and the services of professional riggers and parachutists. The successful bidder was the Eagle Parachute Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Experiments were conducted in the Winthrop, Washington, area on the Chelan National Forest (now the Okanogan) during October 5 through November 15. Beach Gill of the Eagle Company, under appointment by the secretary of agriculture, served as consultant and collaborator. The Eagle Parachute Company sent Frank, Chet and Virgil (Buss) Derry to Winthrop. Frank was in charge of the experimental phase of the tests and was the West Coast representative for the Eagle firm. He also had his own business, the Derry Parachute Company, which at the time had an Englewood, California, address in the Los Angeles area. Glenn (Smitty) Smith came with Frank Derry—his firm in California employed him. Smitty was a colorful barnstormer and had made many free falls, as had the Derry brothers. Captain Harold C. King served as engineer-pilot and flew the Forest Service's high-wing, five-place Stinson Reliant. Two local individuals from the Winthrop area, Dick Tuttle and Alan Honey, were placed under contract by the Eagle Company to make experimental jumps—their first. Before the parachuting was concluded that autumn, five Forest Service personnel from the Chelan National Forest also made jumps for the first time. They were: Francis Lufkin, a fire guard; Harry Tuttle, a CCC telephone line foreman and father of Dick Tuttle; Walt Anderson, Chelan National Forest chief of fire control; Roy Mitchell, Chelan assistant forest supervisor; and Albert Davies, Region 6 assistant chief for fire control. 🌲



Historic Photo: Frank Derry, 1940, studying chute design in the loft at Moose Creek Ranger Station. (Courtesy of Jim Alexander)

MILESTONES

"Milestones" was created to serve as both a "Hall of Records" for smokejumping and as a way to encourage you to write in with related stories. If you know of an event that relates to any of the listed categories or want to nominate someone, please send it in. You will be helping to preserve our history.

This issue will contain the complete listing of the marks obtained and recorded. The other issues will contain the marks submitted since the prior issue. The following is a cumulative listing of entries received over the past issues:

Fire jumps in one season:

29-Bill Murphy	(Missoula '56)	1961
28-Bruce Yergenson	(McCall '54)	1961
28-Robert Turner	(Redding '99)	2001
27-Lynn Sprague	(McCall '59)	1961
27-Chas Bull	(Missoula '57)	1961
27-Ted Mason	(NIFC '88)	1999
26-Fred Rensmeyer	(McCall '58)	1961
26-Ted Mason	(NIFC '88)	1994
26-Chuck Sheley	(Cave Jct. '59)	1961
26-Shannon Orr	(Redding '92)	1999
26-Steve Price	(Missoula '95)	1999
26-Shannon Orr	(Redding '94)	2001

Search and rescue jumps:

33-Bill Moody (NCSB '57)

Easternmost fire jump (longitude):

Longitude 79° W, George Washington N.F., Virginia, 1974, Ron McMinimy (Redding '65), David Oswalt (Cave Jct. '65), Tom Emonds (Cave Jct. '66), Gary Thornhill (Cave Jct. '68), Walt Congleton (Cave Jct. '68), Pat McNally (Cave Jct. '67), Mike Marcuson (NCSB '64)

Westernmost fire jump (longitude):

Longitude 170° W, Little Diomed Island, 1991. Rod Dow (McCall '68), Robert Collins (Redmond '69), Al Biller (Fairbanks '82), Jon Larsen (Fairbanks '89), Lance Clouser (Fairbanks '85)

Northernmost fire jump (latitude):

Latitude 70° N, Alaska, 1993. Dustin Matsuoka (Boise '93), Steve Theisen (Fairbanks '86), Bruce Ford (Missoula '75), Mike Niccoli (Boise '93), Rod Dow (McCall '68), Bob Hurley (Fairbanks '87), Pat Kenny (Missoula '87), Al Seiler (Fairbanks '85)

Highest elevation landing:

12,187'—White River N.F., Colorado, 2000.
Mike Tupper (Fairbanks '85), Dennis Terry (Redding '90), Todd Jenkins (NIFC '98), Mel Tenneson (Fairbanks '86)
11,193'—Humboldt N.F. Nevada, 1966.
Bill Yensen (McCall '53), Nick Kennedy (Idaho City '64), Bruce Yergenson (McCall '54)
10,700'—Shoshone N.F. Wyoming, 1965.
Tony Peiffer (Missoula '61), Jim Thompson (Missoula '63), Vern Bush (Missoula '63), Jerry Lebsack (Missoula '62), Gary Romness (Missoula '62),
10,690'—Custer N.F. Montana, 1947.
Wally Henderson (Missoula '46), Jim Ward (Missoula '46)
10,100'—Shoshone N.F. Wyoming, 1974.
Steve Clairmont (Missoula '62), Ted Kamrud (Missoula '66)

Longest letdown:

270'—Olympic National Park, Washington, 1970. Larry Hyde (NCSB '70)

Most consecutive seasons with a fire jump:

34—Jerry Ogawa (McCall '67) 1967 through 2000

Oldest first year jumper:

Age 50—Jason Greenlee (Redding '99)

Age 49—George Cross (Missoula '74)

Youngest first year jumper:

Age 17 + 2 mos.—John Lewis (McCall '53)

Oldest active jumper:

Age 59—Murry Taylor (Redding '65) 2001

Age 58—Walt Currie (Missoula '75) 2001

Age 57—Bob Reid (Missoula '57) 1995

Jumping at or beyond age 50:

Greg Anderson (Missoula '68), Phil Brollier (Boise '71), Mike Burin (McCall '88) Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74), George Cross (Missoula '74), Walt Currie (Missoula '75), Mitch Decoteau (Grangeville '78), Chuck Flach (Missoula '68), Bob Ford (Missoula '75), Dennis Golik (McCall '74), Jason Greenlee (Redding '99), Bob Harris (Redding '75), Doug Houston (Redmond '73), Tim Huntington (Redding '77), Bert Mitman (Redmond '70), Bill Moody (North Cascades '57), Ron Omont (Redding '78), Bob Reid (Missoula '57). Al Seiler (Fairbanks '85), Murry Taylor (Redding '65), Dick Tracy (Missoula '53), Jim Veitch (Missoula '67). Leo Cromwell (IDC '66), Thad Duel (MYC '56), Jerry Ogawa (MYC '67), John Seagraves (MYC '63), Bill Yensen (MYC '53)

Longest break in service between fire jumps:

35 years—Bob Reid (Missoula '57) 1960 to 1995

Number of different bases employed:

06—Willie Lowden (NCSB '72)

05—Pat McGrane (Boise '76), William Ferguson (McCall '70),

Tim Pettitt (McCall '75), Chris Palmer (Redding '75), George Steele (NCSB '72)

Number of states jumped (practice and/or fire):

17—Troop Emonds (Cave Jct. '66)

14—Mark Corbet (LaGrande '74)

Number of aircraft types jumped (on the job):

25—Bill Moody (NCSB '57)

16—Eric (The Blak) Schoenfeld (Cave Jct. '64)

14—Willie Lowden (NCSB '72)

13—Richard Fox (Fairbanks '80)

13—Murry Taylor (Redding '65)

12—Bill Yensen (McCall '53)

Fires spotted in a single season:

70—George Steele (NCSB '72) in 1994

60+—Jim Veitch (Missoula '67) in 1977

60+—Skip Scott (Anchorage '71) in 1977 🐿

Please send your information and marks to: pegmark@juno.com or mail them to Mark Corbet, 1740 SE Ochoco Way, Redmond, OR 97756.

FEATURED LIFE MEMBER

BEN CONNER (NORTH CASCADES '48)

by Steve Hakala

BEN CONNER, A TRULY REMARKABLE MAN, now lives with his wife of 54 years, Marcia, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. After speaking with both of them,

it is little wonder that they like each other so much. Ben began his smokejumper training in Winthrop, Washington, in 1948. He was a three-year jumper and was based in Winthrop during his second year where Marcia also worked charting smoke reports from the lookouts. He remarks that it was a memorably “wonderful summer” for both of them, and that she was sometimes aware of exactly where Ben would be jumping. Ben was in Winthrop during the 1949 Mann Gulch fire, which gave his mother such a scare that she issued an emergency message for him to call her. At that time Ben was unaware of the extent of the tragedy.

Ben had some memorable fires of his own to tell about. He describes the Hell's Canyon fire on the Oregon side at which he and three other jumpers had to aim for a jump spot near the rim of the canyon that was little more than rock slides with a few very small grassy spots. One of the men nearly drifted into the 6,000-foot canyon, but corrected in time and instead hung up in a tree. Ben and the others made it to the grass. Ben says that it was one of his more attention getting jumps. Over 200 ground crew eventually relieved him and his buddies. He was amazed to later learn that over 22,000 acres had burned just across the Snake River on the Idaho side, from where he and his four-man crew had first jumped.

Another jump that stands out was an early morning departure to a fire that was relatively close to his base, but difficult to get to. Ben's partner was **Pic Littell** (MSO '44). He says they circled the fire several times and decided it looked like a good two-man fire. They made the run and the jump, only to be greeted by two men on the ground who were tending the fire, but who had made no attempt to wave them off. Ben says that he and Pic were “absolutely outraged” at the men for not signaling that the fire was manned, and that now, fifty four years later, he still gets mad thinking about it.

The worst landing that Ben ever made was on his second training jump where both his wife and trainer were watching as he botched his landing and banged his head hard on a rock. He says that made him “kinda dizzy for awhile.” Ben talks about his smokejumping experiences of 50 years ago as if they were last week. He says that jumping was “the best job I ever had!” Not bad from a guy who was a radio operator and gunner on a B-25 in South America during WWII, later serving in British Guiana. Or how about his finishing law school after leaving the jumpers and passing the New York Bar?

Ben Conner eventually settled in and became the corporate vice president of AMP (now Tyco), a multi-billion dollar company from which he retired.

Although he is now 80 years old, you can feel Ben's excitement when he talks about smokejumping. He plays down the fact that he has traveled extensively around the world, to out of the way places like the Amazon, Alaska, Borneo, Madagascar, Antarctica, Africa, the Orient, Australia and many other places. He modestly mentions that he served on the Advisory Committee on U.S. Trade Policy, and many other equally important tasks of an advisory nature. But his excitement level rises when he speaks of Idaho, Oregon and other places where he *jumped!* He credits the smokejumpers for giving him the “inner resources” that have helped him with all of his life's work. He remembers being tired, scared, hot and thirsty. But he speaks of those tough conditions with pride and refers to them as character builders.

Ben remembers **Lee Kahler** (NCSB '46) and “Pic” Littell, **Roy Goss** (NCSB '46) and **Jim Allen** (NCSB '46), as spotters “who never missed.” He recalls **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB '39) as his mentor and teacher, a legend, pioneer in the field, and a “true hero.”

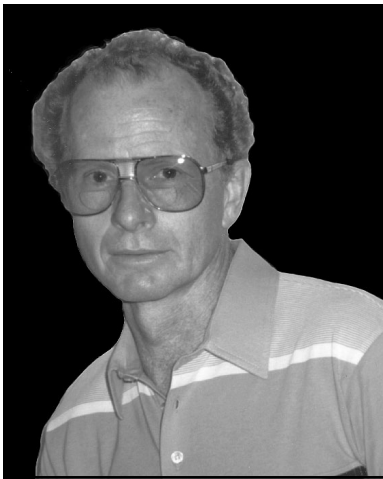
Ben Conner is a gentleman. In the short time that I was able to speak with him, he impressed me as being modest about his remarkable accomplishments and adventures. If smokejumping can be credited with developing character of the kind Ben seems to have, then all young men should rise to the challenge. 🙏



Ben Conner. (NSA file)



Sounding Off from the Editor



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

Personal Responsibility

IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS since the Cedar fire raged through Southern California. Fueled by the Santa Ana winds, the blaze resulted in 1 firefighter fatality, 13 civilian fatalities and 107 injuries, and consumed 280,278 acres and destroyed 2,232 structures.

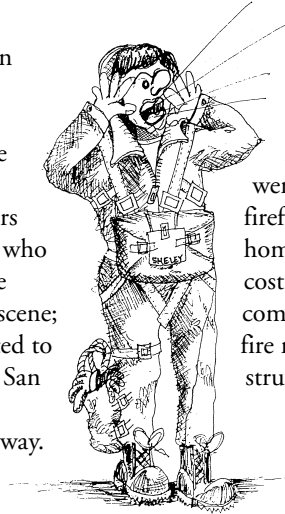
We can't control the Santa Anas, but we can control how we manage such disasters—and how we prepare for them in the first place. I would like to put forth a concept that has almost vanished from our culture: *personal responsibility*. These days, the drunk driver will sue the bartender for letting him drink too much, the parents will blame the teacher for the student's failures and the burglar will sue the homeowner for an injury sustained while committing the crime. (You might laugh at that last example, but it happened in nearby Redding, California. A person attempting to break into a high school gym fell through a skylight and was successful in suing the school district for an enormous amount.)

Let me explain what I mean by personal responsibility and how it

relates to the Cedar fire. On October 29, a wind-driven blaze shot through heavy brush near a rural residence in San Diego County, overrunning four firefighters from Northern California, who were working to defend the structure. One died at the scene; the three others were airlifted to the medical center at U.C. San Diego.

It didn't have to be this way. Had the property owner used a little common sense and taken a few precautions, what happened to those four crewmembers could have been averted. As it was, the site of the fatality represented an accident waiting to happen. The 490-foot driveway leading uphill to the residence was overgrown with brush and required trimming. The wood-frame stucco house had a flammable roof and a large wooden deck attached to its north end. Later, it was reported that bushes along the patio were burning.

Such a hazardous site, incidentally, is not an isolated case in areas where homes are surrounded by trees and brush. Because so many homeowners don't bother to ensure their homes are fire safe, crews frequently encounter such conditions. Making matters worse, it seems as if more and more crews are having to focus on structure protection as opposed to controlling



fire. I have seen disgruntled homeowners on TV wondering why their homes burned while others were spared, suggesting that firefighters protect expensive homes at the expense of lower-cost dwellings. Perhaps such complaints have persuaded some fire managers to focus more on structure protection.

In any event, there's an easy solution to this problem. If such homeowners want protection, they ought to meet fire crews halfway. People should take personal responsibility for making their properties defensible. Such properties should then be identified and mapped, so that when a fire begins, informed and educated decisions can be made that will save lives and properties.

The incident report of the firefighter fatality in San Diego County followed standard procedure, listing the "Ten Standard Fire Orders" and the "18 Watch-Out Situations." I'd recommend adding an eleventh fire order for structure protection in wildland urban-interface areas: "There will be no professional structure protection allocated to homes and properties whose owners have not made them defensible."

The property owner who prepares ahead of time should be rewarded for bringing personal responsibility back into the picture. 🙏

Heads Up!!!!

Smokejumper Reunion 2004—Missoula, Montana—June 18, 19, 20

Just a reminder that a smokejumper reunion will be held in Missoula June 18, 19, 20, 2004. You can save \$10.00 by registering on or before May 1. Those who register early have the best chance of participating in the activities and having the "pick of the litter" of merchandise.

If you have misplaced your registration form, schedule of events or lodging information, copies may be found on the National Smokejumper Association Web site: www.smokejumpers.com/ You may also write to: Smokejumper Reunion 2004, P.O. Box 4081, Missoula, MT 59801, or call 406-239-7620 and leave a message.

Letters from a Hero

by Jill Leger

This month marks the 51st anniversary of the death of Hugh Jenkins (Missoula '49), an infantry soldier killed in the Korean War. Last April, we printed several letters Jenkins wrote home as a young smokejumper. We thought they made for fascinating reading; Jenkins had a writer's knack for capturing detail—and a poet's gift for expressing himself with grace.

Jenkins joined the Army in 1952, but the decision to enter the infantry did not come easily. Classified as a conscientious objector when the war began, Jenkins originally volunteered his services as a medic. His pacifism, however, soon gave way to a sense of realism. Wrote Jenkins in 1952: "The dream of a nonviolent world (with Hugh Jenkins as one of its champions) was and is mighty attractive, but pacifism is so inherently negative, and force is the base of so much good as well as bad, that I couldn't stay with it long."

Here we print portions of Jenkins's correspondence from Korea, written during what would be the last six months of his life. These letters, originally printed in the September 1961 issue of Saga magazine, lend insight into an important historical chapter. They are also a window into the heart of a man who until the very end continued to ponder the world and his place in it.

Wednesday, October 15, 1952

Dear Mom,

Yesterday I finally joined my new unit. I am in Company F of the 15th Infantry, 3rd Division. We are now in reserve north of the 38th Parallel but still several miles south of the shooting. We are behind the lines, living in tents, getting three good hot meals every day and lots of training.

I left the Pusan replacement depot Saturday and rode the train all day up the trunk of the peninsula. Many fascinating sights, and many sad and tragic ones, too. The farmers cultivating their third rice crop of the year, in the fields with their wives. Children begging in the railroad station—acting cute and childlike for the GIs and then showing their desperate hardness when a candy bar is thrown [to] them, scrambling and biting for it. Old men carrying colossal loads of wood down from the mountains—loads as tall again as themselves. The women moving along the country roads with [babies] riding piggy back and carrying big pots and bundles on their heads. The 12-year-old ROK [Republic of Korea] soldiers, standing guard in the stations and railroad tunnels. The mountains themselves are Sierra-like, rising steeply from gently terraced valleys, bare rocky foothills mounting up to timbered slopes and rugged peaks. Many of the rural villages in South Korea look in good shape, relatively—clusters of adobe huts with thick thatched roofs, each house with a little courtyard and maybe a cow or a couple of pigs with some chickens, surrounded by the still-green rice fields. ...

Most of the GIs have been here 11–12 months, so it will

probably be a good year before I'm rotated. In the meantime, don't worry. I'm fairly comfortable, and the last time the company was on the line it stayed four weeks and didn't lose a man.

Love, Hugh

Tuesday, October 21, 1952

Dear Charley [*Jenkins' former roommate at Oberlin College*],

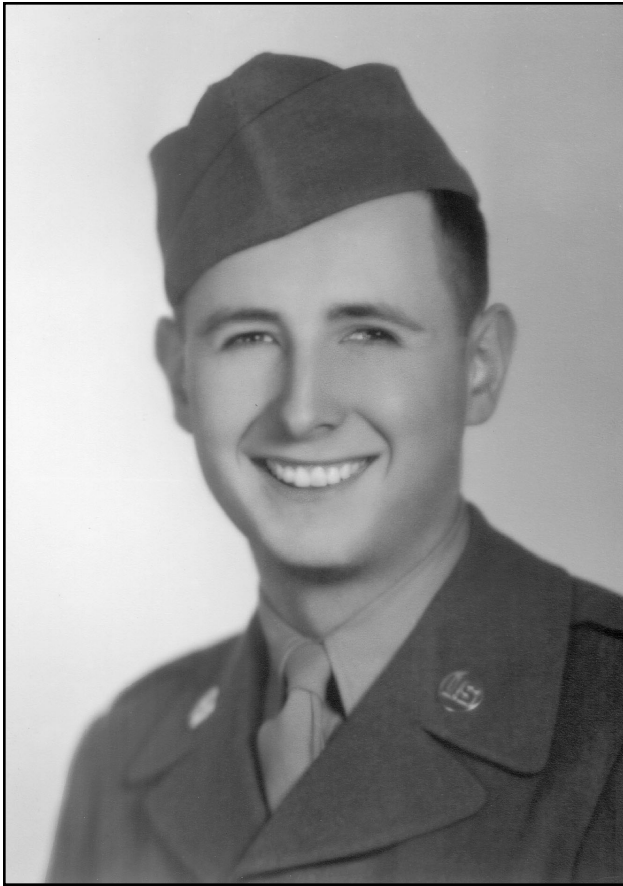
Your letter of last summer reached me ... and was very welcome. ... In case you're wondering, I entered the Army last March. My college-inspired idealism has proved to be pretty fragile, I guess. The dream of a nonviolent world (with Hugh Jenkins as one of its champions) was and is mighty attractive, but pacifism is so inherently negative, and force is the base of so much good as well as bad, that I couldn't stay with it long.

So here I am, on a free government-sponsored tour of the Far East. My rank: private. My branch: infantry. My job: rifleman. Sixteen years of education have done me plenty of good in many ways, but they don't make the Korean mountains any easier to climb.

The Far East is quite a spectacle. Seeing a world so different brings our own way of life into sharp contrast. The people are actually very much the same. You see a Jap mother playing with her baby just like anywhere else; you see the young people courting, and the old men sitting around shooting the breeze just the same. But their circumstances are vastly different. I remember the train ride from the Yokohama docks up to our camp outside Tokyo—rocking along in little wooden cars pulled by an engine that looked like it was out of a Western movie, through the crowded acres of little shanties and two-by-four gardens, the narrow streets of Tokyo crowded with these little people hurrying about their business. Later I spent two weeks in southern Honshu, where the landscape looks just like one of those Oriental prints: mist-covered mountains, overgrown with gnarled pines, rising abruptly from lush green plains. I remember the fishing junks with their battered bamboo sails moving out of the harbor at Sasebo, and the miserable city of Pusan: a million people living in lean-tos and big Army shipping crates surrounded by mud and barbed wire and filthy open sewers.

Enough of this travelogue. Would like to give you a worm's eye view of the war, but that is simply too big a job. Just remember that warmth, cleanliness, shelter, dryness and rest should rank among everyone's highest values. Maybe I'll see you again, back in those United States, before the end of 1953.

Regards, Hugh



Hugh Jenkins (Courtesy Starr Jenkins)

Sunday, October 26

Dear Starr and Stella [*Jenkins's brother and sister-in-law*],

Yesterday we moved, and now our battalion is settled in a new bivouac area. Our new home is farther up in the mountains, and it actually overlooks a part of the front, which is about four miles away. ...

Our company has quite an assortment of men. For the last few months they have been attaching ROK soldiers directly to American units, so now our company is almost half South Korean. In addition, we have quite a number of Puerto Ricans who speak very little English. So you have three cultures kicking around here. Communication is in a modified pidgin, which I have been rapidly learning. It's amazing what you can do on a handful of nouns, plus gestures and facial expressions. Every word is repeated. *Poly-poly* means hurry up. Stealing is *slicky-slicky* or *sneaky-sneaky*. When we send one of our ROKs to slicky-slicky a candle or something, he usually manages to do it. Most used words: *scoshie*, meaning small, and *tocsan*, meaning big or plenty. Some of the Koreans have picked up a little Spanish, and today I heard one say, "*Tengo tocsan chop-chop*," meaning he had plenty to eat.

Love and regards, Hugh

Sunday, November 9

Dear Mom,

... The other day I helped one of our Korean boys who was carrying a heavy .30-caliber machine gun. He was pretty

pooped, so I carried it a few hundred yards and then gave it back to him. The next day we happened to be next to each other in the chow line, and he looked at me with a very serious look. "Jesus Christ?" he asked. "Yeah, Jesus Christ number one," I said. He put on a big grin and nodded, "Jesus Christ okay number one." It would be interesting to know how this boy learned about Christ—probably from his parents, whose own parents lived near some mission in ancient, peaceful, now *sayonara* (good-bye) Korea. ...

Have a good Texas winter. I know I'll be with you again during the next one.

Much love, Hugh

Thanksgiving Day

Dear Starr and Stella,

... Most of the past month has been spent on the MLR (Main Line of Resistance), which is not really too bad. ... We spent a few days on an outpost called 270 and had one day of real war on a knob called Jackson Heights. My squad leader was killed up there, and another man was killed and one other man was wounded, leaving me in charge of the four men left in the squad. We went through a day and a night of bad shelling—rounds shrieking in like creatures from hell and I'll never forget it.

One special memory—my first view of war dead. We had spent the night sitting in the cold on ... Jackson Heights, and when the sun came peeping up (Election Day, incidentally), we began to see the dead from earlier fighting scattered around us. There were two Korean laborers struggling with a dead colored boy, trying to move his body back to the outpost before it got too light. What with their haste, and the steepness of the slope, they were half dragging him over the rocks. Occasionally they would lose their grip and his body would roll down the mountain for a ways, arms flailing and head rolling loosely in the dust. I saw his face—features glazed over by concussion but not actually damaged. Simply the blank look of death. ...

Love, Hugh

December 8, 1952

Dear Mom,

... Yesterday we saw one of our planes shot down. After dive-bombing a mountain in front of us, it came back across our lines with orange flame streaming from the engine. Once it was safely in our territory, we saw the little figure fall clear, and then a parachute blossomed. The companion planes circled the drifting chute while the plane leaned over and then smashed down on the plain behind us. Nobody hurt—just another blow to the taxpayer and an added strain on some pilot's nerves.

Love, Hugh

February 5, 1953

Dear Mom,

It's fantastic how I can let the weeks slip by without writing. All I can say is that you shouldn't worry; no news is good news, and if I get into difficulty, you'll be informed. ...

The outfit has gotten many replacements while I was gone, and now I'm running a big ten-man squad. It's just like being the mother of a big family—taking care of these guys 24 hours a day, seeing that they are quartered and fed and equipped with what they are supposed to have, dividing up the details, etc. I have three Puerto Ricans and one Korean, the rest being American GIs. ...

Hope Texas is continuing to blossom into early spring, and remember that I'll be home in only a few months now.

Your loving son, Hugh

Monday, February 16

Dear Starr and Stella,

Have finally made corporal. Two more promotions and I'll be drawing the pay I'm supposed to. Have lost one asset, however. Now the platoon leader and platoon sergeant can threaten to bust me when I chew them out or obey orders as I see fit. Up till now I've been doing them a favor merely by leading a squad (not having the rank), and have been able to act pretty independent sometimes. ...

Love, Hugh

Yokohama Club ASC #15
Yokohama, Japan
March 3, 1953

Dear Mother,

Am at this moment on the last few hours of my R&R, the "Rest and Recreation" leave, which is one of the privileges of the Korean service. I left the front on the 25th of February, flew to Japan in a few hours on the 26th, and have been free since the 27th. ...

R&R has been a wonderful interlude, a chance to get completely clean and dry and warm, to live in a civilized way for awhile. The biggest satisfaction, I think, has been to stroll into the fine big government-operated restaurant they have here in downtown Yokohama and eat a good American meal. Mood music in the background, courteous service, linen, china and silver—the works. In Korea I do all my eating with a single utensil, a big soup spoon I carry in my shirt pocket between meals. ...

Have bought and sent to you a Japanese music box, which I hope arrives safely. Remember that if I wrote every time I thought of you, mail would be coming in every hour.

Love and regards, Hugh

March 19, 1953

Dear Mom,

Was glad to hear you got the music box and surprised at how soon it reached you. Maybe you can keep jewelry, or sewing knickknacks and so forth in it. The box's exterior is what attracted me—hope you don't think it's too gaudy.

A good article on Korea has been passed around up here lately and you might look it up and read it. "How It Is in Korea," by James Michener, the guy who wrote *Tales of the South Pacific*, in the January '53 *Reader's Digest*. He does a simple, accurate, journalistic job, emphasizing the routine rather than the violent and spectacular, which seems to be the tendency in most reports. I could quibble with him on a

few points, but have never enjoyed quibbling. ...

Love and blessings, Hugh

March 17, 1953

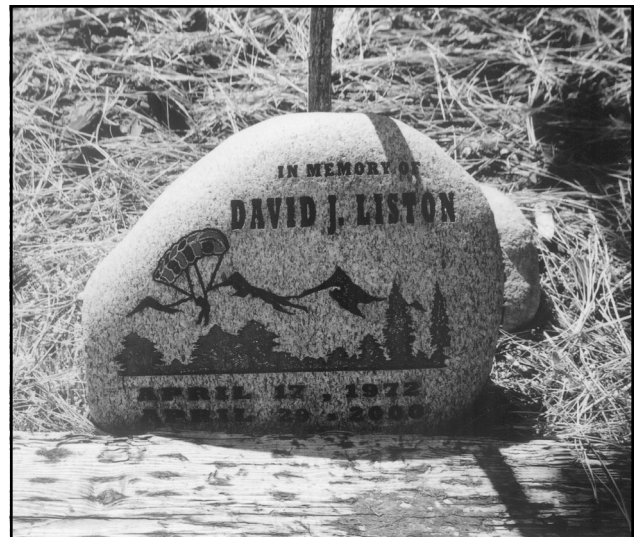
Dear Starr,

... These air incidents lately chill my soul. What are 600-mph jets doing ten miles from the Czech frontier? Or "weather" planes 25 miles from Kamchatka? The Russians are impossibly trigger happy, but at the same time these incidents show how easily a few Air Force brass hats could plunge humanity into war. When you remember that many of them think it is inevitable, and regard us as now adequately prepared, it's a pretty dismal situation. Well, let's *vive en espoir* (live in hope). Only 173 days and I'll be home.

Regards, Hugh

Jenkins never made it home. On April 25, 1953, he was killed in an enemy assault, shot as he rushed to aid a fellow serviceman hit by enemy fire. On Christmas Eve of that year, it was announced that Jenkins had received the Silver Star for what the Army called his "gallantry in action."

"During the early morning of 25 April 1953, in the vicinity of Surang-ni, Korea, Company F was defending strategically valuable Outpost "Harry" against a large scale enemy assault. Disregarding the intense mortar and artillery concentrations accompanying the attack, Corporal Jenkins bravely directed the fire of his squad upon the enemy. While leading his men, he was seriously wounded by fragments from an exploding artillery round but, ignoring his wounds, courageously continued to defend the outpost. Through Corporal Jenkins's sound judgment and aggressive leadership, his men mortally wounded or repelled all enemy troops attacking their sector. Observing a friendly casualty, Corporal Jenkins left his position and rushed to aid the man. In this valiant attempt to save his comrade, he was mortally wounded by the enemy fire." 🇺🇸



Dave Liston memorial at the North Cascades Base. (Courtesy Jerry Dixon)

Indian Smokejumpers

by Bob Dusenbury (Missoula '46)

In 1960 I was a project fire supervisor on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. It became painfully evident to the agency staff that a well-trained and equipped work force would be helpful in preventing excessive suppression costs to the government and losses of natural resources to the Flathead Tribes.

The summer of 1960 had cost the government \$700,000.00 in suppression costs on the Flathead Reservation. Although we employed 1800 local firefighters, they suffered 74 disabling injuries and many thousands of acres of timber were damaged or destroyed. We immediately set up training programs for Indian firefighters on the Flathead and Blackfoot reservations.

There were two goals for the comprehensive training program: Suppress wildfire with skilled firefighters and offer a source of much needed employment. I worked up a contract with the USFS smokejumper center and

the Flathead Tribes whereby the tribes would put up \$5,000.00 per year. The USFS would guarantee that at least four Native American jumpers would be available for fires in the remote areas of the reservation.

I went through refresher training in 1961. It was 13 years since I had jumped and I realized I was getting older! The BIA decided to transfer me to Fort Peck Reservation and I never did get to jump with the Indian firefighters that we started that year.

I called up some of them from that time period and they filled me in with their experiences. From the Flathead I remembered **Homer Courville** (MSO '61), **Norbert Dupuis** (MSO '61), **Bob McCrea** (MSO '66), **Ron McCrea** (MSO '68), **Steve Clairmont** (MSO '62), **Jim Clairmont** (MSO '65), **Jim Barber** (MSO '60) and **Ronald Normandeau** (MSO '62). I haven't been able to find the original agreement between the Flathead Tribes and the USFS



Bob Dusenbury (Courtesy Bob Dusenbury)

but in about 1974 the Montana Indian Fire Fighter (MIFF) program was started.

In talking to the aforementioned jumpers, they say they have been used as supervisors for the MIFF and some, most recently, went down to the search for the *Columbia* space shuttle remains. Apparently, the MIFF is used in disaster situations as well as fire. I asked the dispatch center in Great Falls about fire incidence and manpower usage and they gave me a big number that was impressive. Sufficient to say it looks like the program is working. 🍄

On Final

by Tom Hunnicut (Redding '78)

In the door waiting,
Waiting for the spotter's tap.
It's coming, be steady!
It's coming, look straight ahead!

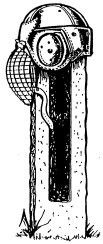
There it is,
That definite tap,
That tap to go,
That special tap.

The tap that might be
My last human contact,
My last green trees and blue sky,
My last breath.

Then my push out the door
To that special jumper's bond
Of hand leaving the plane's side
And booted foot leaving the step.

It is a new world then.
Supreme excitement!
The 'chute either opens
Or I go to plan "B."

The 'chute opens and
It is another day at work.
Another day to give thanks for,
Especially to the packers of this
'chute!



Off The List

We want to know! If you learn of the serious illness or death of a member of the smokejumper community, whether or not he or she is a member, your Association wants to know about it. Please

phone, write or e-mail the editor (see contact information on page three of the magazine). We'll take it from there.

Herbert J. York (Missoula '46)

Herb, 77, passed away November 4, 2003, after a hard-fought battle with lung cancer.

He was born March 16, 1926, in Miles City. During the summer following his junior year in high school, Herb enlisted in the Air Force and served as a crewman on a B-29. After the war, Herb was discharged and returned to Montana to become a smokejumper. He jumped during the 1946 and 1947 fire seasons.

Herb continued to work for the Forest Service during summers while attending the University of Montana and graduated in 1950 with a degree in wildlife technology and began researching for the Fish and Game and the USFS.

He then returned to school to finish his teaching degree while working nights at the Bonner mill and weekends at the Anaconda smelter to support his family.

Graduating with a master of science degree in 1953, he accepted a teaching position at St. Ignatius High School. Herb completed 33 years as a science teacher and guidance counselor at St. Ignatius. He also taught at the University of Montana after his retirement.

Herb was a gifted teacher and was recognized nationwide for his work. His physics class was honored as one of the top ten in the United States. He was honored by the state university system for excellence in teaching chemistry and by the National Biology Teachers Association as an outstanding biology teacher. This led to recognition by the National Science Foundation for a Presidential Award as Montana's Science Teacher of the Year in 1983.

His most cherished award came in 1984, when the University of Montana declared him Distinguished Alumnus.

Alman W. "Bill" Hegland (Missoula '48)

Bill died November 24, 2003, in Lakeside, Montana, where he and his wife, Faye, had retired in 1980.

After graduating from high school, he worked in an aircraft factory before joining the Navy in 1944. Upon his discharge from the Navy, Bill attended the University of Montana and graduated in 1950 with a degree in forestry. He then went to work for the Northern Pacific Railroad as a civil engineer until his retirement. Bill was an NSA member.

Timothy T. Ross (North Cascades '74)

Tim, 49, passed away on December 5, 2003, at his home. He grew up in Bridgeport, Washington, graduating from high school in 1972 and began his fire fighting career at age 15 with the Forest Service. Tim worked as a smokejumper based out of Winthrop for three years. He dedicated his fire fighting career

to the Everett Fire Department for 25 years as a paramedic and instructor and ended his career as a fire captain. He was also active with the Critical Incident Stress Management Team serving as the Washington State president during 2002–2003.

Verland "Swede" Ohlson (Missoula '49)

"Swede" Ohlson, 86, died December 7, 2003, at his home in Conway, New Hampshire. Born in northwestern New York, son of Swedish immigrants who ran logging camps in the early 1900s, he was drafted in 1941 and served in the First Special Service Force (The Devil's Brigade) in Italy where he was wounded.

After the war he attended the New York Ranger School, completed his forestry education at the University of Montana and worked on the Clearwater N.F. in Idaho before his moving east to the Allegheny, George Washington and White Mountain national forests. Appointed district ranger of the Saco Ranger District, WMNF, in June 1957, he served 23 years as district ranger before retirement in 1980. Two of his grandchildren (Tory Kendrick and Mara Veale) are currently smokejumpers.

Fred G. Malroy (Missoula '56)

Fred, 67, died of natural causes near his Fountain Hills home while sharpening his marksmanship skills at the Rio Salado Sportsman's Club on Saturday, March 20, 2003.

He loved the outdoors. Fred's career spanned 25 years in the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a forester and was followed by many years as a real estate agent, part-time local historian and orator. In his youth he served his country honorably in the U.S. Marines and later treated every excursion as a military expedition, whether he was with his wife, outdoorsmen friends or "grandbabies," as he loved to call them.

Fred and wife, Rosemarie, were life partners for 42 years.

James W. Evans (Missoula '46)

James, 76, died January 10, 2003, from complications from Alzheimer's disease. He was a 1951 graduate from the University of Washington School of Architecture and was employed in that field for 40 years. Jim was project manager on many large jobs including the Kingdome in Seattle, the U.S. Pavilion in Spokane for the 1974 World's Fair, the USAF Medical Facility at Travis AFB and the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Seattle before retiring in 1994. He was also a private pilot who built several small airplanes over the years and served as Vashon (Wash.) airport commissioner from 1990 to 1997. He and his wife moved from Vashon Island, Washington, to Sun City West, Arizona, in 1998. ♣

2003 Fall Social at the Evergreen Museum

by Fred Cooper (North Cascades '64)

On October 25, 2003, over 140 jumpers, relatives, and friends had a private tour and banquet at the Evergreen Aviation Museum in McMinnville, Oregon. Eighty of those in attendance were past or present jumpers. The banquet was on the floor of the museum between the Ford Tri-motor and the SR-71 Blackbird and under the tail of the *Spruce Goose*. What a setting! We had 10 jumpers from the 1940s with the oldest being **Oliver Petty** (MSO '43). Also, there were four pilots.

In addition to the camaraderie, the group was presented a conceptualization of the Smoke-jumper exhibit by the Museum staff.

The exhibit is scheduled for presentation and continuing display to the public in the spring of 2004. It will include the jump suit used by **Francis Lufkin** (NCSB '39) along with accessories used in that era along with a present day jumper suit and equipment. The museum is still looking for historic artifacts and photos so if anyone has any they would like to contribute, contact Katherine Huit, Associate Curator and Historian for the Evergreen Aviation Museum at 503-434-4123. Photos will be copied with originals returned to you.

Ron Stoleson (MSO '56) presented the KIA Plaque which will be on permanent display as part of

the jumper exhibit. Pilot **Penn Stohr** is designing an experimental 747-ST (Super Tanker) for Evergreen Aviation and he presented a video of the project. In the near future, imagine a Boeing 747 with the capability of dropping 40,000 gallons of fire retardant? In addition to it being available for fire control, it could also be used for spreading an emulsifier to mitigate the damage of large oil spills over water and by the new Department of Homeland Security for dispersal of chemicals to neutralize harmful biological agents.

So, we had an opportunity to listen to old war stories as well as learn about what Buck Rogers has in store for the future. 🦋

Do You Take This Jumper to Be ... ? I Do

by Doug Houston (Redmond '73)

Throughout history where a diverse workforce exists, relationships spring up and this results in many marriages. Since the recruitment of women into smokejumping in the early '80s, we have been no exception to this "normal" flow of things. Heck, I still remember the first time that I saw two smokejumpers kiss in a motel parking lot in Redding back in the early '80s. I remember thinking, "what have we come to." Now, you see I have no room to talk since I, too, have been married to an ex-jumper for 5+ years.

But, back in the early '80s, it was a big deal. Now there have been several relationships since that time and many marriages. I thought that the readers might be interested in seeing just how many there are, so listed below are the jumper/ex-jumper married couples as of Big Ernie's year of 2004. And, I do believe that Big Ernie was a romantic ...

Kasey Rose (BOI/MYC) and Eric Messenger (BOI/MYC)
Eric Walker (BOI) and Allison Cushman (BOI)
Doug Houston (RAC/NCSB) and Paige Taylor (FBX)
Tiffan Toele (RAC) and Matt Gray (RAC)
Karen Doris (MYC) and Rob Morrow (MYC)
Scott Jones (MSO) and Lori Messenger (MSO)
Jennifer Anderson (WYS) and Mark Belitz (WYS)
Melanie Dunton (MYC) and David Vining (BOI)
Leslie Anderson (MSO) and Tom Cook (MSO)

Kirk Rothwell (RAC/MSO) and Tara Townsend (RAC/MSO)
Dalan Romero (FBX) and Sandy Ahlstrom (FBX)
Jason Greenlee (RDD/MSO) and Dawn Berry (MSO)
Cynthia Nichols (RAC/RDD) and Scott Lusk (FBX)
Forrest Behm (MYC) and Christy Salter (MYC)
Julia Ondricek (RAC) and Tony Johnson (RAC)
Brenda Tracy (RDD) and Don Sand (RDD)
Derrick Hansen (MSO) and Lisa Acosta (NCSB)
Renee Lamoreaux (RAC) and Jeff Robinson (RDD/RAC) 🦋



Doug and Paige Houston (NSA file)

I Wish I Could Have Met Willi

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

I knew that one of the legends in mountain climbing had rookied at Cave Junction in 1950. Several books, articles and Google searches later, I've become fascinated by the life of **Willi Unsoeld**.

Back in October 1997, **Jack Demmons** (MSO '50) wrote a piece for *The Static Line* that shed light on Unsoeld's life and times. I'd like to expand a little on that article, and add to the historical record some of my own insights and research.

In 1963, Unsoeld and climbing partner Tom Hornbein became the first individuals to scale Mount Everest via the peak's treacherous West Ridge. The feat has been called one of the great "firsts" of mountaineering history, and is regarded by *National Geographic* as one of the top five Everest climbs of all time.

By all accounts, Unsoeld was a nice guy. Jumpers who knew him remember a climbing enthusiast who loved travel and books, and who relished crossword puzzles. Above all, he was unflappable. As **Orv Looper** (CJ '49) put it, "Nothing ever bothered him."

Unsoeld died in an avalanche on Mount Rainier in 1979. He was up there with a bunch of students from Evergreen College, where he taught philosophy. One of the students died too.

These days, it seems as if anyone with enough cash can make it to the summit—thanks to state-of-the-art equipment and expert assistance. But the challenge is still formidable, and the danger still persists—as evidenced in May 1996, when eight climbers, including two team leaders, died in a 24-hour period on the peak.

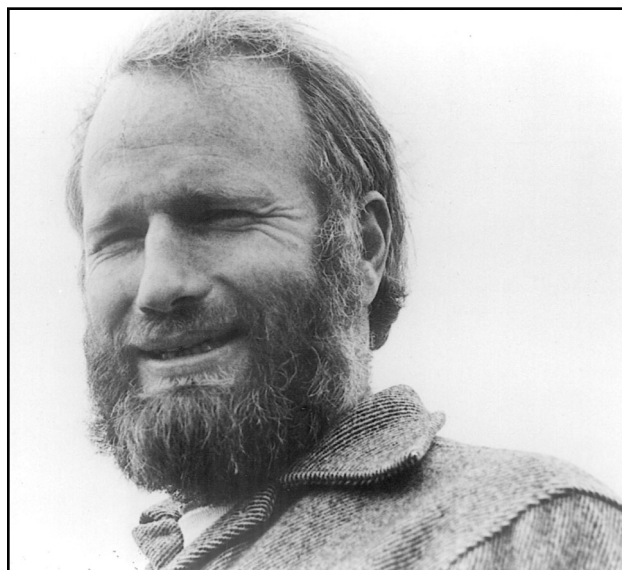
Everest was formally discovered in 1852, but it wasn't until 1953 that Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the 29,035-foot-high summit.

By 1963, routes along two of Everest's three ridges were well established. The third route, up the West Ridge, was considered too difficult, and had not been ascended.

Norman Dyhrenfurth aimed to change that. As the leader of the first U.S. expedition to Everest in 1963, Dyhrenfurth pegged team members Unsoeld and Hornbein for the job. The odds were against them, but in my book, success was imminent: I mean, who better than a Gobi smokejumper to take on the menacing West Ridge?

At first, there was talk of canceling the climb, a prospect Hornbein found deeply disturbing. "Dammit, how could they do it to us?" he's said to have asked the seemingly unfazed Unsoeld. "And how can you be so damn calm?" Hornbein added. Replied Unsoeld: "Got to, Tom. Just to keep you out of trouble."

Tackling the West Ridge was an enormous undertaking. Dodging avalanches and contending with 100-mph winds, the climbers set up camp at a biologically brutalizing 27,250



Willi Unsoeld (Courtesy Jolene Unsoeld)

feet. Zones above 24,000 feet are known as "death zones," due to the fact that in these regions, human life will deteriorate rapidly without supplemental oxygen (which may be why most Everest summiteers don't hang around too long to enjoy the view).

At 6:50 AM on May 22, 1963, Unsoeld and Hornbein left camp to begin their summit attempt. Four hours later, they had traveled only 400 feet.

With Unsoeld leading the way through fierce 60-mph winds, they encountered a 60-foot rock wall, which they scaled using two pitons. This marked the point of no return, and they pushed on. They had to make it up and over or die. They reached a point where the ridge narrowed to a steep knife-edge and then arrived at the top.

Articles I've read report that 3 PM is when climbers typically must begin their descent back to camp in order to survive. It was 6:15 PM when Unsoeld and Hornbein reached the top. After a 20-minute stay, they started down via the South Col route, facing the uncertain prospect of descending via an unknown route in the dark. By 7:15, it was so black that Hornbein couldn't see Unsoeld, even though only a short length of rope tethered them. Then Unsoeld's oxygen ran out.

At 9:30, they encountered fellow expedition members Lute Jerstad and Barry Bishop, who were near exhaustion and nearly out of oxygen. Jerstad and Bishop had reached the summit via the South Col route at 3:30 that afternoon and had left at 4:15, figuring no one would be any later than they were.

The two sets of climbers joined forces, staggering through the darkness. Midnight came and went before they

decided it was too dangerous to continue. It had taken three hours to descend 300 feet—the same distance they could probably have covered in 15 minutes during the day. The four men huddled until 4 AM, when daylight began to appear. Hornbein noted Unsoeld's high tolerance for pain, as he was not complaining about his feet.

They resumed their descent, meeting up with expedition members bearing the priceless gift of extra oxygen. That night, they made it to camp. Unsoeld's feet were cold and hard as ice. So were Jerstad's and Bishop's. All three would ride the backs of Sherpas on the descent from base camp, and in the end, both Bishop and Unsoeld would lose toes.

Unsoeld and Hornbein had done it. They were the eleventh and twelfth individuals to scale Everest, but the first to do so via the peak's West Ridge. What's more, they had descended via a different route, which was considered to be as great a feat as the initial climb. In July 1963, President John F. Kennedy presented each member of the U.S. expedition, as well as each of the Sherpas who had been so instrumental to the team's success, with the National Geographic Society's Hubbard medal.

In the years after the climb, Hornbein became a professor at the University of Washington's School of Medicine. Unsoeld joined academia too, but not before stints with the Peace Corps and Outward Bound. Unsoeld was in his element at the laid-back Evergreen College, a liberal arts school in Washington State.

In 1976, Unsoeld and his wife, Jolene, lost their 22-year-old daughter, Devi, on the slopes of Nanda Devi, the Himalayan peak for which she had been named. It was just over two years later that Unsoeld himself died on Mount Rainier.

To learn more about Unsoeld, I contacted some of the jumpers who knew him back in his Cave Junction days. Here's what they shared with me.

As told by Orv Looper (CJ '49):

"In the summer of 1950, I was training the CJ jumpers. Willi Unsoeld was hitchhiking to Eugene on the Redwoods Highway, which ran right by the base. Anyway, he saw us and asked what was going on. I explained to him what we were doing. He asked if we needed any more men. We were two men shy, so I sent him down to see foreman **Cliff Marshall** (CJ '46), and he was hired and started the next day.

"Willi had been on his way home from a trip around the world, which he did on a near-empty pocketbook. He had paid his way by giving climbing lessons and talks on climbing.

"He was the type of recruit every squad leader dreams of. Willi was very quick to learn, and *nothing* ever bothered him. I had to take away his crossword puzzle to get him into the door on his first jump! After waving his streamer upon landing, he took the puzzle out of his leg pocket and finished it. He was the calmest person I have ever been around; nothing bothered him."

As told by Al Boucher (CJ '49):

"I knew Willi as 'Bill.' He fascinated me, because in 1950, you didn't know many civilians who had traveled so

much or done so many things. I talked to some of the 1950 jumpers at the CJ reunion, including **Bud Proctor** (CJ '50) and **Buzz Florip** (CJ '50). They roomed with Bill at college and are two sharp guys. Buzz spent his career as a radio broadcaster. I also talked with **Dick Courson** (CJ '46), our old-time squad leader, who was a Marine paratrooper in World War II. He thought Bill was just a nutcase. He wasn't.

"I think that **Bernie Welch** (CJ '61) looked up Bill once when he was in India. Several of the jumpers at the base would go with Bill and climb mountains on the weekend. I declined, as I had better things to do than spend nights strapped to a cold rock at 8,000 feet.

"Bill was also skilled in the use of the sling for throwing rocks—much to the dismay of Courson. I'm sure you know that Bill's widow represented the state of Washington in the [U.S. House of Representatives]."

As told by Bob "Rigger" Snyder (CJ '48):

"I remember him for a couple things. He always kept a book with his jumpsuit, and whenever he was in the plane, he sat there and read and didn't talk. Also, he would disappear on Friday night and show up Monday morning after spending the weekend climbing a mountain somewhere."

As told by Terry Fieldhouse (CJ '47):

"Although I didn't realize it at the time, it was evident from conversations with Unsoeld that he'd been influenced by Eastern [religion] during his travels around India. He described to me traveling third class on an Indian train and getting terribly sick. A group of nurses brought him back to good health. I was always impressed with how cool he was in all situations. I was one of the younger jumpers, and Willi always seemed to be one of the more mature of the bunch. That wasn't at the expense of having a sense of humor."

As told by Don Wallace (CJ '49):

"I remember him clearly as a guy who got along well with everyone and who always carried his share of the load. But I also remember him as ... somewhat 'apart.' He was certainly more intellectually mature than any of us, Dick Courson excepted, in spite of our being military veterans and college students. He told us that he had already been around the world on tramp steamers and had already climbed some important mountains. Willi was not the type to exaggerate, so I have no reason to doubt what he told us.

"On the way to a fire, all of us would be yakking away, trying to keep our minds off that scary first step into thin air. All except Willi, that is. He would be sitting there quietly practicing climbing knots with two short cords of rope that he always carried with him. Cliff Marshall said that this was Willi's way of whistling in the dark."

As told by Ed Hinkle (CJ '50):

"I knew Bill as well or better than most on the Gobi that summer. We became fair buddies. First we knew him as 'Bill'—these were his pre-'Willi' years. He was a very quiet, reserved guy, not a beer drinker or hell-raiser, as some of us were prone to be.

“That summer, we overhauled an old ’32 Plymouth that Bill had [acquired while] working in the Tetons. After the overhaul, it wouldn’t start or even fire. I bet we pulled that old bitch for 30 miles up and down the strip trying to get it started. After about two days, me, the expert, finally figured out that I had the damned distributor in 180 degrees off. A few years later, Bill told me he was still driving it.

“Next, we decided to paint it using brushes. After a sand and prep, we went to work one early weekend morning down by the loft. That lying dog of a salesman said that we could simply apply the paint one way ... and it would all flow together. Bullshit—it was the ugliest green Plymouth you ever saw!

“Bill read a lot, and I remember him deep in a book on our way to a fire jump.”

As told by Bud Proctor (CJ ’50):

“He was ‘Bill’ until later in life, when the international climbing community chose ‘Willi.’ Bill arrived late for training with a severely sunburned face from a training climb on Mount Shasta. He was quite good at yodeling, which he demonstrated whenever he was about to do something he considered exciting. Painting the toes of his friends’ boots green showed a sense of humor that was just below the surface. I remember he never complained about anything. His endurance was unlimited, but he always stayed with the group and never flaunted it. His leadership skills weren’t generally recognized, because he did not seek attention.

“We had a fire jump in the Trinity Alps and worked the fire for about twenty-four hours, before a ground crew from Yreka relieved us. I proceeded to get some sleep, but Bill had seen a huge monolith when we were flying to the fire and couldn’t resist. He packed some food and water and went looking for it. About eight hours later, he returned, having found and climbed it. We flew to Yreka by chopper later that day. We bought some cheese with the little money we

had—something he had done many times in Europe. This was just part of the adventure, and having the adventure was what it was all about.

“Out of high school, Bill worked his way to the East Coast, boarded a freighter and worked his way to Europe. At the Matterhorn, they told him he would need a professional guide. He felt [this] was too expensive, so he climbed it solo.

“At Oregon State, he worked at perfecting his climbing techniques, while keeping his grades close to A’s. Climbs at the college often began early in the morning at the girls’ dorm, where he would rappel from his girlfriend’s dorm window.

“Later, while losing his toes to frostbite, he took pictures of the progress of their sloughing off. Made an interesting slideshow! Though he lost nine toes, he still could outdo most people in hiking and climbing. He commented, ‘Losing my toes just gets me closer to the rock.’”

As told by Wilford “Ole” Olson (CJ ’50):

“He was a very intelligent person and always had a book in his hip pocket. Each weekend, he took off in his clodhopper boots with a rope curled around his shoulder.”

As told by Bob Scofield (CJ ’49):

“He was not a hell-raiser, as we were wont to be; I don’t remember a single occasion where he was found in the ‘hoot.’

“He was a quiet sort, and a bit philosophical when he popped out with some witty quote. He was a hard worker.

“One thing I remember about Bill Unsoeld was when I got to go mountain climbing with him—sort of mountain climbing. Early in the season, Bill and I were given the job of carrying in supplies to the Pearsoll Peak lookout. The trail started on the Illinois River and climbed about 4,500 feet in four miles. I don’t believe he stopped once on the way and definitely left me in the dust.”

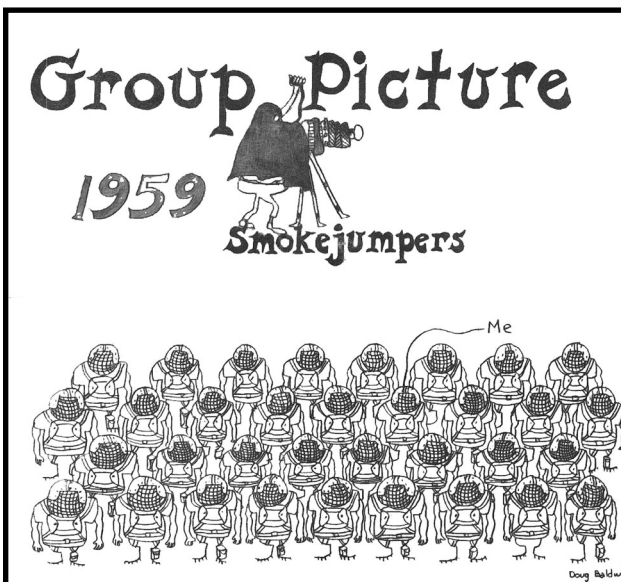
As told by Henry “Buzz” Florip (CJ ’50):

“Bill and I both attended Oregon State College and lived at the Beaver Lodge, which was an off-campus co-op living group. Bill did succeed in getting me interested in mountain climbing as a member of the OSC Mountain Club, and subsequently got me up a couple of mountains.

“We also had a lot of mutual friends at OSC who were interested in folk dancing. Through that group, he met his future wife, Jolene Bishoprick. Her family was from Washington, and both she and Bill were later on the staff at Evergreen State College in Olympia.

“Bill and Jolene named their daughter after a mountain in [India] called Nanda Devi. The daughter later died on that mountain of pulmonary edema.

“I have a lot of fond memories of my association with Willi Unsoeld, even though I never caught his enthusiasm for mountain climbing. Bill was a truly remarkable individual—very modest and unassuming, relatively small in stature, rather than [having a] ‘super-athlete’ appearance. [He was] a free-thinking individual who [had an] impact on those with whom he came into contact.” 🙏



Paddy Flats and a Cooling Swim

by Denis Symes (McCall '63)



Thorn Creek Detail soaking fence posts in tank of preservative. (Courtesy Denis Symes)

When things were slow in McCall, we were farmed out to perform tasks, both to keep us busy and out of trouble, and to get work out of us.

During periods of low fire danger, only the top jumpers on the jump list would be kept in camp, the others would be sent to work assignments throughout the Payette National Forest. For example, the top eight would work around the jumper base; the next twenty or so would work at the Thorn Creek Guard Station. The lowest on the jump list might go to Paddy Flats to cut trees.

Once cut, the poles were transported to Thorn Creek. There, the task of peeling, stacking, letting dry over the winter, and then treating the poles in a bath of penta and diesel to preserve them, was consummated. Once treated, these poles were used as fences throughout the forest.

Peeling poles with drawknives is a hot, dirty and monotonous task. Tree sap stuck to your hands, face and clothes and the ever-present dirt and dust just stuck to it. At the end of the day, you were looking forward to a shower.

During late August 1964, a crew of 6–8 low list jumpers was sent to Paddy Flats under the able stewardship of **Stan Ramsey** (MYC '58). The day was very hot and cutting and limbing trees really took its toll. At the end of the day, we headed back to McCall and passed a lake. I pounded on the cab roof and shouted to Stan to stop—"I want to go for a swim." Obliging, Stan hit the brakes and pulled up to the lake. I jumped out of the back of the pickup, stripped and jumped into the lake for a refreshing

swim. Then I noticed that Stan had picked up my clothes and piled them into the truck's cab, climbed in and started the engine; the other two guys in the front also piled in and the doors were locked.

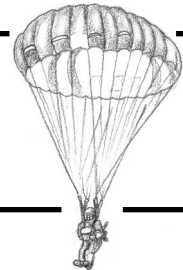
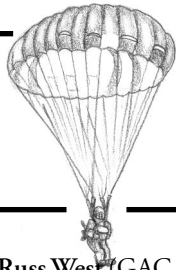
"Get in the truck now or we'll leave you here," Stan called. I pleaded for my clothes, but he was now laughing and threatening to leave me standing along the road naked. Reluctantly, I climbed into the pickup's bed with all my nudity exposed. As we drove, I hunkered down and continued to plead for my clothes—the wind was rather brisk and I was cold. The guys in the cab (and those in the back) just laughed.

After about 15 minutes, we pulled out onto Idaho Route 55, a major north-south highway in western Idaho, and sped up to 55 mph. The wind chill factor must have been about 50–55 degrees. Finally, I decided to play along and stood up in the back of the pickup and waved in all my glory to passing cars. With that, Stan immediately braked and gave me back my clothes. He was pissed and coldly said, "Do you know what **Del Catlin** (MYC '47 and our head foreman) will do if anyone of these people call him?"

Anyway, I offer my apologies to any passing motorist or families I offended in 1964. As for Stan, I remember this and other good experiences we had 39 years ago. Actually, the lake was cold, but the swim was refreshing. 🐼

Denis Symes can be reached at: 9504 Rockport Rd., Vienna, VA 22180 or at denissymes@verizon.net

Odds and Ends



Russ West (GAC '78) is living on a ranch near Imbler, Oregon. He served as Union County district attorney in La Grande for 18 years until 2002 when he was elected Union County circuit judge. He still enjoys running a chain saw on their small wood lot. "Thanks **Denny Lewis, Karl Dammen, Doug Houston, and Jon Foland** for all that you taught me about hard work, fighting fire, and jumping out of airplanes. Your spotting wasn't too bad either. If anyone comes through La Grande or Imbler, our door is always open."

John "Doc" Lammers (MSO '71) gives the following suggestions to all reunion attendees: This summer is the bicentennial of Lewis & Clark's Corps of Discovery. Much of that endeavor occurred in Montana with the corps spending the Fourth of July in Great Falls, MT. There is a wonderful Corps of Discovery interpretive center in Great Falls. The interstate between Great Falls and Helena passes close by Mann Gulch. The Mann Gulch site is on the other side of the river, so one needs a boat to actually get to the site. It is a half-day excursion to boat down the river, hike up to the hallowed ground and return.

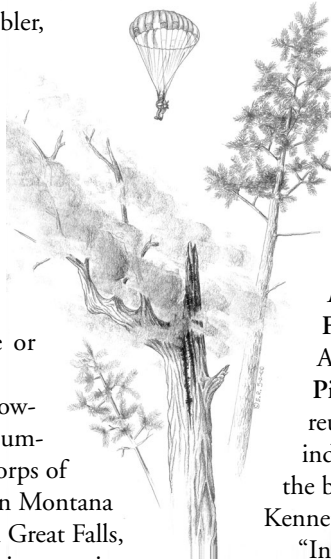
People coming for the reunion might enjoy the Lewis & Clark aspect since they will probably be traveling much of the same route. So as to enrich the experience, some suggested readings would be: *Undaunted Courage* by Ambrose and of course, *Young Men and Fire* by Norman Maclean.

Just got a change of address from **Scott Fairchild** (RAC '74) who retired as Alaska regional aviation officer in July of 2002. He and his wife, Cindy, have moved to Kitwanga, B.C., which is the best fishing and hunting location he could find.

I was looking at a note from **Ernest "Doc" Reesing** (MSO '61) and noticed the heading "Past President State Firemen's and Fire Marshalls' Association of Texas." I have ceased to be surprised by the success that the NSA members have achieved in their fields. Still, congratulations. Doc and his wife, Jo, live in Alpine, Texas.

A welcome back to **Wes Langley** (MSO '68) as he rejoins the NSA after dropping out way back in 1995. Wes relates: "I was out taking pictures of a home a couple years ago and happened to see Earl (Cooley) and stopped to say hi. He still had the same determination and natural 'high presence level.' I helped him put a battery into a car and we had a good time visiting. I went away thinking 'What an extraordinary man—always willing to visit and spend a few minutes with one of his ol' smokejumpers.'"

From the *Boise Weekly*: Accomplished Idaho author **Clay Mor-**



gan (MYC '74) will read from his new novel for young adults, *The Boy Who Spoke Dog*. After the reading, Morgan will sign books. This is Morgan's first novel for adolescents; his other published books are the novel *Aura*, winner of the Idaho Fiction Competition; *Santiago and the Drinking Party*, winner of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award; *Boise, the City and the People*; *Idaho Unbound*; and *Shuttle-Mir*.

Fred Rohrbach (MSO '65) wanted to let any of you Air America people know that he will be bringing **Pisidhi Indradat** (Associate) and his wife to the June reunion in Missoula. To bring you up to date on this individual, I will add the following information from the book *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*, by Kenneth Conboy with James Morrison:

"In early December (1966) a Pathet Lao guerrilla defected. Interrogated, he gave information on a Communist jungle prison at Ban Naden, a secluded village near the entrance to a karst cave. What's more, he said the prison contained an Air America employee. To lead a team of raiders, the CIA chose a Lao Theung sergeant named Te. He was a former FAR paratrooper. Te and nine of his best men, loaded up with carbines and bolt cutters, were inserted by a H-34 helicopter a two-day hike from the prison. The team struck at 0400 on Jan. 7th killing three Pathet Lao guards and driving off the rest.

"Holed up in one of the earthen detention cells was **Pisidhi Indradat**, a former PARU commando who was an Air America kicker aboard a C-46 which was shot down in September 1963. **Gene DeBruin** (MSO '59) was also one of the kickers. There were over 80 prisoners freed. Apart from that brief ceremony, no other publicity was given to the raid, the most successful of its kind in the entire Second Indochina War."

In a note from **Ray E. Williams** (Associate) in a merchandise order that I filled today: "The rookie jump pin is to be placed with other memorabilia of my brother **Gary G. Williams** (MSO '59) who died in the crash (Tri-motor) at Moose Creek on August 4, 1959. We never found his pin."

From **Bob Graham** (MSO '52): "Thought your comments in our last issue on accidents traveling in vans was very appropriate. This morning's Spokane paper, (*Spokesman Review*), highlights your concerns. Two high school teenagers were killed yesterday when a 15-passenger van full of students rolled on U.S. Highway 395 south of Ritzville Washington. Van slid on thin ice and rolled at least once, killing two and injuring seven. Doesn't say what the driver's qualifications were but he was 35 years old and I'll bet that he was a part-time driver and probably a teacher."

It's been 40 years since I heard from **Gil Boundy** (CJ '62). He called in an address change the other day. Gil is a retired FBI agent and will be moving from Ohio to Norris, Tennessee. He also plans to get a home in Montana and split the year by seasons.

I'm sure that most of us have had that "telepathic" experience a couple of times. **Ken Sisler** (NCSB '57) has been the subject of an article that I've been working on for over a year. Ken was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for action in Viet Nam (Laos) in which he was killed in 1967. Getting information outside of the CMH Web site was a difficult task. **Jack McKay** (NCSB '57) was a big help in getting me in contact with Becky Sisler—Ken's sister. After a year's time on this article, I had just written Becky thanking her for the use of some photos and updating her on the projected publishing date (July 2004 issue). The letter was sitting on my desk when I received a call from Jane Sisler (Ken's widow). This was the first time that we had ever been in contact and it was on the same day that I was working on Ken's article. Bottom line is that we should have a great cover photo on the July 2004 issue.

From **Doug Houston** (RAC '73): "Chuck ... I just wanted to congratulate you on the latest *Smokejumper* magazine. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I thought it was a great blend between the historical first jumps and the contemporary problems that still are prevalent in the fire world. I related easily to your chronology of the Link fire. It is nothing new. I remember several times looking out the window of my office at the Redmond Air Center watching columns growing, waiting for a call to hit the siren and send jumpers, but it didn't happen. The reasoning was still the same ... it wasn't a "jumper" fire, although we could have put people on the ground in a quick and effective way, then pulled the jumpers back when others arrived. It was pretty darn frustrating as I'm sure it was again last summer. Some things are just slow to change and I know that the base managers and operations people keep promoting/encouraging use of jumpers, although sometimes it is just a hard sell, especially if the dispatcher feels that it is not a "smoke-jumper" type fire.

Thanks for the job ... you did good.

I am really pleased with the way the feature article "Interview with a Pioneer Smokejumper" came together in the January issue. This was another long-term effort involving **Jim Budenholzer** (MSO '73) taking the time to contact **Jim "Smockey" Alexander** (MSO '40) in North Carolina and making the journey to his home. In addition to the collection and initial writing of the interview, pictures were arranged, many edits took place and then the layout with the associated "First Fire Jump" articles was done. A big thanks to **Jill Leger** (Associate) for her work on the project. I feel this piece is an invaluable record of smokejumper history. The proof is in the pudding. I got a call from the man himself this morning. Jim Alexander called from his home back east and requested 12 copies of the January issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. Look for more in future issues.

Was able to sit down and catch up on 40 years by having

lunch today with **Bill Knight** (CJ '60) who was passing through Chico on his way south. Bill flew helicopters for eleven years in the Navy before going on to other things. He has just retired and is looking forward to following the sun in the winter.

Dr. Albert Gray (CJ '45) thanks us for the profile in the January issue of *Smokejumper* magazine. "In so many ways, over so many years, my experiences at Cave Junction have had a significant impact on my life."

Hal Werner (NCSB '48) saw the article about **Willi Unsoeld** (CJ '50) in the January issue and remembers that a fellow Survival instructor (USAF) climbed with Willi in 1953 in the Himalayas. It was the first American party to climb Mt. Makalu (fifth highest in the world).

A special thanks to **Mike McMillan** (Fairbanks '96) for his work on the "Touching All Bases" column in this issue. I had dropped that column in the past few issues due to the fact that my time was stretched to the limit. Mike noticed the absence and pointed out the importance in getting current jumper information into the magazine. He has picked up the ball in fine style. For a good read, check out Mike's work.

Verland "Swede" Ohlson (MSO '49) recently passed away. His obit is listed in the "Off the List" section of the magazine. Thanks to his grandchildren, **Tory Kendrick** (MSO '00) and **Mara Veale** (MSO '01) for information about his long career with the Forest Service. 🌲

Postholes of Gold

Idaho City, 64-65

by **Tom Decker** (Idaho City '64)

You would think
that if the good Lord
would have wanted
post holes

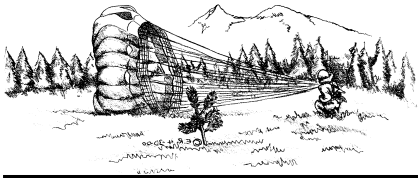
in this rock pile,
he would have
hailed in some sand,
or better yet

made holes
12 inches x 4 feet
lined up, squared up,
and spaced for the fence

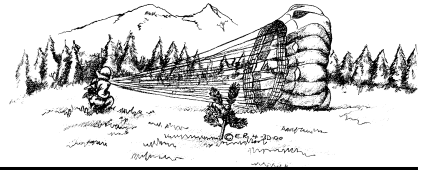
that he
must have known
needed building,
but the Lord must have

a soft spot
for jumpers,
for they find 'em
one by one

in the midst
of all these
picked over rocks,
as good as gold.



Checking the Canopy



by Tom Decker
(Idaho City '64)

Work of the Divine

Working phone line

Miles of line,
miles of brush,
miles of deadfall,
snags and such,
and we dying
... for a fire.

WHO CAN FORGET SMOKEJUMPER work details? We painted fences and buildings with the distinctive Forest Service green and white, dug

postholes, worked phone line and trail, sharpened tools, controlled burns, and repacked parachutes.

Reroofing a big hanger occupied most of the slow '65 fire season. Today's power hoists and nail guns would have made short work of our weeks' labor spent hauling lumber and roofing up to the lofty hanger's rafters where it could be put down by the incessant pounding of nails.

"What *will* they think of next?" we muttered when the supervisors came up with yet another brainchild during slow fire seasons. But no jumper refused the paycheck at the end of the pay period! Money for college or for a car ... YES!

The U.S. taxpayer made out too! The woods were protected by a first class fire fighting resource, and a lot of the nation's back country chores got done when slack time became prime time for painting, cleaning, pruning, aligning and fixing.

A third payoff of work, certainly not recognized by most of us at the



time, was the development of teamwork and leadership as NEDs grew into seasoned fire hands toned with experience and know-how.

But wait! Bear with the preacher now, for there is yet another element reflected in even mundane work, and that is God's care for creation.

Let's face it: on a good day, our work is an expression of who we are—or hope to be—and we got paid for it! On a better day, our work may even be an indication of our connectivity with our fellow human beings. And this, dear jumper, is the seed of the divine planted in all of us at the moment of our conception. No wonder then that we glory in our work! It is meant to be! 🙏

Tom Decker, a retired Army chaplain, now pastors a small Lutheran congregation in Long Beach, California.

Can Someone Help?

In the January issue we printed the first in a series of interviews done by Jim Budenholzer (MSO '73) with pioneer smokejumper James "Smokey" Alexander. It is through interviews like these that we (NSA) are able to capture the history of smokejumping. Jim Budenholzer deserves our thanks and a pat on the back for his time and effort in doing these interviews. It is not an easy task and our only pay to Jim is just a heartfelt "thanks."

There are only a few of the "pioneer" smokejumpers left and we must get their remembrances recorded before it is too late. The editor has two other "pioneer" smokejumpers that he would like to get someone to interview. One lives in southwestern Idaho (Fruitland) and the other in Missoula. If you can help with this project please contact Chuck Sheley.



1948 photo: Joe Sylvia (MSO '48) standing at left with camera hanging from his neck, Stan Reba (MSO '48) standing in the middle rear with dark cap, E. Boyd Swenson (MSO '48) seated between Sylvia and Reba. (Courtesy Chuck Pickard)

Events Preceding Mann Gulch

by L. A. "Chuck" Pickard (Missoula '48)

The 1949 season began in a routine manner. Spring training at the Nine Mile Camp was over on schedule. Some of our returning jumpers were expected to report shortly since a few colleges were late in letting them out.

The building of our Nine Mile airstrip was a huge success. We had begun constructing the strip the year before (1948) with not much more than a dump truck, a dirt roller and a few other borrowed pieces of equipment. The jumpers built the strip and it was located a mile or so up the canyon from our camp. It was suitable to land Tri-motors, Travelairs and other small aircraft. Because of the limited length of the strip, we made no attempt to land the C-47 on this field.

With the training completed, the majority of jumpers were sent out to the forest districts for project work. Forest trails had to be cleared, phone line to lookouts needed to be repaired and bridges had to be re-built. In short, the districts welcomed the jumpers to handle these projects. Counting the new jumpers, we had over 100 men working under the supervision of the squad leaders.

A small group went to Hale Field in Missoula to pack parachutes and get fire equipment ready. A small cadre under my charge remained at Nine Mile to train the late

arrivals. We gave them refresher jumps, updated them on the coming fire season and got them into physical condition for this strenuous work.

The late arrivals numbered eight. They had all jumped the previous year and were familiar with the routine. Among the new arrivals was **Joe Sylvia** whom I had known before the war. We both grew up together in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and served together with the U.S. Marines in the South Pacific. It had been a surprise meeting with Joe when he showed up the year before with his friend **Stanley Reba**. They were both forestry majors at the University of Minnesota.

After completing refresher training, the late arrivals joined the others on the district projects. A few were sent down to Moose Creek where we were experimenting with the use of helicopters. In July, I was sent to Missoula to pack chutes and handle other duties at Hale Field. The fire season was slow in getting started and we had jumped a few small fires but nothing large. By the third week in July the forests were drying out and lightning storms were showing up. Our action on small fires started to increase.

Both the squad leaders and jumpers worked from a rotation list. **Fred Brauer** ('41), **Wag Dodge** ('41), **Al Cramer** ('43), **Fred Barnowsky** ('42) and **Art Cochran** ('42)

were the five permanently employed foremen available for large crew fire action. Otherwise, the squad leaders handled the bulk of the fire crew supervision and all aspects of the training. **Earl Cooley** ('40) and Fred Brauer realized that the area was heating up and called back additional jumpers for standby at Hale Field. We had a bunk building adjacent to the field at the old fairgrounds

August 5, 1949, was a warm and sunny day. Dry lightning had moved across Montana and Idaho the night before and by noon we had jumped three fires. It was Saturday and we had 25 or 30 jumpers at Hale Field. A group had congregated on the steps of the dispatch office in anticipation of additional fire calls. The rotation had me up next for an eight-man or larger fire. Squad leader **Bill Hellman** ('46) was next after me. Hellman and I were talking about how much he needed the weekend overtime and it would sure be nice if I would let him jump the next large fire request. He explained that his wife was expecting and he really needed the extra money. We joked back and forth as the afternoon wore on. I felt sorry for Bill because he badly needed the overtime money and I reluctantly swapped places with him on the rotation list.

About thirty minutes later, a 15-man request came in from the Helena N.F. Barnowsky and I helped suit up the load. Wag Dodge was the foreman and Bill Hellman the squad leader. Earl Cooley would be doing the spotting. The C-47 fired up its engines and took off for a routine fire jump.

Wag Dodge was a very quiet person to work with. He always wore a dark blue baseball cap. He had started jumping in 1941 and helped carry the project through the

war years. Hellman, who started in 1946, wore a khaki billed cap and khaki pants most of the time. He was a likeable guy with a ready smile. On that crew were both Stanley Reba and Joe Sylvia. Reba was from Brooklyn and was kidded a lot about it. He was a big, quiet, husky ex-air force and very good-natured. Whenever Sylvia thought he had a cause to gripe, Reba would always kid him back to reality.

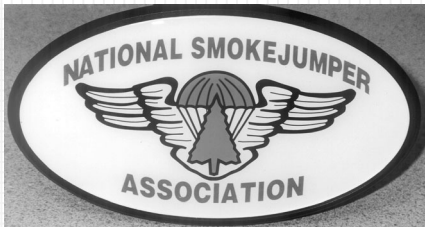
Phil McVey ('48) was also in that load. Phil was ex-navy and most always wore faded blue jeans and a faded blue shirt. Like many sailors during the war, McVey always tied his shirrtails around his waist rather than tuck them in. He always had a grin. I had most of these fellows work for me at one time or another. They made a fine bunch of men. It seemed like smokejumping brought out the best in these fellows, whether they had been veterans who survived the war, older men who stayed home or younger guys just starting their careers.

It was late afternoon when they took off. Within 30 minutes of their departure, a fire call came in for a fire in the St. Joe N.F. Brauer told me to take this fire. I was to spot the two jumpers and then jump myself. The three of us worked the fire all night and most of the next day. It ended up being a three-day affair with a long hard packout.

We learned the horrible news of the Mann Gulch fire from the district personnel who picked us up. The fire swept along by high winds erupted in the face of the jumper crew before any of them could escape. It was no one's fault. We lost good men that day and the special memories of Hellman, Dodge, Reba, Sylvia, McVey and all the others will never be forgotten by me. 🙏

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

The View from Outside the Fence



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

ON DECEMBER 3, 2003, PRESIDENT Bush signed into law the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. The law authorizes \$760 million a year for thinning projects on 20 million acres of federal land and requires judges to weigh the environmental consequences of inaction and the risk of fire in cases involving thinning projects. The Montana GOP e-mail briefing was rather blunt about the purpose of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act: "The legislation is a step in the right direction toward increasing the timber industry's ability to harvest off of

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federal land by limiting legal abuse from environmental groups."

Now that brush and small trees will be thinned the question is what to do with it? According to Jeremy Fried, a forester with the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station, "Small trees are almost like toxic waste—there's no use for it." Fried and other researchers with the Forest Inventory and Analysis Program have developed a computer model to determine the volume of biomass within a geographic area, how much can profitably be transported to biomass fueled power plants, where those power plants should be built, and how many years' supply of biomass is available to keep the plants running. The program also analyzes economic variables including at what point does removing the material stop being profitable and require subsidies to persuade private investors that it's worth building a biomass fueled power plant? The program also considers how much biomass material is close to roads, density of the fuels and whether it's in a protected area such as a park or wilderness area. The computer program analyzed 28 million acres of the Cascade Mountains across Oregon and northern California. Studies in New Mexico and Arizona were to be completed over the winter.

The National Interagency Fire Center has acquired surplus Vietnam era AH-1 (Bell 209) Cobra helicopters from the Department of Defense and has installed a sophisticated electronics package on one of the ships. The helicopter will operate in tandem with a vehicle on the ground carrying "state of the art multi-spectral imaging systems and communications equipment". The plan is for the Cobra to fill a lead plane role and as a platform for Air Tactical Ground Supervisors. The question is, can and

should a single aircraft fulfill both roles simultaneously? The 703 engine on the Cobra burns one hundred gallons of fuel an hour. With the USFS requirement that aircraft land with thirty minutes of fuel onboard, that leaves the Cobra with only a one and a half hour flight time. I thought we were trying to get away from using surplus military aircraft? I find it hard to believe that with all of the high performance civilian aircraft available, the Forest Service can't seem to find a suitable fixed wing replacement for the Beech Baron. But the "advantage" of using military aircraft is that you can make up your own maintenance program while requiring part 121 or part 135 maintenance from the private sector. I wonder which Forest Service program was robbed for funding this experiment?

A tip of the hard hat to NSA member, author and founder of the Museum of Mountain Flying, Stan Cohen. Stan sent along a letter correcting a mistake in a previous column. I mistakenly referred to Tanker 123 as a PBY. Tanker 123 was a Consolidated PB4Y-2. The PBY is an amphibious aircraft. Thanks for keeping me honest, Stan!

A Hawkins and Powers Fairchild C-119 Flying Box Car N15501 was ferried to Namibia in December to be used in a remake of the classic 1965 movie *Flight of the Phoenix*. The remake stars Dennis Quaid and is scheduled for release sometime in 2004.

This column is dedicated to **Tim Ross** (NCSB '74) who answered the final alarm on December 5, 2003. Tim served on the Everett Washington Fire Department for 25 years and contracted cancer as the result of exposure to carcinogens on the job. ☠

*Chris Sorensen can be reached at:
cmsorensen@worldnet.att.net*



Items from the Fire Pack



I Jumped a One-Man Fire

We were so busy in '49 that I jumped a one-man fire. It was this side of Hell's Canyon. Lightning had hit a big yellow pine and it was burning about 20 feet up. I threw my jump rope over a limb and climbed up and scraped all the fire out with my Pulaski. They were so desperate for jumpers that a packer came in and got me at 2:00 AM that morning.

Max Glaves (McCall '47)

Close Call

Six of us jumped the Potlatch fire, which was getting pretty good size as it was late in the afternoon. We were told to hit the timber on the top of the ridge and I aimed for a big spruce but overshot it. My chute collapsed and I tumbled through the branches feeling like I was falling down a 100 foot elevator shaft. I could see a log on the ground on which I expected to crash. Suddenly my chute snagged a branch and I found myself dangling with my toes touching the log. After a brief prayer of thanks, I unsnapped my harness and stepped down.

Dick Flaharty (Missoula '44)

Smokejumping Is In!

In the spring of 1940 Francis Lufkin (NCSB '40), Virgil Derry (NCSB '40) and I did a jump at a training camp for all the personnel for the forest. There was this fellow, head of fire control from Washington, D.C., who was out there to observe who rode in the co-pilot spot. They started a fire and had the smoke coming up pretty good. I jumped first followed by Francis and then Virgil. We all three lit right in the circle close to the fire and we had to kick Francis' chute out of the fire.

Godwin said, "That's good enough for me, smokejumping is in."

George Honey (North Cascades '40)

What Made You Stick with Smokejumping So Long?

It was the closeness to the people you're working with. In the first 20 years of jumping, we didn't have the communications with anybody on the outside, so we were on our own. We had to figure out some way to get a handle on anything that happened. There was no way to get help without quite a bit of effort and a lot of time expiring.

Wayne Webb (McCall '46)

Survived the Crash

In 1982 a private plane crashed in some very steep country. Somehow all three of them survived. We jumped in, gave them first aid and got them out the next day.

Bill Moody (North Cascades '57)

They Would Snap Your Shoes Off

Well Smitty, (Glenn Smith NCSB '40) opened his chute with his feet in the air and the shroud line took a half hitch around one leg and pulled his knee out. I think Frank (Frank Derry NCSB '40) hurt his back or something. Those Eagle chutes opened so fast that they would just about snap your shoes off. And if you weren't tensed up and cinched up tight, you were sure to hurt your back. They just snapped the socks off of you. I never did use them much.

Virgil Derry (North Cascades '40)

Loose Harness

Sitting on the floor of the DC-3,

I loosened the straps on my harness to be more comfortable. Big mistake. When it was my turn to jump I forgot to pull the straps tight again. Geronimo ... one ... two ... three. The canopy popped open and I almost flew completely out of the harness. My ass was pointed towards terra firma, but the harness straps caught me where my knees and elbows were bent. Gingerly I climbed back in. Am I the only jumper who had this experience?

Perry Rahn (Missoula '61)

No Help Needed

Late in the '44 season, Jack Heintzelman (CJ '43) took ten of us in the crew truck to a fire near Gasque, Calif. It seems the blaze was started by logging operations and was out of control with no organized effort being made toward controlling the fire.

Jack started us building line which we did throughout the day and into the wee hours of the night. All the time as we worked, we passed numerous small groups of men sitting or standing on the line watching us work.

After we completely lined the fire and were headed back to Cave Junction, we learned that Jack had requested that the loggers get out of our way and just patrol the line. We figured that he couldn't resist showing off his crew.

Kenneth Diller (Cave Junction '43)

125 Jumpers on a Fire

After our basic training was over, our unit was composed of 14 jumpers stationed at Twisp, Washington. We jumped a fire near the Canadian border, which was quite large. The morning after we jumped, they sent in around 125 army paratroopers from Pendleton,

Oregon. It was quite a sight watching them jump.

Joseph Eigsti (North Cascades '45)

Rafting the Rapids

Before we took off for the fire, we were given a bunch of nails to build a raft to get across the river on our way out. I landed near a rattlesnake, that I dispatched to wherever good snakes go, and then watched our sleeping bags freefall toward the river.

That evening a local resident arrived to help us with the fire. After putting out the fire, I built the raft, which was barely afloat when the three of us got on.

I must have been elected captain and was given a pole and told to keep the upstream end of the raft into the current. Everything went

fine for a short distance and then the raft turned end for end and we went downstream through a set of rapids and huge boulders.

We finally got to the other side near a FS truck that was waiting for us. The local disappeared without saying good-bye or even thanks for the ride. He must have had urgent business elsewhere.

George Anderson (McCall '44)

He Had to Have an Eagle

Ed Nafziger (MSO '43) and I jumped a fire on Cow Creek. Ed always jumped an Eagle just because he liked them the best. On this jump his Eagle whammed real hard. So hard it collapsed for a moment and then whammed again. It snapped the straps off his shoes and suspenders and his Eagle lost three

lines to boot! But the next time he jumped, he had to have another Eagle.

David "Skinny" Beals
(McCall '45)

You've Got Too Many Jumps

We had a rescue jump for a government employee who had fallen while working on the fire line and was severely burned. We carried him all night across the Bitterroot Mountains. Toward the end of the season Earl Cooley told me that I was getting too many jumps and that I would be assigned to trail work. I really didn't want to go. That afternoon a number of fires started and they needed every available man, so I jumped again. I never did get out on that trail.

Luke Birky (Missoula '45) 🦋



Historical Photo: North Cascades 1945. Standing L-R: Bob Goering, Bill Bristol, Walt Buller, Francis Lufkin, Bill Laughlin, Harold Holden, Wes Kerr. Kneeling L-R: Elmer Neufeld, Joe Eigsti, Ken Diller, Otto Bartel, Earl Kenagy, Howard King, Art Penner. (Courtesy Earl Kenagy)



Smokejumpers.com: NSA on the Web



by **Jon Robinson**
WEBMASTER

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE a hand in Smokejumpers.com? Do you have Skills?

Do you have Web, graphics or journalism skills? Are you looking for a way to contribute to your smokejumper community? Are you a hard working detail oriented individual? Of course you are! You're a smokejumper for heaven sakes.

The NSA is full of skillful and successful individuals. Men and

women who have parlayed the same drive and determination that earned them brotherhood in the paragon profession in the world of firefighting, into achievement and excellence in their extended professional lives as well. If those extended professional skills include web technologies, web research, graphics or journalism skills, we would love to hear from you!

Do you want to pitch in?

Perhaps you want to contribute to the NSA and the smokejumping profession. Maybe you wish to polish your Web development skill-set or increase your experience, and are excited to work with cutting edge technologies. Maybe you love to stay up on the world of smokejumping and firefighting through the Web. Perhaps you have journalism skills and would enjoy contributing news and commentary.

We at the NSA Web Project have all kinds of things we want to accomplish. And while we are pleased with our product (and hope you are too!) we also are limited by budget.

We have accomplished the basics and then some, but realistically we just don't have the \$ to spend to round the corners and sand the edges. That's where *you* could help out, *and* gain valuable skill and experience in the process!

If you possess skills such as (X)HTML, CSS, PHP and/or Photoshop, or if you are a journalism student or professional, or surf the Web for smokejumping and related news, consider dropping me a line at: webmaster@smokejumpers.com.

If you have some skill that doesn't match up to those I have listed, don't let that stop you. Maybe we can find a way to include those skills or connect you up with bros who can!

Bring it on!

So bring it on! Let's continue to build and improve on this very special community.

Jon Robinson is a freelance Web developer in his other life: <http://www.chakra5.com>. If you have a professional Web project that needs attention, contact him at: jon@chakra5.com (e), 206-781-0140 (o) or 206-265-9293 (c). ☎

Maryott Tribute

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Douglas B. Maryott's (MSO '71) death shattered the last link in a family chain that shackled the horse and rifle U.S. Forest Service of a century ago to today's pickup truck and computer agency. Doug died of a brain tumor in his Dalton Gardens home at the age of 56 on Oct. 31. At the time of his passing, he was the fire management officer for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest's Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District.

His grandfather, Dana W. Maryott, was one of the first forest rangers in Montana, hired soon after the agency was formed in 1905. His father, Glenn, began packing for the

Forest Service in 1926 then, served in a succession of jobs for the agency in Idaho, Montana and finally Washington State where he retired as a ranger in Colville in 1969.

Doug began his service with the agency in 1970 as a fireguard on the Colville National Forest. But he'd already sampled his chosen profession, as a 14-year-old firefighter with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Neither of his children, Christy Nelson of North Pole, Alaska, and Anna Maryott of Dalton Gardens, are following their father's, grandfather's and great-grandfather's career paths. So, for almost the first time in a century, the U.S.

Forest Service is without a Maryott on its rolls.

Doug was born in Coeur d'Alene on August 7, 1947 while his dad was stationed at the Big Creek Ranger Station. Two years later, the family moved to Big Prairie in the Bob Marshall Wilderness then, in 1953, to the Kootenai National Forest's Silvanite Ranger District. His sister Gwynn remembers that Doug started first grade in a one-room country school on the Yaak River with 18 other children in eight grades. The Maryotts moved again in 1957, this time to Colville, and there they remained through Doug's senior year in high school.

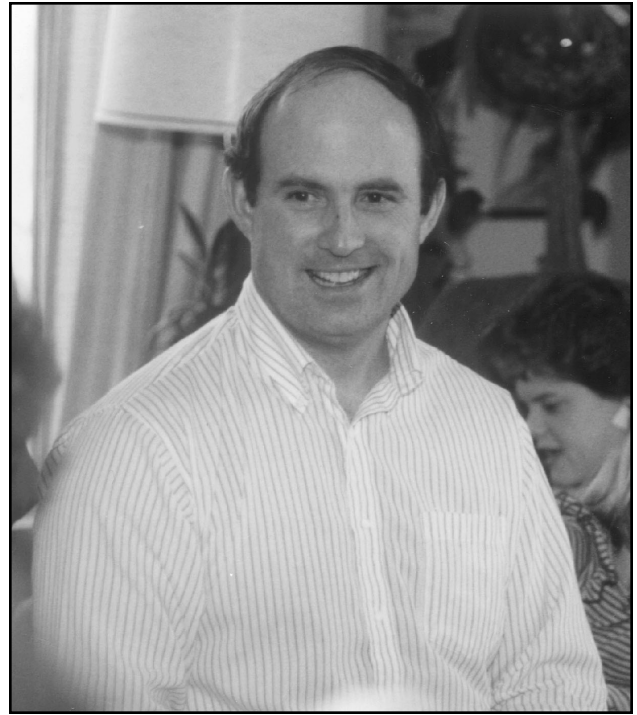
A lover of nature throughout his life, he learned falconry while in the fifth grade. "One day, one of the men who worked for dad brought home two red-tailed hawk chicks," Gwynn said. "Doug was hooked. He raised the chicks and taught them to return to him. For the next several years, he'd find chicks every spring, train them, then turn them loose in the fall."

His wife, Diana, recalled Doug as merely a fellow student until 1965, their senior year, when they began dating. Described by his sister as an indifferent student, Doug started school at a junior college in Wenatchee, but dropped out in 1967 to volunteer for the draft. After training as an infantryman at Ft. Lewis, he was shipped to Vietnam where he served a year with the 1st Infantry Division. He returned to the States in 1969, the day his father retired from the Forest Service, and he and Diana were married that November.

Doug was a smokejumper from 1971 to 1975, working his way through the University of Montana's forestry school. He graduated in 1976, and then took his young family to familiar country, the Flathead National Forest where he served as wilderness ranger in the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wildernesses. He returned to jumping as a "retread" in 1985, but broke his ankle on a fire jump, then returned to "ground pounding." After a short stint with the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon as a trainee forester, he returned to the Flathead then, in 1990, came to the Idaho Panhandle where he served as forester and fire management officer until his death.

Tragedy struck the Maryotts late in 1991. Their youngest, Nicole, who had just turned six, returned with her family from a holiday candlelight ceremony at their church in Coeur d'Alene. Unseen by her parents and sisters, she went into a closet and lit a candle to admire its glow. Her dress exploded into flames. When she came screaming down the stairs, Doug smothered the fire with a blanket, suffering second and third degree burns on his hands and face. Nicole was airlifted to Harborview Hospital in Seattle where she died.

To those who worked with him, Doug was far more than the last link in the Maryott/Forest Service chain. Peggy Polichio, who was in charge of all fire activities on the Panhandle national forests, described him as "a strong man, inside and out, with unflappable confidence." To some, she said, he was a hero: "Just ask the residents of several small villages in Canada, Alaska and Montana. During several summers between 1995 and 2000, Doug, as a key member



Doug Maryott. (Courtesy Maryott Family)

of fire teams, saved numerous communities by his aggressive fire fighting tactics." Forester Sherri Lionberger, a fellow worker, said, "He had backbone. He always stood up for his people, as well as stood behind them and mentored new employees. "It's telling that many of Doug's co-workers were also his friends, hunting partners, firewood cutting buddies and car poolers," she said. "Using fire to fight fire, he was able to pull fires away from homes and businesses. Doug was a fireman's fireman, and he kept his troops out of harm's way while always putting fires out. "His people have always come home safely," she said.

With 33 years of federal employment, Doug was getting ready for retirement. Two years ago, he started a tree service, Dig Doug Tree Transfir which he operated during vacations and on evenings and weekends. "His dad had planted Christmas trees behind their home here in Dalton Gardens," Diana said. "Doug took the business over when his dad passed away, then got into planting seedlings and transplanting them when they were old enough. "He liked growing trees a whole lot more than cutting them down," she said.

His daughters remember their dad as a quintessential outdoorsman who taught them to enjoy the woods as he did. "I remember our hikes in Glacier Park, and racing up ahead of him so that I could rest a moment before he caught up," said Christy. "We'd pick huckleberries, go snow shoeing to cut our own Christmas tree. And he taught us to ride horses.

When he was in the woods, he was really at peace, in his natural habitat."

And, said daughter Anna, "He wasn't the biggest man, but he was the strongest of all." 🌲

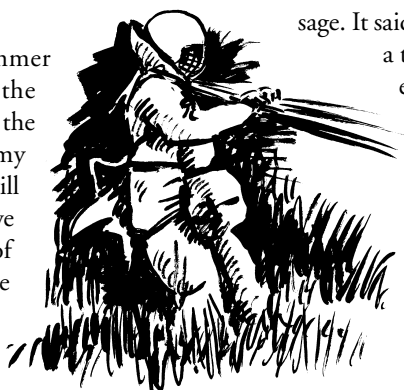


Blast from the Past

Oldsmokeys Website

One of my early memories was of a summer morning at Bear Valley Ranger Station on the Malheur N.F. Dad, H. Robert Mansfield, was the district ranger at the time. Dad got me and my oldest sister, Meredith, out of bed while it was still dark. We never got to get up at that hour and we were playing in the swings and doing a lot of yelling. Dad and his district assistant were at the weather station and were somewhat irked by all of the commotion. Over the years I asked him what that was all about and he would never answer. Then when he and Mom were visiting us just after I joined Los Alamos Scientific Laboratories, I asked him again. He was silent for a moment and then he said that since he was in Los Alamos and since I was working for the lab, maybe it was OK to tell me.

He and his assistant were cleared to top secret and had all of the decoding books and other stuff that went along with that clearance. One day he received a coded message. They got out their code books and finally were able to decode the mes-



sage. It said "On (such and such a day) at (such and such a time), look for unusual atmospheric phenomena." It was the day of the Trinity shot (the first atomic bomb.) Someone was very perceptive in that they knew that the ranger and his assistant were cleared, had weather-recording equipment, and were trained weather observers. These observers were spread out over the entire western U.S.

Dad guessed that something big was happening and got us up to witness the event. We didn't see anything at Bear Valley.

Shortly before I retired from the lab, I went into the classified library to see if I could find out who had issued the order and any other details about the event. There is no reference in the library. The event was declared by the DOE to be unclassified since the fact that the Trinity shot took place is not classified. The best information is that someone in the Army issued the order independently of the lab.

Chuck Mansfield (CJ '59) 🐼

Crew Action July 2002

by Jason Greenlee (Redding '99)

Pretty good crew you got here, Arnold!" I said loudly enough for the whole crew to hear.

"Yep." Arnold Bill is a native, and uses words sparingly.

"TOO BAD THEY'RE A BUNCH OF CANDY-ASSED WUSSES!" I yelled.

"Huh? Hey, we're not wusses! No way, man!"

"WELL, IF YOU'RE NOT CANDY-ASSED WUSSES, YOU MIGHT NOT MIND PLAYING A LITTLE SMOKEJUMPER GAME!" I yelled to everyone in general.

That generated some interest. A few people grinned, not realizing they were being drawn into something they might regret. A few turned away, not interested in finding out what the baiting was all about. They were more interested in collapsing in the bus with a cold Gatorade. I couldn't blame

them. They'd had a hard day of searching-and-destroying smokes in a steep canyon in eastern California's Cannon fire. But I couldn't resist introducing them to a little fire culture.

I drew a line in the sand behind the bus with my shovel.

"Cross this line, and play the game, or you're all WUSSES!"

A few still hesitated, but then started to venture across the line. I guess I didn't look that tough at 5' 10".

"Come on, come on, it won't hurt."

I finally coaxed all twenty across the line and got them into a tight circle behind the waiting bus. The bus driver looked out her driver's window impatiently. She wanted to get back to the nice cool halls of the high school we were staying in.

"This is a game that will challenge

your luck!" I sang out. I pulled a quarter out of my pocket. I flipped it into the circle, letting it spin until it hit the ground. "Heads! I get to stay in!" I yelled, grabbing up the coin and passing it to the next guy. "Heads, you stay, tails, you're out," I said. "And the winner gets a cold Coke!" I produced a Coke that had been hidden at the bottom of the ice cooler.

That caused a stir. Some people who had held back came forward to take a turn. Around and around we went, until one guy won the Coke. As we scattered to get into our rigs, I whispered to a squad leader "Don't tell anyone, but the last day's game is going to be a killer. A really, really bad deal. This whole thing is a trick to bait everyone into a trap."

Next day, same time, same place,

same hollering: “YEP, NOT A BAD CREW! TOO BAD YOU’RE ALL A BUNCH OF WUSSES!” Again, a growl from the crowd. Again the line in the sand. Again another lame little game. This time we battled for who could hang from a pine limb the longest (it’s hard—try it). The winner got another Coke. As we scattered to get into our rigs, I whispered to another squad leader, “Don’t tell anyone, but the last day’s game is going to be a killer. A really, really bad deal. This whole thing is a trick to bait everyone into a trap.”

Next day, same thing. A challenge and an easy game. By this time, I had everyone sucked in, wondering what the next “smokejumper game” would be. And everyone was dancing across the line each afternoon to see if they could win the cold Coke. But the rumor had gotten out that the last day was going to be a bad deal—a really, really bad deal.

Finally, the last day came. The fire had rolled over dead, and we all knew this was the last shift. Firefighters had been giving me nervous looks all day. As we walked down toward the bus off the ridge, I detected a slightly less jaunty air to the crew. Uncertainty reigned. Each man was wondering to himself if he was up to the challenge. And men wondered what the nasty trick I had in store for them was. What was I up to? Why had I been baiting everyone each day? Was this some kind

of evil smokejumper trick that could even hurt someone or even be fatal?

The moment came and I sang out with extra vigor: “... BUNCH OF WUSSES!” Every eye turned fearfully toward me. Every face reflected the apprehension of the damned facing the hangman’s noose. How tough was this smokejumper? How cruel a trick could I come up with? I drew the usual line in the sand.

Reluctantly, as if he was marching down death row, one lone lemming edged across the line. A silence hung over the area as the single hero looked fearfully back at his comrades as if to say, “Hey, don’t leave me out here alone!” One more man crept across the line. Then two more. Then, as if they were being pushed through a meat grinder, the others shuffled across, looking like they were in the Bataan Death March.

I produced a coin again, and smiled sweetly. “Hey, just another game of chance.” The looks of relief were amazing. It was as if the sun had been behind a cloud and had come back out. Cold fear was being replaced with rubbing of hands and grins. Everyone was up for this! I said, “Only THIS time, we play for dessert. The winner gets all the deserts, and I happen to know that it’s the IC’s birthday, and that we’re having birthday cake for dessert!”

Yeah! Everyone wanted to win that one! The coin flew through the air,

spinning end over end, landing in the sand. Around and around we went, losers falling off to the sidelines to watch when their coin came up tails. Finally, it was down to one victor again—this time, it was Andy who won. Andy didn’t weigh more than 115 pounds and he certainly didn’t look like he was going to be able to handle twenty pieces of cake.

Then I lowered the boom: “BUT, here’s the deal: the winner HAS to eat ALL the desserts! Har!”

Later that evening, we crowded into the high school auditorium to eat. Dinner finished, we all lined up for some birthday cake. I hollered: “Wait! Remember, Andy won the desserts!” Twenty of us filed past the server picked up our cake and came over to Andy, who sat with a huge grin, accepting twenty pieces of cake.

You know what? The 115-pound kid ate every damned piece of cake. And everybody had a good laugh. And Andy went home a few pounds heavier.

And 20 firefighters went home with a new respect for the evil that lurks in the mind of the smokejumper! 🍪

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Historic Photo: 1940 photo of Tri-motor unloading cargo at Moose Creek R.S. (Courtesy Jim Alexander)



Touching All Bases



(Editor's note: At my request, Mike McMillan (FBX '96) has agreed to collect and edit this column. Mike welcomes all submissions from active jumpers interested in contributing to their base's report. You can e-mail Mike at: spotfireimages@hotmail.com. The deadline for the October issue is July 1.)

Alaska Base Report

by Mike McMillan (Fairbanks '96)

Sixty-five smokejumpers were on our jump list in 2003, after two chilly waves of refresher training last spring.

We bid fond farewell to **Mel Tenneson** (FBX '86) after 17 seasons in Alaska. He transferred to Boise as a spotter and squad leader. **John Lyons** (FBX '90) replaces Mel as our new crew supervisor. **Derrek Hartman** (RDD '98) also joined the Boise base after spending two seasons in Alaska. We lost our good friend **Dan Hernandez** (RDD '85). He returned to Redding to jump from his home base in 2003. Dan's brother **Fred Hernandez** (RDD '88) is also missed in AK after taking an FMO job in New Mexico last year. We gained transfer **Frank Goodson** (RDD '95) from Redding, and he's made a smooth transition to the square parachute.

Four USFS jumpers from Missoula and North Cascades joined our "New-Man Ram-Air" training in April for everything except the jumping. They're glad they made the trip, the consensus being the experience was a step in the right direction.

Congratulations to former smokejumper **Ed Strong** (RDD '75) on his promotion as the Alaska Fire Service's chief of fire operations. Promotions within the Alaska crew last season: **Jason Jordet** (NCSB '00) and **Pete Stephenson** (RDD '98) are now Operations (Box) 8's, **Paul Lenmark** (FBX '96) is our EMT 8, and **Steve Theisen** (FBX '86) became our paracargo supervisor. New spotters kicking jumpers and boxes from airplanes last year, as well as serving as squad leaders, were: **Mike Bradley** (FBX '95), **Marty Meierotto** (FBX '94) and **Jay Wattenbarger** (FBX '92).

Alaska's paracargo section dropped 160,000 pounds of cargo on 92 fire and project assignments in 2003. Paracargo section rookies were **Mike O'Brien** (FBX '98), **Randy Foland** (FBX '01), **Tony Marchini** (FBX '01), and **Jeff McPhetridge** (MYC '93). Tony also earned his senior parachute rigger's license last season.

Five of seven rookie candidates made it through training in 2003. Congratulations to **Jason Dollard**, **Quint Gidley**, **Andy Parsons**, **Jeff Stark**, and **Chris Swisher**. The Alaska



hotshots contributed heavily to the class of 2003 and last year's rooks are a strong group.

Eight jumpers fought the season's first fire on May 2 in the Upper Yukon Territory. The only clue at the fire's point of origin was a pile of goose feathers near a campfire littered with whiskey bottles.

By August 1, we jumped 36 fires in Alaska, sending 245 jumpers out the door. Forty-two jumpers also "pounded" fires, several of which threatened structures. **Charlie Brown** (FBX '88) was IC of the Central fire, leading three loads of jumpers on a successful scramble to save houses near the airstrip and town. The dump at Lake Illiamna spawned a fire that burned through town. **Tony Pastro** (FBX '77) and his crew managed to prevent any damage to houses, airport structures and a town full of can-do

volunteers working the fire with a subdued regard for their own safety.

Wally Humphries (FBX '90) and seven Forest Service boosters traveled into the Arctic Circle to a North Slope fire in the Brooks Range. Lightning sent flames from thick spruce high into the sub-alpine tundra, blessing the group with Alaska's most picturesque fire assignment last season.

Fire action in Alaska was hot and cold last season with rain a key player throughout. In July, the bros were hauling 30-pound king salmon from the Chena River behind our jump units. Heavy rains forced our many boosters home in July, but not before **Derek Patton** (RAC '00) won the Big Flip.

Project work included historic building restoration in Eagle, Alaska's first incorporated city. During the slower weeks of 2003 the crew built a wooden leisure deck beside our paracargo bay, thanks to **Gary Baumgartner** (FBX '88) and his home lumber mill. In an afternoon they felled, hauled, milled and nailed the white spruce boards into place next to the ramp. The new deck could still use a good coat of shellac, but so could we.

The base's garden was blooming with huge turnips, radishes, squash, snap peas and potatoes, thanks to the AK crew's green thumbs and the help of enthusiastic boosters to our base.

Under stormy Alaska skies we sent 60 jumpers south by late August. Five served on Alaska's Type I Management Team and two were Air Tactical Group Supervisors. By September 1, Alaska smokejumpers were boosting bases in Boise, Carson City, Cedar City, Ely, Grand Junction, Missoula, Twin Falls, Pocatello, West Yellowstone, and Grangeville.

We'd like to especially thank GAC Base Manager **Robin Embry** (GAC '85) and The Nez Perce smokejumpers. They welcomed a crew of Alaska detailers last August, and together

the squares and rounds jumped fires throughout Idaho and Montana until the rains came.

The entire Alaska crew jumped consistently in the lower 48 in 2003—the only jumpers left in God’s country chose to stay to guard the home front. Our sole injury last season was a rookie’s broken pinky on a fire jump. With plenty of wildfire for everyone, 2003 was a season to remember.

Congrats to Pete Stephenson and Dania on celebrating their marriage in Dania’s homeland of Chile with a big bash in January.

Several Alaska regulars bought snow machines to brighten up their winter. **Ivan Smith** (MSO ’95) and **Robert Yeager** (RDD ’92) performed several high-speed crash tests on their new toys. They fared better than the machines did, fortunately surviving to jump again in 2004.

Bill Cramer (NIFC ’90) reported a heavy snowpack across the state, often a precursor to an active Alaska fire season.

After much contemplation throughout the winter months spent in Fairbanks, Operations Specialist **Bert “Ice-Man” Mitman** (RAC ’70) is seriously considering a career in stand-up comedy.

On the baby watch, congrats to: **Tom Roach** (FBX ’98) and wife Missy, they had daughter Zuly last April. **Mike O’Brien** and Janelle had daughter Hailey in June. **Bill Cramer** and wife Sharon had daughter Amber on November 5, and **Doug Mackey** (FBX ’99) and **La-ona DeWilde** (FBX ’99) had son Waylon Vaughn Mackey (FBX 2026), born on December 14, 2003.

Boise Base Report

by **Grant Beebe** (NIFC ’90)

We had another busy year in 2003 for jumping fires and sending folks out on overhead assignments, fire management details, and prescribed fire assignments.

Again our 81 smokejumpers spent over four months on the road, on average. Nearly 1,000 jumpers went out the door during operations, and we accounted for over 2,000 days on prescribed fire projects.

Our goal remains to place a Type III IC on every plane load of jumpers, recognizing the need to quickly deploy qualified, experienced overhead.

We continue to run four Twin Otters, setting up satellite operations in western Colorado, southern Utah, Nevada, and southern Idaho. Additionally, BLM jumpers supplemented the West Yellowstone base during the heart of the season.

Turnover looks to be small this year, with only a few slots open to a mix of rookies, retreads, and transfers.

Missoula Base Report

by **Wayne Williams** (Missoula ’77)

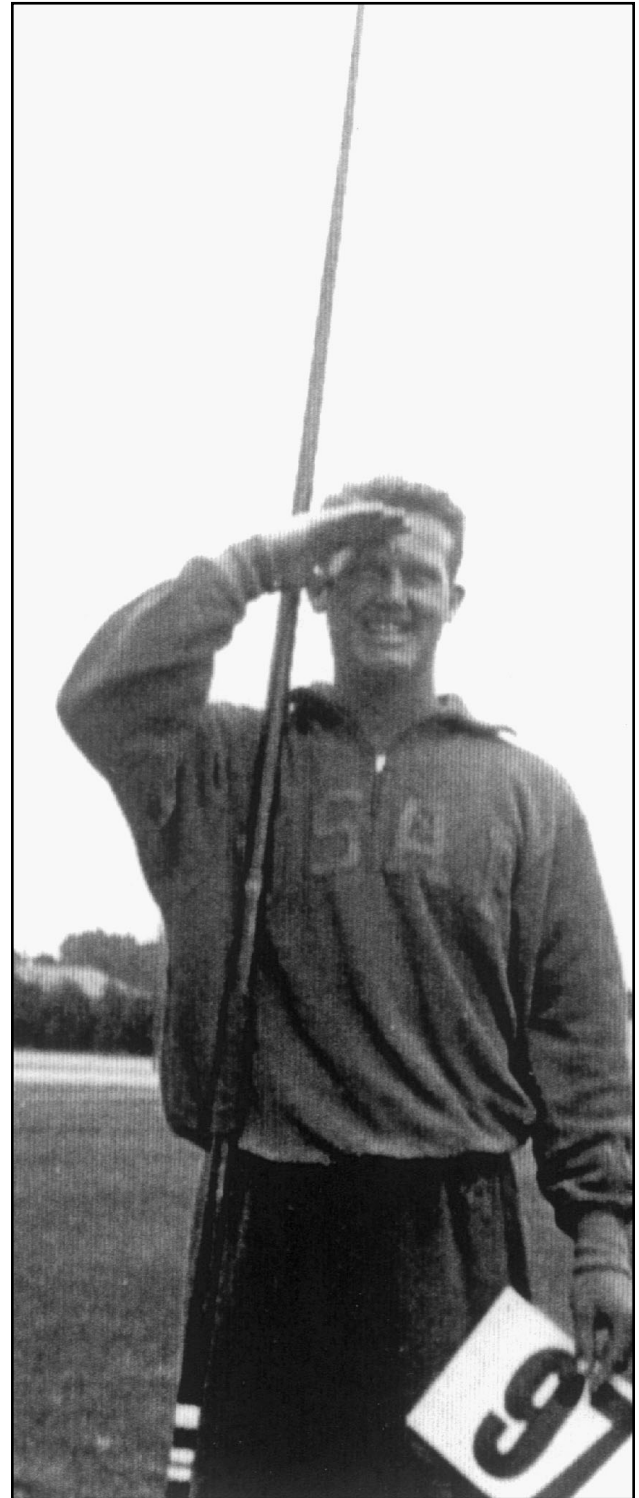
The Missoula smokejumpers were twice as busy in 2003 compared to our average fire season, with standing requests for boosters throughout August. The base reached jumped-out status on 17 different days, usually by 9 AM.

We staffed 73 jumpers, 68 of whom were active. (Our 14-year average is 69 jumpers per season.)

Region 1 rookie training began with 23 candidates last year.

Sixteen rookies completed training, and nine were assigned to the Missoula base. Four of those were detailers.

Our total crew time spent on fires and fire use was about 11,000 hours. Missoula jumpers made 164 fire jumps on 28 different fires, and staffed 12 walk-in fires. We also fulfilled 10 overhead assignments. A total of 483 fire jumps were made from the Missoula base in 2003.



Hal Werner (NCSB ’48) competing in the 1952 Olympic Team Trials at Compton, Calif. Hal threw the javelin a career best 232 feet later in a meet in Norway. (Courtesy Hal Warner)

Our aircraft performed two paracargo resupply drops and 10 smokejumper demob missions. Project work was varied from sewing projects to prescribed fire for a total of about 1,200 hours.

The Northern Rockies fire season kept the Missoula crew busy from mid-July through August. In July we sent two boosters to Grand Junction. The Silver City fire season raged, causing a resource shortage in Region 1. Several more boosters were sent to West Yellowstone to reinforce area fires. Extreme fuel conditions were reached in August, and six boosters were called to bring our head count to sixty. By late August, we were filling 25 single resource assignments at any one time.

Six different booster crews visited Missoula in 2003, for a total of 98 personnel. Redding furnished 18 boosters for a total of 10 days. Winthrop furnished eight boosters for 21 days. Redmond supplied 10 boosters for 13 days. Alaska sent 10 detailers for 42 days. Boise sent 10 boosters for six days.

We had difficulty getting booster requests through the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) on several occasions, despite having multiple bases ready to send us reinforcements. Missoula deployed boosters to other bases on 12 different occasions for a total of about 1,200 personnel days. We filled 123 requests for overhead. Assignments included integral Type I IMT members (IOF1, ATGS, SOF1), SEAT and helicopter managers and coordinators, division and group supervisors, strike team and task force leaders, field observers, human resource specialists, dozer bosses and felling bosses.

Missoula jumpers served as Type III IC's on five fires, allowing the release of critically needed Type I and Type II IMT's. We also supplied cargo by air on four incidents this season, resupplying two fires from Silver City, NM.

We had seven fire line explosives assignments in 2003, blasting more than 126,000 feet of FLE.

The Missoula smokejumpers again provided supervisory and logistical support for the Great Northern Fire Crew (Type II) last year. This has been an excellent opportunity for our jumpers to get needed training and experience as crew bosses. A primary mission of the Great Northern Fire Crew is to supply individual crewmembers with quality training in wildfire suppression and fuels management.

Three Missoula jumpers were certified as tree climbing instructors, and 19 participated in tree climbing surveys in Chicago, New York and New Jersey, searching for the Asian longhorned-beetle. Almost all of our jumpers' surveys were beyond their normal tours of duty, both before and after fire season.

Missoula jumpers worked 54 days on the Minnesota National Forest and Wisconsin State Forest on fuels treatment projects.

We also coordinated a comprehensive detail program to the National Forests of Mississippi, consisting of Region 1 smokejumpers and Northern Rockies' Forest personnel. We spent 276 days working in Mississippi, assisting in the burning of 104,400 acres. We prescribe-burned about 8,500 acres in Region 1 and 59,000 acres on the Gila National Forest in 2003.

North Cascades Base Report

by Steve Dickenson (LaGrande '78)

The 2003 fire season was just below our 10-year average for fires, but large fire activity in the Washington area kept the season a busy one for the smokejumpers at NCSB.

We made 222 fire jumps and 476 practice jumps last season, with no injuries and no aviation accidents or incidents.

Refresher training began early, as most of the crew completed training during the first week of April.

Frank Clements (NCSB '88) and **Sara Pierce** (NCSB '99) participated in the ground portion of Alaska's transfer jumper-training and reported it was interesting and they were impressed. No new smokejumpers were trained at NCSB, but some changes were seen in personnel this season.

The first fire jumped out of the base was on the 10th of June in the Methow Valley District of the Okanogan/Wenatchee National Forest.

There were 21 smokejumpers at NCSB this season, and the aircraft again was a CASA 212—with a nice new paint job—contracted from Bighorn Airways, Inc. **Kevin McBride** was the pilot and **Butch Hammer** was the co-pilot again this season. Both the aircraft and flight crew performed excellently again this season with a total of 155 flight hours.

Matt Desimone (RAC '97) and **J. P. Knapp** (NCSB '96) were the GS-7 spotter trainees this season. They performed flawlessly, assisting in operations during John Button's absence and running the ATGS program.

Some highlights of the season include:

John Button (NCSB '75) and **Matt Woosley** (NCSB '84) supported the Regional ATGS platform at Wenatchee as Air Tactical Group Supervisors.

There was continued involvement with APHIS in Chicago.

Two NCSB smokejumpers worked on WFU fires in Yosemite National Park on a fire use module.

There were overhead assignments in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California.

Education and training in fire suppression and prescribed fire continued for instructors and students. There were boosts from Redmond, McCall, Grangeville, Missoula and Redding, providing professional and skilled assistance.

Tim Lum (RDD '91) spent another summer reactivated for Operation Enduring Freedom as a pararescue soldier. **Jesse Gold** (NCSB '95)—having jumped out of NCSB during the '95 and '96 seasons—returned and was a welcome addition to the crew. **Frank Clements** accepted a GS-7 position with the Boise BLM jumpers, and his skills as a squad leader will be missed.

Scott Galassi (NCSB '02) returned to his fire department job with the city of Kent. **Sam Palmer** (NCSB '00) worked on an internship in Pennsylvania.

Stuart Hill (NCSB '99) took a leave of absence for the season to work on his house in Oregon.

NCSB smokejumpers enjoyed training, working with the Wildland Fire Use program and suppressing initial attack and extended attack fires and performing large fire support while working in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, California, Wyoming, and South Carolina last season.

A base review was conducted in early August, and the report describes a healthy program here.

We expect to hire four to six new jumpers next season and will have a GS-9 training supervisor and a GS-8 squad leader open sometime soon after the new year.

Redding Base Report

by Bob Bente (Redding '88)

The California smokejumpers got off to an early start with the first refresher training beginning March 17. Rookie training followed shortly after on April 7 with 14 quality individuals. By May 2, 27 were on the jump list and with the addition of the rook's, 41 were available for fire assignments by May 9.

In mid-May, Redding set up a satellite base in San Bernardino with a Sherpa. An Otter from McCall was used later in the fall and positioned at Big Bear Lake. The crew had plenty of opportunity to sharpen up on tree felling skills in addition to feeding an insatiable nine-inch chipper. A cone-picking detail was also filled to help replace the millions of trees being lost due to consecutive years of drought in the area. While only one fire was jumped, seven were pounded, including initial attack action on the Grand Prix fire.

The base experienced the first of two lightning busts on July 23. Action was taken on 23 fires on eight National Forests and one in the wine country of Napa County. The second bust,

from September 3-7, saw representation from seven different bases on 30 fires throughout the north state, including one at Redwood National Park.

The base recorded statistically the second best season in recent history, while also recording a near record season for jumps out of region.

And a few notables for the season, **Dan Hernandez** (RDD '85) returned this spring from a two-year hiatus in AK. **Steve Murphy** (RDD '88) filled the operations foreman position. And last but not in the least, **Ron Omont** (RDD '78) is planning to be officially retired by press time.

Redmond Base Report

by Gary Atteberry (Redmond '97)

Two thousand and three was another busy year here in Redmond. We saw a great deal of project work across the country, a great fire season in our own back yard, some major personnel changes, and additions to the Redmond Air Center facilities.

Project work started in earnest in January. **Dirk Stevens** (RAC '91), **Tony Loughton** (RDD '83), **Ron Rucker** (RA '76), and **Mark Gibbons** (RAC '87) headed for the Francis-Marion N.F. in South Carolina. That began our regular detail of prescribed burning, firefighting, and project work for our friends on the Witherbee and Wambau ranger districts.



Tri-motor load McCall 1958. Left side from back forward: Miles Johnson, Gary White, Jerry Costello, Mike Daly, Carl Rosselli. Right side back forward: Shep Johnson, Woody Spence, John Lewis, Stan Ramsay, Richard Peterson. (Courtesy Leah Hessel)

Redmond had jumpers rotating on the detail through April.

As the weather warmed and what snow we had melted, the spring prescribed burning season began here at home. There was no lack of work for the jumpers in the local area. Most districts of neighboring forests had requests for folks to burn throughout spring.

In early April, **Gary Atteberry** (RAC '97) and **Ray Rubio** (RAC '95) both accepted promotions as GS-7 squad leaders and began spotter training immediately. **Dirk Stevens** (RAC '91) also was detailed as a squad leader, filling **Renee Lamoraeux's** (RAC '89) position while she detailed to the Sisters Ranger District as a wilderness ranger.

Also in the spring, Base Manager **Dewey Warner** (RAC '75) announced that his wife had taken a new job in Las Vegas, Nevada. He was packing up the family and moving. Dewey stayed with us through the fire season, but has since begun a detail as an FMO in Las Vegas. As of December, we don't know if we'll see him back.

Another loss to the Redmond base will be longtime Loft Foreman **Mike (Mick) Brick** (RAC '76). We believe he will be leaving us some time early of 2004. All of us here will miss Mick and his words of wisdom.

Early refresher was held in the middle of April and most permanent jumpers attended. Promptly after refresher operations, Foreman **Bill Selby** (RAC '91) organized mixed load refresher training. **Hector Madrid** (MYC '89), **Ryan Swartz** (NIFC '02), **Dave Estey** (NIFC '90), and **Dave Zuares** (RDD '91) joined us from Boise, and we all had a handful of jumps out in the desert and in the timber. It was a great opportunity to prove that jumpers can work around the politics to get the mission done. We thank the Boise bros for visiting and welcome them back anytime.

Fire season began to ramp up in May, with six jumpers helping fill out the Silver City crew. Rookie training started late in the month. RAC trained six rookies this year; four detailers and two new hires. Our detailers came from various backgrounds; **Eric Scholl** from the Malheur rappel program, **Aman Cholas** from the Sandia rappel program, **Phil Bordelon** from the Winema IHC, and **Jason Gibbons** from the Prineville IHC. Our two new hires—**Sarah Brown** and **Julie Pendleton**—filled out this outstanding rookie class of 2003.

It's worth mentioning that we have two Gibbons at the base now, **Mark** ('87) and now his son **Jason** ('03). We would like to have all of the '03 class return, but because of the detailing situations we will probably lose most to their home units.

May ended with our first fire jump of the season. On May 22, we put a load in the Wenaha Tucannon wilderness of the Umatilla.

In June, **Wally Hockman** (RDD '01) transferred to RAC from Redding, he has proven to be a great addition to the crew. Also in June, **Cindy Champion** (MSO '99) transferred back to MSO, and we wish her all the best. And longtime smoke-jumper/teacher **Jim Reeve** (RAC '82) announced he would not be returning. Jim's quick wit and ability to put a buck on anything was surely missed this season.

By July, the weather pattern had not changed, and would remain the same throughout summer. High pressure dominated our region, limiting storm occurrences to below aver-

age. Lack of cloud cover and moisture normally associated with the storms resulted in a summer-long pattern of sustained record high temperatures and ERC's, priming the region for large-fire activity.

Redmond jumped only 70 fires this season for 332 jumps—a little below our 10-year average—but it seemed like we never stopped once we started. The Willamette N.F. benefited most from RAC jumpers who staffed 26 of the forest's 116 fires. We are very proud to say we staffed 23 percent of the forest's fires—all in the heart of the Cascades.

Somewhere amongst all those jumps, **Ron Rucker** (RAC '76) made his 500th jump. Due to a miscalculation, however, the party was held on his 499th. The beer was just as cold and the bros didn't mind a bit. Congrats, Ron.

With only 35 jumpers based at Redmond, there were 11 requests made for boosters over the summer, the first arrived June 29, the last one departed Sept. 29. A total of 116 jumpers boosted Redmond from those 11 requests. Redmond hosted jumpers from every base except Boise and Alaska.

Redmond jumpers also boosted different bases six times throughout the summer. Bases hosting RAC jumpers were MSO, RDD, and NCSB.

As the summer wore on, large fires in our backyard began to grow. The B&B complex which was flown when spotted but was not jumped due to wind, closed in on its total of 90+ thousand acres by late August. The fire provided a plethora of assignments and late season projects for jumpers until the snow became too deep for working.

In August, **Ralph Sweeney** (RAC '01), **Ryan Koch** (RAC '01), **Justin Wood** (RAC '01), **Jeff Shipley** (RAC '01), and **Jon Hernandez** (RAC '01) all accepted permanent seasonal appointments—congratulations.

In addition to fire line assignments and details, Redmond also had jumpers in other interesting details last season. **Gary Atteberry** (RAC '97) detailed to NWCC to work with the regional MAC group. **Tony Sleznick** (RDD '92) spent two weeks at Central Oregon Dispatch, and **Jim Hansen** (RDD '87) spent three weeks at NWCC, working with weather forecasters.

A fire in the Mt. Thielson Wilderness on September 26 marked the end of our 2003 jump season—a season that on paper looked just average but in reality stayed quite busy, with plenty of overtime for all.

There was no hesitation in changing gears from fire season to project work, though. Within a couple of weeks, three jumpers were in Chicago and eight were in New York climbing trees for APHIS, hunting down the Asian longhorned-beetle.

Back home, there was plenty of work rehabbing the large area fires, and by late fall, drip torches were once again dragging across the landscape.

By mid-December, Gibbons, Hernandez, Rubio, Shipley, Stevens, and Atteberry had pulled the last stick from its grips in the snow and thrown it on the burn pile, calling it quits to another season outdoors.

Things for RAC to look forward to in the 2004 season: a new base manager, a new loft foreman, position upgrades, the testing of a new letdown system, regular details to South Carolina and east for tree climbing, the hiring of up to six rookies, and another safe and prosperous fire season. 🌲